actually double your chances of survival in the event of fire.

Smoke alarms, though, are not the only element of a home escape plan. It is vital that every individual in a household knows and practices at least two escape routes from every room in that home. If confronted by a fire, one should first escape the burning house and then meet at a previously designated family meeting place outside of the home. Then, the fire department should be notified. Finally, by no means should anyone attempt to reenter a burning home.

Mr. President, I rise today in support of the theme of this year's National Fire Protection Week and to encourage the development of as many home escape plans as possible. The fact is that no one is immune to the dangers of fire, but if they develop a plan similar to the USFA's their chances of survival are significantly increased.

Today, on the anniversary of one of our nation's worst fires, the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, I want to commend the National Fire Protection Association for sponsoring National Fire Protection Week and to urge my colleagues and all citizens to pay careful attention to the theme and message of this year's National Fire Protection Week, so that we may continue to reduce such preventable losses.●

TRIBUTE TO JENNIFER WARDREP

● Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Jennifer Wardrep, one of my finest employees who has worked for me, in one capacity or another, for five years. Jennifer came to work for my press office when I was the Secretary of State of Georgia. She had recently graduated from East Carolina University where she studied journalism and political science. Jennifer had a successful career in college, working for the student newspaper and rising to become its editor.

In the Secretary of State's office, Jennifer quickly won my respect and that of her coworkers for her hard work and writing skills. She spent many long nights working in the Georgia Capitol to make it possible for the people of Georgia to receive the news of State elections, the new Motor Voter laws and all of the important work handled by that office. Her dedication to me, and that office, is something for which I am deeply in her debt.

In December of 1995, Jennifer left the safety of her ''good government job'' for the exciting but temporary life of a political campaign. Once again, Jennifer came to work for me, on my longshot attempt to become a United States Senator. If there ever was a time when I needed a good press person, it was then. Jennifer was a huge part of a successful media campaign that let the voters of Georgia decide for themselves who was best suited to represent them in the U.S. Senate.

I remember one time in particular when we were traveling through South Georgia talking to several newspapers and many more voters. It was late in the campaign and we were all tired and ready for the election. Jennifer kept me on message as much as humanly possible and rewarded me with candy. This creative thinking is typical of Jennifer. As she and I will both affirm, it sometimes takes innovative approaches to confine me to one message.

I went to bed on election night not knowing for certain if I had won the race. Early the next morning, my phone rang and woke me up. It was Jennifer and she said ''Good morning, Senator.'' The people of Georgia had heard our message of hope and opportunity, several news organizations wanted to interview me and this was my wake-up call. Jennifer was the first person to call me ''Senator.'' I will never forget that moment and I want to thank her very much for that.

After the election, I asked Jennifer to come to Washington with me where she became my Press Secretary. The tenacious media in Washington was no match for her. Although the southern hospitality of Atlanta was nothing like the rough and tumble of Washington, Jennifer's experience paid off. Jennifer quickly established good relationships with the media and helped me share with the people of Georgia the work we were doing on campaign finance reform, Georgia's defense operations and many, many more things.

Although I have said it many times, I truly believe that I have the best staff on Capitol Hill. And I truly believe I have the best Press Secretary on Capitol Hill as well. Jennifer has decided to move on to other things and I wish her the best of luck at whatever she does, although I doubt she will need it. Jennifer has served the people of Georgia well and served me extraordinarily well. Whether it was setting up press conferences, sending out news releases, writing PSA's, or recording Internet messages, Jennifer Wardrep is an irreplaceable part of my staff and will always be my ''Tiger'' in the press office.●

THE BUDGET SURPLUS

● Mr. KYL. Mr. President, September 30 marked the end of fiscal year 1998, and, for the first time since 1969, the news is written in black ink, not red. Although the final numbers will not be available for a few more weeks, it appears that the federal government will end the year with a unified budget surplus of about $70 billion.

Mr. President, this is truly a dramatic turnaround. After all, it was only three years ago that President Clinton submitted a budget plotting $200 billion deficits well into the next century. I recall that skeptics back then often derided a balanced budget as a risky idea, something that could even threaten Social Security. Now, however, the skeptics seem to concede what many of us have been saying all along—that a balanced budget is good for America and good for Social Security.

