We should not be concerned that the people do not know our names or the length of our terms or who controls which Chamber. But we ought to be deeply troubled that so many people seem to have lost faith in us. And we should be especially concerned that the poll reflects these things at a time when Congress has made promises, kept them, and has demonstrated a sincere commitment to turning this Government around.

Mr. President, when the 104th Congress was gaveled into session a year ago, there were high expectations. There had been a dramatic transfer of power. People called it a sea change, a revolution.

There was a radical, new message that had begun to break through the noise of the usual political rhetoric. We talked about new solutions. We talked about Government as a service provider, not our national nanny, or caretaker. We talked about making Washington more accountable to the taxpayers, and a more efficient consumer of taxpayer dollars. We talked about shifting the focus of the Federal Government from advocacy on behalf of tax recipients to advocacy on behalf of the Nation's taxpayers.

We talked every day about our children and grandchildren, and what kind of future we would be leaving them if we turned our backs and did nothing.

One year later, our message has not changed, and we have passed a great deal of legislation in the last year to put real muscle behind our promises. But we did not count on running headlong into an obstructionist President, gunning for reelection, who was willing to deny the people a better tomorrow in order to preserve the status quo.

Mr. President, up until last year, I believed wholeheartedly in a mathematical absolute I first learned in high school geometry—that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. The idea has been around for so long—since the time of the ancient Greeks, in fact—that I never considered questioning it. But what I learned during the first session of the 104th Congress has forced me to rethink those early geometry lessons.

You see, there is no line more straight than the 16-block stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue that runs between the U.S. Capitol and the front door of the White House. So when the American people elected a new Congress on our pledge to balance the budget, cut taxes, repair the welfare system, and save Medicare, it stood to reason that the road to enacting those fundamental reforms, in the shortest amount of time, would be a straight line as well: Congress would pass the laws, we would send them up Pennsylvania Avenue to the President, and he would sign them.

But this President has managed to distort the laws of mathematics so badly that Pennsylvania Avenue has become not a straight line, but a tangled trail culminating in a dead end. Today, those 16 blocks are littered with legislative casualties that never had a chance against the veto pen of a President who is dead set against even the most basic reforms.

Congress sent the President a balanced budget that acknowledges it is morally wrong to pass the debts of one generation onto the next. He vetoed it.

We sent the President a tax relief package that offers a $500-per-child tax credit—and a lot of hope—to every middle-class, American family. He vetoed it.

We sent the President a bill that delivers on his promise to ''end welfare as we know it.'' He said he liked it. Then he vetoed it anyway.

We sent the President a plan that moves Medicare into the 1990's, rescues it from bankruptcy, and reforms the system by offering seniors something they have never had access to through their Government-provided health care plan and that was real choice. Once again, he killed it with a veto. Given yesterday's troubling news that the Medicare trust fund lost money in 1995 for the first time in 23 years, a full year earlier than expected, and may not survive until 2002, the President's veto appears even more shortsighted and misguided.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. GRAMS. When I am through, I will yield for a question.

Mr. FORD. I am sure it was part A, not part B. The Senator went over it with a broad brush.

Mr. GRAMS. It is part A. Congress delivered tax relief, Medicare and welfare reform, and a balanced budget to the White House just as we promised the American people we would, and they were all returned to us ''V–O–A''—''vetoed on arrival.'' So much for high school geometry.

What I have come to realize, Mr. President, is that sometimes, the shortest distance between two points is not a straight line at all, but the route with the least congestion. What I want to assure my fellow Americans is that from now on, Congress will follow whatever line takes us where we need to go, and if that means bypassing the gridlock on Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House, so be it. We will not be deterred from pursuing the principles of individual freedom and restraint in Government that have already brought us this far. We moved an important step forward recently with the passage of the Balanced Budget Downpayment Act. The President may have vetoed our balanced budget plan, but our downpayment on it moves us $30 billion closer to a balanced budget, and keeps our children from going another $30 billion in debt, by eliminating a host of wasteful Government programs. It was not what the President wanted. In fact, his latest budget does not make any serious reductions in Government spending until the year 2000. But Congress controls the Nation's purse strings and in this political climate, Congress must start taking these small steps in order to reach our larger goals. One of the papers in my home State interviewed a number of Minnesotans last week and asked what they thought about Congress and the President and our accomplishments of the past year. I thought the comments made by the mayor of Woodbury were the most insightful. He said,

> We watch with interest but quite a bit of disappointment. They are more concerned out there with their political one-upmanship, political brinkmanship, political hassle of each other. There is a big gap in quality leadership.

