measure we approved yesterday is a historic moment. I feel strongly that this is among the most important votes that I will cast here, and I am proud that this Congress has the courage and conviction to enact a plan to achieve a true balanced budget.

This is a good plan, and in my estimation, it is a very fair plan; but it is not entirely a perfect plan. An area, for example, that I believe that this Congress has abdicated its responsibility is the reforms of the peanut program that are contained in this bill.

My desire to reform programs such as peanuts and sugar is certainly well known among my colleagues. It is my view that we must curb these subsidies for farmers and investors and bring these programs into line with other, more market oriented agricultural commodities. As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I have been fighting for reforms in both of these programs. I assure my colleagues that the provisions in this bill are not true reform.

The peanut industry is in a state of serious decline. Consumption and production are falling as a direct result of a failed Government policy that excessively inflates the price of U.S. peanuts to almost twice the world price. It is my goal to make the peanut program operate like other farm programs so peanut farmers will grow peanuts for the market, and not for the Federal Government. Under the current peanut program, artificially high-priced peanuts simply end up being forfeited to the Federal Government.

The peanut provisions contained in the budget reconciliation bill not only fail to reform the peanut quota system, but make a bad program worse by forcing the Secretary of Agriculture to further shrink national production to avoid Government forfeitures.

This summer I introduced S. 1188, a bill that provides for a phasedown of the excessive support price for quota peanuts in order to move the program toward a market orientation. In year 2000, my bill would end the quota system and replace it with a loan program, much like the program we have for soybeans.

The Agriculture Committee, however, chose to include the general commodity programs in the budget reconciliation bill rather than have a farm bill fully debated on the Senate floor. At the time of Agriculture Committee deliberations, I agreed not to oppose the package of peanut provision for inclusion in budget reconciliation in return for some minor reforms in the program.

One of the chief concessions I obtained in the Agriculture Committee reported bill, was a new provision for the release of additional peanuts when market prices for domestic edible peanuts exceeded 120 percent of the quota loan rate. This provision would have placed some cap on the price of peanuts when the Government creates an artificial shortage.

Unfortunately, this provision was ruled out of order under the Byrd rule, while other provisions, such as the extension of lease and transfer of quota, were allowed to be part of final legislative package on peanuts.

My other objective today is to point out the inconsistency in terms of how the Byrd rule was applied against my provisions to reform the peanut program. No one can deny that the Byrd rule was applied selectively to eliminate certain provisions, while other items, such as lease and transfer provisions were allowed to be attached to the budget reconciliation bill. Through procedural maneuvers to protect the peanut program from a floor vote, the Congress has effectively chosen to heavily subsidize a few thousand peanut quota holders at the expense of millions of consumers.

The peanut provisions contained in the bill serve to protect the status quo, while consumers have to pay even more for peanuts because the Secretary of Agriculture will be forced to short the market. In fact, it is estimated that the proposed modifications will effectively increase the cost of peanuts by as much as $100 per ton. Budget reconciliation provisions that increase the cost of peanut products at a time when the peanut industry is already losing market share are simply bad public policy.

I am disappointed in my colleagues' use of the legislative process to hide the peanut program from the light of public scrutiny. Working to deny floor consideration of peanut program reform has extended the life of this outrageous program for a while longer. Ultimately, I am afraid that the provisions in this bill do a disservice to supporters of the program by further pretending that there is no crisis in the peanut industry.

In stark contrast, some of the reforms that I have proposed would expand national production by allowing American peanut growers to produce for the market rather than the government. Real reform of the peanut program will not only benefit this Nation's consumers, but will help avoid the loss of manufacturing an jobs in my home State of Pennsylvania.

As a Representative of Pennsylvania, one of the largest states in terms of the number of employees related to peanut product manufacturing, I have good reason to be deeply concerned about the loss of jobs that will result from further Government imposed reductions in U.S. peanut production.

Mr. President, it is critical that we have an opportunity to vote for reform of the peanut program on the Senate floor. Consideration of the peanut program to date has been nothing short of denying public scrutiny of an unfair and outdated Government program.