What does a balanced budget mean for hard-working Americans? For one thing, it means lower interest rates. The rate on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage might be as high as 9.5 percent, instead of the current average of about 6.6 percent, had Washington continued to rack up deficits as large as those experienced in the early 1990s.

The savings from lower interest rates can be substantial. Just a one point drop on a $100,000 mortgage amounts to monthly savings of $67, or more than $24,000 over the 30-year term of a mortgage. We are talking here, not about just a one point drop, but rates that are two to three points lower than just a few years ago.

Lower interest rates on student loans make a college education more affordable for young people, and lower rates on car loans mean that hard-working men and women all around the country can stretch their budgets a little farther. A balanced budget literally means money in people's pockets.

The first thing we should do at the beginning of this new fiscal year is commit that we will maintain a balanced federal budget for the American people. We can certainly debate what to do with emerging budget surpluses, but there should be no longer be any debate that our national policy ought to be to keep the budget in balance.

Mr. President, now that the budget is finally in balance, we have the unique opportunity to consider other issues without the cloud of big deficits hanging overhead. For example, we ought to consider whether tax rates are at their optimal level, or whether they are too high. By definition, a budget surplus means that our government is collecting more than is necessary for current operations. People are paying simply paying more than they need to.

Perhaps, instead of keeping tax rates higher than they need to be, we ought to reduce income-tax rates across the board—for single people and married couples, people with children and those without, young people just getting a start and seniors trying to make ends meet on fixed incomes. It seems to me that every taxpaying American deserves a break.

We could also reduce taxes on savings and investment—lower the tax on capital gains and eliminate the death tax—two things that would help keep the already lengthy economic expansion from petering out. If we have learned anything from recent experience, it is that a strong economy, more than tax-rate increases or modest spending cuts, is what it takes to turn budget deficits into surpluses. The booming economy has been pouring billions of extra tax dollars into the Treasury. If we want that revenue flow to continue, we need to be sure that tax policy is conducive to sustained economic growth.

But the fact is, tax relief is not going to pass this year. President Clinton has

already indicated he will veto the modest tax-relief bill approved by the House, and we do not have the votes to reach the two-thirds majority that it would take to override a veto. So discussion of tax relief is really academic this year.

Aside from tax relief, the surplus gives us a chance to pay down the national debt. Less federal borrowing frees up funds for businesses and consumers, and as I indicated earlier in my remarks, that has already led to lower interest rates. Further reductions in the debt would continue that virtuous cycle. Moreover, it seems to me that we have a moral obligation to relieve our children and grandchildren of some of the burden of paying off the debt that our generation has accrued.

Another option is to use the budget surplus for Social Security. We all recognize the huge costs that will be associated with getting back to what most people thought Social Security was supposed to be—a safe and secure account where their contributions could be deposited and where they could grow to produce a nest egg for retirement. Applying the budget surplus toward those transition costs will make it much easier to make the required changes and ensure that Social Security is there for our children and grandchildren.

And of course, the surplus we have in the unified federal budget really exists only as a result of the surplus that Social Security generates anyway. Take Social Security out of the calculation and the federal budget would show not a surplus of $70 billion, but a deficit somewhere in the range of $30 billion.

Mr. President, there is some merit in each of these ideas: tax relief, debt repayment, and Social Security reform. The problem is, before we can even begin the debate about which of these options is best, the budget surplus is being steadily frittered away.

Earlier this year, Congress, at the Clinton administration's behest, dipped into the surplus, spending about $6 billion on a variety of programs. Within the next day or two, action is expected on another Clinton request to draw down the surplus by at least another $14 billion—with not a dime going to Social Security. We are talking about the President's request to spend billions of dollars of the surplus on Bosnia, embassy security, farm aid, and the Year 2000 computer problem.

Of course, funding requirements for Bosnia and these other needs were certainly foreseeable and could have been accounted for when the President sent his budget to Congress eight months ago. After all, troops have been deployed in Bosnia since 1995, and last year, the President extended their deployment there indefinitely. The need to beef up embassy security was brought up months ago, and we have known about the Year 2000 computer problem for some time. None of these things should have come as a surprise to the White House or anyone else.

But by failing to account for them when he submitted his original budget in February, President Clinton was able to inflate spending on other programs and claim that his budget still fell within the constraints of last year's budget agreement. Now, the President wants all of this declared emergency spending so that it does not have to be offset elsewhere in the budget. The reality is that he wants to raid the Social Security surplus to pay for these other things.

