

Senate as well as the farm community that when we wrote that bill we were changing it philosophically to a farm bill that would extend a helping hand to our agriculture community in times of low yields and low prices, but when prices were good and yields were good the Federal Government was not going to be there in the way of commodity payments; that is exactly what happened.

It was projected by the CBO that we would spend for the first 3 years \$52 billion. The fact is, we have spent \$37.9 billion. The reason is, for 2 of those years, we have had good yields and we have had good prices, so payments have been down.

While I applaud the President and I applaud his administration for being fiscally responsible and coming forward with a budget that does meet his goal of cutting the deficit in half during the next 4 years, we have to be careful and make sure we do not throw the baby out with the bath water and that we make sure we approach this budget for the next 5 years in a sound and sensible manner, in a manner that makes sure our defense community is looked after and makes sure that all of America is looked after when it comes to our agriculture production and our ability to buy safe and secure products in the grocery store.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

THE BUDGET

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a process that many Americans face each year. Imagine your average American family with paper and pencil in hand, gathered around the kitchen table discussing their budget for the year. Their funds are limited—and going into a deficit is not an option for them, like it is for their Government. They must choose their priorities, cut the wasteful spending, and make sure that their spending does not add up to more than their income.

Here in the U.S. Congress, we've been tasked with the same job. Those tax-paying families that toil over their own budgets expect us to put the same thoughtfulness into how we spend their hard-earned money here in Washington, DC. And for too long, we have been largely irresponsible with how we spend their money. First, we have to prioritize our spending—and that means making tough choices.

Our top priority today must be our security. That includes the security of our borders and the safety of the brave servicemen and women in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world who are helping secure our borders and our freedom. We must be vigilant in making sure that our military has the tools it needs to get the job done.

We also cannot afford to turn our backs on the economic growth that we have been experiencing. Economic growth continued job creation are what will help bring increased revenue into the Government coffers and ultimately help reduce our deficit even further.

Now some critics of the President's budget in the Senate might say that we should raise taxes on the American family to reduce the deficit. I don't think that takes us in the right direction.

That kind of thinking fails to recognize how the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 have helped our economy grow. This growth has resulted in 20 straight months of increased employment. In 2004 alone, America created 2.2 million new jobs. Each of these workers is gainfully employed and taking care of their own family. They are also paying taxes.

In fact, as a result of increased employment, even with lower tax rates, individual income tax revenue will increase almost \$73 billion this year. Overall revenue is expected to increase by almost \$125 billion this year. I think this is proof that the tax cuts worked. This is one important reason we have to make sure that we don't raise taxes on American families this year and in the years to come.

After we decide what our priorities are when it comes to spending, we have to make more difficult decisions about what we will cut from our budget. As we would tell our children and as we must sometimes remind ourselves, "Money doesn't grow on trees." Our budget must reflect the understanding that there are limits to how much we can spend—as is true for the typical family creating a budget.

Although it might be easier to continue throwing money at failing programs, it is not the right thing to do. If a program is not effective, it cannot expect to cruise on the Federal dole indefinitely. We must demand accountability, and we must focus on programs that are making a difference. I applaud President Bush for taking the position that "... a taxpayer dollar must be spent wisely, or not at all." That is the leadership we need in order to make these difficult reductions.

All Americans can work together to reduce Federal spending. Every tax-paying American should demand spending reform, demand that earmarks and pork barrel spending in the appropriations bills be eliminated, and call on Congress to eliminate the ineffective programs. Rather than having lobbyists and activists calling on Congress to increase spending for every program, Congress should force these groups to identify cost savings too.

For example, if you want more spending for one of the more successful housing programs, housing activists should be forced to identify a housing program that is a failure. That way

Congress can reallocate resources to the better run programs. This goes for every federally funded program. It should no longer be acceptable in America for our elected officials not to ask that hard question before increasing spending from one year to the next. The future of America's financial house demands a changed way of thinking.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. LAUTENBERG and Mr. CORZINE pertaining to the introduction of S. 308 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, may I inquire how much time remains on our side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 21 minutes 9 seconds.

Mr. HARKIN. I thank the Chair.

BUDGET PRIORITIES

Mr. HARKIN. President John Kennedy used to say that to govern is to choose. Certainly that is what a proposed budget is all about. It is about choices and priorities and the values that underlie them.

A budget is not just numbers. There are a lot of figures in there, but ultimately a budget is about people and priorities and what kind of an America we want. It speaks about the values of our country.

On that score, President Bush's proposed budget for 2006, sent yesterday to the Congress, speaks in the starkest of terms. Gone is any pretense of compassionate conservatism. Gone is any pretense of concern for the most needy in our society. Instead, what we see in the budget released yesterday is an unvarnished message that the far right rules, that the gloves are off, and future budgets will reflect traditional hard right priorities.

Specifically, the President's position is that the tax cuts for the very rich must not be touched. In fact, they must be made permanent. Moreover, two additional tax cuts for the very wealthy—tax cuts passed in the 2001 tax bill which become effective next year—must also not be touched. Meanwhile, President Bush proposes to slash critical life-supporting programs for veterans, schoolchildren, the sick, the poor, the disabled, the most vulnerable in our American family.