Those are the very same thoughts being reflected in the kind of polls we saw in the Washington Post. Mr. President, if we are going to begin restoring the people's faith in their Government, we are going to have to earn it through quality leadership, and we are going to have to do a better job of communicating our successes. Every American needs to know that this Senate passed a balanced budget. More importantly, every American needs to know that we are not giving up until President Clinton has signed a balanced budget into law.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CRAIG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, this afternoon the Senate will once again attempt to wrestle with one of its key responsibilities to American agriculture, and that is to pass legislation that will craft new farm policy for our country and send the necessary message as to what we expect American agriculture to do in relation to farm programs directed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I found it interesting yesterday that President Clinton has submitted his 1997 budget when we do not even have a 1996 budget, and we find ourselves here on the floor of the Senate today debating agriculture because the President vetoed agriculture. So while the President is now off campaigning across the country waving a 1997 budget, the Government does not have a 1996 budget, and we do not have a farm policy.

The Secretary of Agriculture has just entered the floor. By the 15th of this month, he is going to arrive at a crisis point in having to deal with the implementation of 1949 agricultural policy.

Last Friday on the floor of this Senate, the Democrat leader and his party blocked a farm bill. We offered a bipartisan farm bill, Democrats and Republicans alike. Senator LEAHY of Vermont, who is just about as liberal as I am conservative, came together in a bipartisan bill. Once again we were denied the opportunity to vote on that because we were told it would be blocked.

I hope today that we can deal with a farm bill and send the appropriate message to American agriculture. But yesterday, I think Robert Shapiro, the president of the Progressive Policy Institute, which is a centrist Democrat leadership council arm, said it very clearly: The President's budget is not about dollars; it is about politics. He said we are now in a political season, and the President did this for politics. The politics that is being played on the floor of the U.S. Senate right now may be good for one party or another, but it is not good for American agriculture.

So, Mr. President, pick up the phone and call your people here in the Senate and say let us get an agriculture bill so that the Secretary of Agriculture does not have to deal with the kind of draconian things that he may be forced to do to send a shock wave through American agriculture by implementation of the 1949 farm policy. That is not good government. That is not the kind of government we need to deal with.

So I hope we can arrive at a solution this afternoon. But, Mr. President, in closing, because I know our time is up here at about 12:30, I am told that there are now 240-plus amendments filed at the desk on the Lugar-Leahy-Craig alternative bipartisan farm bill. That sends a very simple message to me. There is not going to be a farm bill today. It is impossible to deal with it after 6½ months of intensive extensive hearings before the Senate Agriculture Committee when American agriculture, almost per organization, said do not simply reinstate farm policy, but reform it and clean it up. And that is what we have done in trying to build this.

I am not sure where we go from here. I hope we can get the 60 votes this afternoon so that we can move forward and get the 1996 work done before our President is off campaigning on 1997 budgets that do not balance while he is President, assuming he might get elected another term. I find it very interesting that his own people are now saying it is not policy; it is all politics. Well, we knew that. He knows that. But it is a very dangerous kind of politics, a very dangerous kind of politics for American agriculture.

Historically, Mr. President, we have always crafted a bipartisan farm bill. I see the Senator from North Dakota on the floor. He has talked about that. I have worked with him. I have worked with other Senators on the floor to craft a bipartisan approach to farm policy. I hope that is what we can accomplish this afternoon before the political season gets so hot that we cannot get any work done.

If that is the case, we probably lose. But someone else loses, and that is the American farmer and American agriculture.