Many Americans will ask what happened to the pledge President Clinton made in his State of the Union Address earlier this year. That was when he looked the American people squarely in the eye and said:

> I propose that we reserve 100 percent of the surplus—that is every penny of any surplus—until we have taken all the necessary measures to strengthen the Social Security system for the 21st century.

Eight months have passed, and the President has yet to send us any plan to protect Social Security. Worse yet, while publicly claiming to try to protect the surplus for Social Security, he has already been out drawing it down for other programs. The House-approved tax-relief bill that the President has criticized would use only $6.6 billion of the budget surplus for tax relief next year. That compares to the $20 billion or more of the surplus that the President wants to spend on other programs.

If it is wrong to use part of the surplus for tax relief, is it not wrong to spend at least three times as much on government programs? It seems to me that this is just another example of the President trying to have it both ways.

Mr. President, it is too bad we did not achieve any consensus about what to do with the budget surplus this year, because, by default, as of October 1, any surplus automatically went to reduce the national debt. If we are really serious about protecting Social Security, as to future surpluses, we should wall off the Social Security surplus so that it cannot be spent on other programs—not by the President, not by Congress.

The Senator from Texas, Senator GRAMM, has one idea about how to do that. As I understand it, funds would be invested in genuine assets, not just government IOUs, under the supervision of the Federal Reserve. The money would be off-limits to Congress and the President, and when Congress and the President agree on a plan to save Social Security, it could be put to use for the purpose for which it was collected.

In addition to protecting the Social Security surplus, in my opinion, we should provide broad-based tax relief to the American people with any other surplus. It is, after all, their hard work and their tax payments that have created the surplus we enjoy today. We ought to return any excess revenue to the people who earned it and paid it.●

THE PROCLAMATION OF SEPTEMBER 18, 1998 AS POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY FOR THE STATE OF NEVADA

● Mr. REID. Mr. President, recently, Governor Miller of Nevada, in support of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, proclaimed September 18, 1998 as POW/MIA Recognition Day in the state of Nevada. I am pleased to declare before the Senate my strong support for this proclamation.

The proclamation reads as follows:

> Whereas today there are 2,118 Americans still missing and unaccounted for from Southeast Asia, including 3 from the State of Nevada, and their families, friends, and fellow veterans still endure uncertainty concerning their fate; and
>
> Whereas we as Americans believe that freedom is precious because it has been won and preserved for all at a very great cost; and
>
> Whereas few Americans can more fully appreciate the value of liberty and self-government than those Americans who were interned in enemy prison camps as POWs and those who remain missing in action; and
>
> Whereas the courage, commitment, and devotion to duty demonstrated by those servicemen and women who risked their lives for our sake has moved the hearts of all Nevadans; and
>
> Whereas, their dignity, faith, and valor reminds us of the allegiance we owe to our nation and its defenders as well as the compassion we owe to those families of the MIAs who daily demonstrate heroic courage and fortitude in the face of uncertainty;
>
> Now, therefore, I, Bob Miller, Governor of the State of Nevada, do hereby proclaim September 18, 1998, as POW/MIA Recognition Day.

Mr. President, it is of paramount importance that we continue to demand a full accounting of our servicemen and women in foreign countries, in full respect and acknowledgment of their unremitting courage and dedication in placing their lives on the line as members of the United States Armed Forces.

The importance of this issue cannot be overstated. The sacrifices of these brave men and women must never be forgotten, and we must continue to strive to account for every one of our missing service members. A full accounting of our missing Americans is absolutely essential, not only for our armed services personnel but for their families and our nation. Similarly, we must see that they, like all our other veterans, are forever recognized for the duty they performed so valiantly when our country needed them.

It is with these convictions that I support this proclamation, establishing a Recognition Day for those who so fully deserve our reciprocal dedication.●

HONORING ALEXANDER C. SCHLEHR

● Mr. D'AMATO. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to the young men and women that served bravely in the United States military during WWI, and to one veteran in particular, Alexander C. Schlehr. Mr. Schlehr, of Buffalo, NY, is one of only 1,800 living veterans of this war. He courageously lived through the perils of European trench warfare and served his country honorably.

Due to his strong desire to assist his country in the war effort, Alexander