

A lot of people, including the President, who talk about the balanced budget, talk about it as if it is a painful exercise, a dreadful experience that we have to drag America through. It is the exact reverse. By taking charge of our budget, by managing our affairs, we strengthen every quadrant of America, and we keep the country strong and healthy so that it can keep on taking care of those who fall through the safety net.

Mr. President, this is history in the making. We have done our job. We have put forward a really solid plan to take charge of America's finances, to help every family in the country and to make America strong as it comes to the new century. Now it is on the President's desk. He promised America he would balance the budget in 5 years. He promised America the other day that he would join us in balancing it in 7 years. It is time for him to fulfill that promise to the country.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ABRAHAM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

#### THE BUDGET

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I will be brief. Mr. President, I rise to speak along the same lines as the Senator from Georgia and talk a little bit about our apparent budget impasse. We are told—and I read in the media—that political advisers to the President have urged him to resist negotiations, to allow an impasse to continue, to theoretically take the impasse to the American electorate a year from now. That has resulted, as far as I can tell, in very limited discussions so far, limited efforts on the part of the administration to negotiate, and no plan by the administration with respect to balancing the budget, protecting Medicare, or any of the other vital priorities in this country.

I do not know what the President's decision will be. I do know what I read to be the advice he is receiving from his political counselors. I do not know, he may well decide to take the politically expedient course here, Mr. President. Before he does, I hope the President will consider the implications of taking the advice of the political experts as to what is good for next year's election and understand the consequences of doing that, because if an impasse continues for a year, if the President is responsible for there not being a balanced budget passed, it means a lot of very critical, I think, things for the American people. It means, number one, that we will not deal with the problem of Medicare insolvency that is staring this country in the face.

As the Senator from Georgia has already indicated, we stand on the brink of having part A in the Medicare trust fund bankrupt in just 6 years. If the President does not negotiate in good faith, if he plays the political card his

advisers are recommending, then he will not sign, next week, the bill that would protect Medicare and keep the trust fund solvent.

If the President continues the impasse, if the advisers, the political folks at the White House, are successful, it will also mean, I believe, very detrimental things for our economy. We have been very fortunate in recent weeks, as we have seen the stock market go up and interest rates go down. There is a very clear reason for that, and the analysts on Wall Street and elsewhere in this country all say the same thing. They say that the economy and the markets are reacting to the belief that we will have significant deficit reduction when this budget process is over.

Mr. President, if they conclude that the President prefers an impasse for political reasons, then I think the robust stock market and the lower interest rates will be short-lived. Then the President will have to explain why interest rates are going back up again and why the market is going down.

But most important, if the President heeds the advice of the political counselors, instead of doing what is right for this country, the impact will be felt greatest by the families of America, because if we fail to take advantage of this unique opportunity we have right now, Mr. President, to bring the budget under control and to put us on a path toward balance, what it means for the families, as the Senator from Georgia just indicated, is very, very considerable.

It means continuing interest rates at levels beyond what they need to be. It means people paying more for their mortgage, more for their car payment, more for their student loans than they need to make. It means Washington continuing to make more money and keeping it here and making decisions for the families of America that they ought to make themselves.

Mr. President, I hope when the President returns from his trip to Europe that he will reject the opinion of the political advisers, reject the notion of allowing a long impasse to continue, reject the notion of refusing to negotiate upfront in good faith and with his own plan, and instead come to the table, begin the discussions that I think are necessary for us to bring about the kind of balanced budget that we have passed here in the Senate and the Congress and for the American people, the first balanced budget in a quarter of a century.

I hope that the President decides that the political advisers are not what matters and that next year's election is not what matters, but it is the future of this country, the future of our children that matter.

If he does, he will join the Republicans in seeking to balance the budget, seeking to end the impasse, and most importantly, seeking to protect future generations.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll. The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. 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 BALANCED BUDGET

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I want to rise to speak, as many of my colleagues have, on two very important issues that the Senate is facing right now.

I think there are great differences between the administration's position and the position of Congress. The first, of course, is the balanced budget. We are trying to keep the promise we made to the people that we will have a balanced budget in 7 years. The President has altered his position, starting in his campaign with a 5-year balanced budget, but then after he was elected saying, "Well, 10 years is good enough, 9 years, 8 years."

Now he has committed to a 7-year balanced budget. The only problem is the President is doing what he has been doing for the last 2½ years, and that is giving lip service now to a 7-year balanced budget, but his offer on the table is, "I need \$7 billion or \$8 billion more in spending." Fine, Mr. President. Where are we going to take that spending from? Silence from the White House.

That is not the kind of leadership that we need if we are going to truly sit down with a commitment to a 7-year balanced budget and say, "All right, here are the parameters, here are the spending limits. Now let's negotiate within these parameters." You cannot say, I need \$7 billion out of the sky, but yes, I am committed to a 7-year balanced budget, but I am not going to suggest where we would take it from. That is because the tough decisions are always the decisions on where you have to cut or slow spending or eliminate programs that do not work.

When it comes to the rubber meeting the road, we have to cut spending. That is how we are going to meet the test. Mr. President, \$7 billion more to spend, without saying where it is going to come from, is always the easy position.

I would love to spend the money on these programs. There is probably not one of them that is not a good program. But does it meet the test of our taxpayers feeling that it is worth their hard-earned dollars to put money in these programs rather than live within our means, like every household and every small business in this country must do. That is the question, and that is the test we are facing right now.

When I am home, people say to me, "Don't blink." I am here to say, we are not going to blink. We are going to do what is right for this country. I hope the President will come to the table and say not only where he would like