TED STEVENS: A HEARTFELT BIRTHDAY WISH

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, today is an especially happy day for Alaskans, as we join in wishing our senior Senator TED STEVENS a happy 72d birthday, (November 18.) TED, in his 27th year in the Senate, has set an example for how all of us should fight tirelessly for our home States, while still maintaining the wisdom to put the good of the Nation first.

While TED currently ranks eighth in the Senate in overall seniority, third among Republicans, and is just one of 109 Senators who have served in the body for 24 or more years—out of 1,815 members since 1789, he still can be found meeting every Alaskan Close-Up student group or talking with residents about health concerns.

His encyclopedic knowledge of Federal-Alaska State relations is legendary in Washington. In the Senate, which has lost much of its institutional memory, TED is able to offer insights on everything from passage of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Act, to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, from passage of the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation Act to the Alaska Lands Act.

His recollection of events is so extraordinary not only because he helped draft the Alaska Statehood Act while serving at the Department of Interior during the Eisenhower administration, but because he has had a hand in virtually every Federal issue affecting Alaska over the past three decades.

While TED served 8 years as assistant Republican leader, whip, handling key national issues, especially defense matters, he is respected as a fierce defender of Alaska interests. He especially has been willing to put aside personal ambition for the good of his State.

Many forget that TED sacrificed his seniority on the Commerce Committee to move to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee during the key fight over the Alaska Land Act. He then moved back to Commerce to represent Alaska fisherman—prove positive that TED always puts Alaska first. It is only justice that he is today chairman of the Committee on Governmental Affairs—the panel upon which he has labored for years to the great benefit of Alaskans.

Certainly no Alaskan has done more during his career then TED STEVENS. A Harvard Law School graduate, an Air Force veteran who saw service in China during WW II, the chief counsel to the U.S. Department of Interior, a member of the Alaska House of Representatives who served as speaker tempore and majority leader, and U.S. Senator. TED STEVENS is a model of public service to his State and Nation and an inspiration for all of us.

I, join with all Alaskans, to thank him for his skill, drive, and dedication during his years in Washington and offer him a heartfelt good wish for many, many more years of service to the State and Nation. Nancy joins me

in congratulations to both TED, Catherine, and daughter Lilly. It's been great fun and a true privilege working with you my friend.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SENATOR ROBERT BYRD

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, if the Republican leadership is successful in negotiating an agreement with the President on a continuing resolution, it appears that the Senate may not be in session on Monday, November 20.

For that reason, today I would like to take a moment and wish the distinguished senior Senator from West Virginia, Senator ROBERT BYRD, an advance Happy Birthday. On Monday, Senator BYRD will celebrate his 78th birthday.

Mr. President, the public often views the Senate engaging in bitter partisan debate. Yes, we Republicans have our differences with the Democrats. But when the debates are over, and the votes have been cast, the public would be surprised to learn that we put aside our party labels and share friendships.

And so, the Republican Senator would like to reflect on the brilliant career of Senator BYRD. He has spent more than half of his life serving the people of West Virginia in the Congress. Six years in the House and 37 years in the Senate.

This year, he cast a record 14,000th vote; and just 3 weeks ago, on October 27, when the Senate set a 1-day record of 39 votes, it was Senator BYRD who offered the 35th amendment that broke the record.

But it is not just longevity that will provide Senator BYRD historical statute in the Senate. It is his record of service. He has served as majority whip as well as majority and minority leader. And he has served as President pro tempore and chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

What is even more remarkable is the Senator's in-depth scholarly knowledge of history. Our distinguished Republican leader, Senator DOLE, has often commented that students ought to receive college history credit simply by listening to the speeches of Senator BYRD.

Over a period of several years, Senator BYRD stood on the floor of the Senate and provided an oral history of this institution. These speeches ultimately were printed in two bound volumes and provide the best overview and understanding of the evolution of this 206 year old institution.

