back to their districts to carry on the campaigns, but we squandered an opportunity here, an opportunity to lead, an opportunity to show that we truly care about families across America.

I yield the floor.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, will the Senator yield to me for 30 seconds?

Mr. ASHCROFT. Without losing the floor, I would be happy to yield to the majority whip.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, on rollcall No. 295, I voted yea. It was my intention to vote nay. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote. This will in no way change the outcome of the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

Mr. NICKLES. I thank my colleague from Missouri.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

THE WORST OF ALL OUTCOMES: CLINTON SPENDS THE SOCIAL SECURITY SURPLUS

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I believe these are times in which anyone, anywhere would wish to live—times of boundless opportunity when distant horizons are brought near. Since the second year of Ronald Reagan's first term, America has seen her GDP climb every year but one. Our unemployment rate stands at a historic low. Poverty has dropped by more than ten percent. And our budget is in surplus for the first time in a generation.

For the first time since 1969, the federal government will run a surplus estimated to be $70 billion. It is a surplus that could allow us to do so much for so many. We could free American families from a debilitating tax burden or help the forgotten middle class keep more of what they earn with tax relief.

Beyond meaningful tax relief, the surplus offers another great potential—ensuring the long-term solvency of the Social Security Trust Fund.

The surplus is an opportunity for us to honor our commitment to the men who scaled the cliffs at Normandy and the mothers who sent their son to defend America's freedom halfway around the world. It is, Mr. President, a once in a lifetime chance for us to make the paper IOUs in the Social Security Trust Fund real—to pay our debts and keep our word. We can use the surplus to do this.

Unfortunately, the President and his apologists on Capitol Hill have a different plan. It is an attack given to platitudes rather than principle, an approach long on meaningless rhetoric and short on meaningful reform. It is a plan that calls for a return to the profligate spending of yesterday at the cost of a brighter tomorrow.

As I suggested last Monday on the Senate floor, since late September the President has submitted a series of requests to fund new ''emergency'' spending initiatives. And, because current law subjects discretionary spending to annual caps through FY 2002, this so-called ''emergency'' spending would increase the discretionary spending caps, decrease the budget surplus, and take money from the Social Security Trust Fund.

And what are the President's ''emergency'' spending requests? What are the eleventh hour developments that have made Social Security's solvency a low priority instead of a high one? The President is proposing that the equivalent of at least 24% of this year's surplus—$14.4 billion to date—be spent on a Bosnia deployment that is now four years old, government computer repairs, increased embassy security and a variety of other initiatives.

Now, I will be the first to concede that many of the President's requests constitute real and important funding issues. But emergencies? Mr. President, the lives of our elderly are too important for half-truths and doublespeak.

Social Security should not be betrayed by emergencies that are conjured up and have been anticipated for quite some time. The definition of an emergency is not something that we have known about for 4 years or 2 years or something that we are really trying to get money to spend in the last fiscal year and not in this one.

In his January 1998 State of the Union address, President Clinton made the following statement: ''What should we do with this projected surplus? I have a simple four word answer: Save Social Security first. . . . I propose that we reserve 100 percent of the surplus—that's every penny of any surplus—for Social Security.''

And just 10 days ago, the President repeated his demand again (October 2, 1998). ''I made it clear and I want to make it clear again. . . . We simply have to set aside every penny of it [the budget surplus], . . . to save Social Security first.''

Unfortunately, Mr. President, you can't have it both ways. We can't hide from the truth. More to the point, you can't save Social Security by wasting the surplus on mislabeled emergencies or more big spending. Even as I speak here, the President and his aides are working to see that our seniors' Social Security checks either are shipped overseas or squandered on more bureaucrats in Washington, DC, with more spending programs proposed for money to be shipped overseas or bigger bureaucracies here in the nation's capital. Tragically it is what Chairman Greenspan warned us about just weeks ago. Referring to whether the surplus should be spent, saved, or returned to the taxpayers, Greenspan said, ''. . . I am also, however, aware of the pressures that will exist to spend it, and that in my judgment would be the worst of all outcomes.''

Greenspan says, ''. . . the pressures . . . to spend it . . . would be the worst of all outcomes.''

Mr. President, if increased spending is labeled as ''emergency'' as an accounting gimmick in order to authorize us to spend the surplus, I will not be a party to it. Labeling the taxpayers' money ''emergency'' doesn't make it any less wasteful. Just because it is called emergency doesn't prevent it from adding government and adding bureaucracy. As was said by another, putting a sign on a pig and calling it a dog doesn't make the pig any less of a pig. And there is going to be plenty of pork in this ''Mother of All Pigs,'' that is coming to the Senate for its approval by way of a proposal for spending.