Mr. PRYOR addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I thank the Chair for recognizing me.

Mr. President, I am stunned listening to my good friend from Idaho talk about the politics of the season. If talking about the politics surrounding the vote this afternoon on a bill that the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee has never had hearings on, has never passed, when the other party has frozen this side of the aisle totally out of any negotiations relative to meeting our commitment to an agriculture bill for the farmers of this country—they come forward with something known as the freedom-to-farm-bill. The freedom-to-farm bill, Mr. President, frankly, is a bill that the farmers in France should love. Our competitors overseas should love the freedom-to-farm bill because what it is going to mean is that our farmers are going to be unable to compete in the international and world markets. This bill spells doomsday for the farmers of America. It spells doomsday for the agriculture programs in our country that are the envy of the world.

Mr. President, I cannot believe that my friend from Idaho is talking about the politics of the moment when it is his party that has prevented a real debate on the 1996 agriculture bill to take place. This bill was written by budgeteers. It was not written by the Agriculture Committee in the House or in the Senate. It was written by the budget committees, Mr. President. My friend from Idaho knows that.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. PRYOR. Yes.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask the Senator from Arkansas if we find ourselves in the circumstance that for the first time in history the farm bill was stuck in the budget reconciliation bill last year. So there was no farm bill debate on the floor of the Senate. It was supposed to happen last year, but it did not happen.

I think that it probably is not very important to talk about what happened yesterday. The question is, what happens today and what happens tomorrow? The issue for us is, what about the future of family farming in this country? Will we have family farmers in the future or not? Will we simply have giant agri-factories farming from California to Maine? Do we care about the future of family farmers, or do we not? Is that not the real issue before us?

This is not about politics. It is about policy and who cares about the future of family farmers.

Mr. PRYOR. I will answer my friend from North Dakota by saying that just a few months ago, I went before our farm bureau organization down in Arkansas. I spent about an hour and a half visiting with them. They begged me and they pled with me to oppose the Freedom to Farm Act. Now, suddenly, they have made a reversal. They say, ''Well, maybe it is the best we can do.''

Mr. President, I do not think it is the best we can do. I think that we can do better. I think that we can go back and draft at least an extension of the farm bill of the past 5 years and extend it for a year and make certain that we do not make the gargantuan mistakes that we are likely to make today by enacting the Freedom to Farm Act.

Mr. President, I think the appointed hour has arrived, and I therefore yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks recognition?

Mr. CRAIG addressed the Chair.

Mr. FORD. The time has expired.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. I would note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The VICE PRESIDENT. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH TO RON WYDEN, SENATOR FROM OREGON

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Chair lays before the Senate the certificate of election of the Honorable RON WYDEN as a Senator from the State of Oregon.

Without objection, it will be placed on file and the certificate of election will be deemed to have been read and printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the certificate was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION FOR UNEXPIRED TERM, UNITED STATES SENATOR, STATE OF OREGON, SECOND POSITION

To the President of the Senate of the United States:

This is to certify that on the 30th day of January, 1996, Ron Wyden was duly chosen by the qualified electors of the State of Oregon a Senator from said State to represent said State in the Senate of the United States for the unexpired term, ending at noon on the 3rd day of January, 1999, to fill the vacancy in the representation from said State in the Senate of the United States caused by the resignation of Bob Packwood.

Witness: His excellency our Governor, John Kitzhaber and our seal hereto affixed at Salem, Oregon this 2nd day of February, in the year of our Lord 1996.

By the governor:

JOHN A. KITZHABER,
Governor.

PHIL KEISLING,
Secretary of State.

The VICE PRESIDENT. If the Senator-elect will present himself at the desk, the Chair will administer the oath of office as required by the Constitution and prescribed by law.

Mr. WYDEN of Oregon, escorted by Mr. HATFIELD of Oregon, advanced to the desk of the Vice President; the oath, prescribed by law, was administered to him by the Vice President; and he subscribed to the oath in the official Oath Book.

[Applause, Senators rising.]