

Then I think we should not forget the Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy, Mark Weinberger, and his staff for their assistance because even though they don't have a vote on Capitol Hill, there is a lot of expertise at the U.S. Department of Treasury that this committee—the Senate Finance Committee—has on a regular basis called upon for analysis for their opinions, and also to some extent to give us a view of the executive branch of Government as one more issue in consideration that we ought to have.

My thanks also goes to Jim Fransen and Mark Mathiesen and their capable staff and legislative counsel for taking our ideas and drafting them into statutory language.

Then, finally, as Senator BAUCUS has done, I thank people on his side of the aisle who worked so hard as leaders of the Senate Finance Committee or Senate Budget Committee. I also believe that we would not be here if we had not had a successful budget resolution passed to make room for this third largest tax cut in 50 years, the largest tax cut in the last 20 years. So I thank Senator PETE DOMENICI and his staff director, Bill Hoagland, and the entire Budget Committee staff for their assistance. They were assistants to me during this deliberation, as Senator CONRAD was for Senator BAUCUS, but also that sort of leadership provided the budget resolution.

This is a historical bill for historical times, and I am honored and privileged to be a part of it. Once again, as Senator BAUCUS has said so often, and I have said often, I hope this spirit of bipartisanship continues, as it has, as a tradition in the Finance Committee through our leadership but will also be a standard for other work we do in the Finance Committee; more importantly, that it is something which is contagious, and that there will be closer working relationships and more bipartisanship between all Senators and the products of the Senate.

We go to conference now, and there again we are going to have to produce legislation that hopefully gets the same bipartisan support this bill did. If it is something a little less than that, it can't be much less. I don't want to be gambling that we will get 51 votes when we come to the floor of the Senate after the negotiations are done. I want to make sure that when we come to the floor, we come to the floor in a way that, before we bring the bill up, we have bipartisanship.

The fact is there aren't a lot of Democrats voting for this bill. We can't take for granted the 62 people who have voted for it already.

I wish we could. It would make for a very easy conference. We go there now to negotiate with the other body. I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I congratulate my colleagues from Iowa and Montana for the great job they have done. It was a tremendous amount of work, a tremendous amount of patience. I congratulate them.

VITAL DRUG SHORTAGE

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss an emergency situation facing many of our hospitals across the country. It is an emergency that faces our hospitals, many of our doctors but, much more importantly, it is an emergency that faces the tiniest members of our society, and they are babies who are about to be born and premature babies.

Right now, we have a drastically short supply of a vital drug that is used to help save the lives of babies who are born prematurely. Let me explain.

There is a drug called betamethasone, commonly known as Celestone, which is given to mothers who are about to deliver their child early. The drug is designed to help the premature baby's lungs develop more fully and more completely and to help reduce the risk of bleeding in the baby's brain.

This drug is absolutely essential to giving these tiny newborns a chance to live and grow into healthy children.

An obstetrician at Riverside Hospital in Columbus, Dr. Tracy Cook, contacted me about the current shortage of this very necessary drug. From what I understand, many hospitals no longer have a supply of the drug on hand at all, and others have only a few day's worth left in stock. In fact, I have taken a survey around Ohio, and I suspect what I found in Ohio is true across the country, that doctors and hospitals are running low, many are out, some will be out in just a few days.

I have contacted the Secretary of HHS, Mr. Tommy Thompson, as well as the FDA, to enlist their help in getting emergency supplies of the drug shipped to hospitals as soon as possible. The FDA tells us there are some manufacturing problems with the drug which is causing this shortage.

Whatever the delay, I believe it is absolutely critical that we get these drugs to our hospitals so that no lives are lost, no matter what the cause is for this delay. This is a problem which has to be dealt with.

This drug is critical to the health and future of premature babies. I urge my colleagues to support me in urging the FDA to take whatever action is necessary to resolve this problem. The lives of so many newborns hang in the balance.

This is a problem the FDA must address immediately. We have contacted the FDA, and the response we get back is: These are manufacturing problems. That does not tell us what the exact problem is, nor does it tell us what the

FDA is doing and what the manufacturer is doing to resolve this problem.

We need some answers from the FDA. This is something that cannot wait 2 weeks or 1 month or 6 months. This problem has to be resolved over the next few days. It is critical for the safety of these newborn children.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

TAX RELIEF

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we have been spending all of our time this week on taxes. I am delighted the tax bill has passed. Certainly there are different views on how to do it. There will always be different views when one raises the question of taxes or spending. There are different points of view. Much has to do with the priorities of people. Much has to do with the philosophy of what one thinks the appropriate role of the Federal Government is, what kinds of programs should be funded by the Federal Government. Those are the broad issues.

I was very pleased when we did follow through, and the House, of course, passed tax relief in the amount of approximately \$1.6 trillion, which is what the President requested. The bill that passed the Senate is something less than that. It is still a huge amount of money. Most of us cannot conceive what \$1.3 trillion is, but nevertheless it is very close to the same amount and I think deals with the same principles that are so important.

Taxes are one of the highest priorities for this Congress and, indeed, should be. Taxes are high priorities for this Congress because of the fairness question. It is a question of adequately funding appropriate programs.

It is a high priority for the American people for much the same reason in that no one wants to pay more taxes than they have to, but most of us are willing to pay taxes. It is necessary to do that. Fairness is an issue. This is one of the President's first priorities.

Interestingly enough, this and education are the two highest priorities, and soon we deal with the energy issue. Those are the three things that have been talked about the most in the last several months, so it is appropriate this Congress has focused on and made progress in those areas.

The Senate will be going to conference with the House, and hopefully we will have it down to the President perhaps before this week is over. That is an excellent performance.

On the tax bill we went through 50-some votes on amendments, which gave everybody a good opportunity to talk about the different issues. Yet the bill survived pretty much as it was reported out of committee. I congratulate the committee and the leaders.

There are a number of principles involved. We talk about amount always but limited Government is part of it.