In 1993, Senator BYRD went to the floor on 14 separate occasions to speak on the history of the Roman Senate. These discourses were not designed solely for history students. Instead, they were intended to provide all of us with a perspective on the roots of American government and the extraordinary importance of maintaining unfettered congressional control over the power of the purpose.

On one occasion, Senator BYRD spoke for 6 hours on the floor and provided the Senate a broad overview of the evolution of parliamentary government in England and how evolution influenced our Founding Fathers in shaping this Government.

Mr. President, I could go on and on about Senator BYRD's history lessons. But what I want to do is suggest that when future historians are writing about the 20th century Senate, Senator ROBERT BYRD will surely be remembered as one of the giants who followed in the footsteps of Henry Clay and Daniel Webster.

In particular, I believe Senator BYRD should be commended for his passionate defense of the rights of the minority in this body and to unlimited debate. Many Americans are often frustrated with the slowness of the pace of the Senate. But Senator BYRD rightly notes that in permitting unlimited debate, the Senate stands as a bulwark against tyranny and the passion of the moment.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Senator BYRD for his wisdom. I wish him a very happy birthday this coming Monday and my sincere regards to his lovely wife Erma.

ORDER FOR RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of Senators STEVENS, EXON, WARNER, and CRAIG, the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. I yield the floor.

Mr. STEVENS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. Before the acting leader retires, I hope that we can agree to take off this 5-minute limitation on comment to be made at this time in morning business. It is my understanding that the time limit is 5 minutes for each Member; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct, at this point.

Mr. STEVENS. Well, I have a longer statement I would like to make concerning the defense bill and this hiatus of funds. I would like to ask that that time be extended somewhat.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, could I inquire, how long does the——

Mr. STEVENS. Ten minutes for each one would be sufficient, in my judgment.

Mr. LOTT. I modify my request and ask unanimous consent that each Senator would be given 10 minutes.

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

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished acting leader.

THE FUNDING GAP

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I have been researching today also what is happening here with regard to this funding gap, as it is called in Government circles. I find there have been 15 such funding gaps in a 19-year period since 1977. One went 17 days. And I am becoming disturbed because of the two functions I perform here in the Senate. One is chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee with regard to the general civil service and Government employees, per se; and the other is pertaining to the Department of Defense.

At this time I want to speak primarily on the Department of Defense. If we are in session later today I do intend to speak about Government employees per se, because I think there is a strong feeling building here, for some reason, that those people who have been declared nonessential and are not reporting for work are somehow at fault in this, and they are not going to be paid when we finally reach a conclusion, which we must reach at some point.

But, Mr. President, I want to talk now about the Department of Defense bill because I had urged that bill be held up and not sent to the President because I did not want it caught in this current, very deep controversy. But it has now been sent to the President for his signature.

There is every indication the President will veto that bill, for several reasons. He, of course, has the prerogative to reach the conclusion that he has reached with regard to the funding levels in our defense bill. I am here right now to urge the Department of Defense to confer with the President and do their utmost to get this bill signed. As I noted during the debate here on the floor of the Senate on that bill, this is a bill that I think is of immediate concern to the Department of Defense and one that I believe the President must sign.

If he does not sign it, under the current hiatus in terms of this funding, we are going to be in real difficulty. Today 300,000 civilian employees in the Department of Defense have been furloughed. The Department of Defense depots, supply centers, training ranges, and people who are currently on route in personal moves have been stopped. They can no longer spend money.

Now, we have U.S. troops deployed abroad. I spoke at length on the floor the other night about that also. And 240,000 or more American citizens are deployed abroad as members of our armed services. They are in Macedonia, Haiti, Cuba, Southwest Asia, all over the world, and there are many afloat. We cannot afford any further interruption in defense fundings and programs if we are to maintain our responsibilities throughout the world as the world's last superpower.

I think this would be a sad time for Saddam Hussein or the North Koreans to misunderstand the will of the United States to provide the people and the material and money to fund the commitments we have made throughout the world.