For example, the Wall Street Journal this morning reported that Labor, Health and Human Services and Education account for the single largest part of the Omnibus bill in terms of add-ons sought by the Administration. The President wants a total of $1.6 billion, including almost $1.2 billion for his ''class size'' initiative and another $182 million for a child care block grant.

Mr. President, all of this $1.6 billion dollars in increased education spending is paid for from the Social Security Trust Fund. The President has not offered one dime in spending cuts to pay for his ''priorities,'' which he has labeled as ''emergencies.''

What is equally as shocking is that the underlying Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bill is estimated to be about $4 billion over its spending allocation even before accounting for the extra money sought by the Administration this weekend.

The President should explain to the voters that his pledge to ''save every penny of any surplus'' was untrue. His promise to ''save Social Security first'' was just a slogan—offered during his State of the Union with a wink and a nod, and broken days later.

Only days after first promising to save the surplus, he submitted a budget to Congress calling for $150 billion in additional spending. And in the entire legislative year since the President made his pledge, he has done nothing to fix the Social Security problem—and far too much to fix the blame. He has wasted this entire year, just as he is proposing to waste our senior's Social Security checks on overseas deployments and projects.

If the President truly meant what he said about Social Security, he would propose real fixes instead of empty promises. If the President truly meant what he said about saving the surplus, he would not be trying to spend the taxpayer's money under the camouflage of bogus ''emergencies.''

This whole notion of false ''emergency'' spending is a dangerous ploy. It

puts the President of the United States in the position of the little boy who cried wolf. If and when we face a true emergency, we will be forced to fund it through this discredited process. And when that time comes, we will regret having engaged in this sleight-of-hand, in this legerdemain, in this charade. Words should have real meaning, Mr. President, and actions should have consequences. Two lessons we would do well to remember.

Mr. President, the normal appropriations process is what every American family does when they plan their spending for the upcoming week, or month, or year. Families measure how much they can afford to spend, and where they have to cut back. In some years, when there is an illness or a recession, they may have emergency savings that they use. Perhaps it is a rare occurrence—one they take only in extraordinary circumstances.

But think what would happen if families used their savings for non-emergencies—for a new car or a new dress. They would quickly find themselves unprepared for true emergencies.

The Federal Government should treat its emergencies the same way families do. Necessary but non-emergency problems should be addressed by achieving savings in lower priority federal spending programs.

The President's commitment to send troops to Bosnia was made 4 years ago. It is time to account for that in the normal appropriations process. The Year 2000 problem is a very real threat. But it is also a problem that we have known about for some period of time—since we do have calendars here in Washington. No, instead of anticipating the need and including it in the regular budget process, the President has chosen to ask for this kind of additional funding in the ''emergency'' category. The President is crying wolf and I only hope the Republican Congress has the good sense say, ''No.''

Mr. President, I don't agree always with what I read in the newspaper, but here's an editorial with which I do agree. ''Republicans rightly point out,'' the Christian Science Monitor recently noted, ''that there's a double standard here: It's OK for Clinton and the Democrats to propose spending $20 billion of the coming surplus for 'emergencies,' but when the GOP suggests returning some of it to taxpayers, that's a 'threat' to Social Security.'' (Christian Science Monitor editorial, September 28, 1998)

The Christian Science Monitor had it right in that editorial. And the double standard is even worse than the Monitor suggests. For when this $20 billion is spent, the money will be gone. Whereas if we had given it back to the taxpayer, at least we would have provided some measure of relief from the highest tax burden in the history of this republic—a helping hand to the forgotten middle class.

And that is the key question here. Who owns the surplus? President Clinton and the Democrat Party see the surplus as own private slush funds—money he can hoard with the shield of false promises, but spends whenever it suits them.

I would argue that the American people own the surplus. And it is time to give it back. As we have learned with all too great a frequency in recent years, if we leave the surplus in Washington, supposedly far-sighted bureaucrats will find a way to spend it.

For there is no end to the good Washington believes it can do with their brains and our money. This town specializes in spending.

I believe it is time for us to make the American people aware of the deceitful and dishonorable efforts to use the budget surplus on mislabeled emergencies and increased spending. I came to Washington 4 years ago to cut taxes and decrease government interference in our lives.

I also made a sacred commitment that I would protect and defend the Social Security Trust Fund. I intend, therefore, to oppose any effort to spend the elderly's Social Security checks on overseas deployments or the bureaucracy in Washington, D.C., and mislabeling those things as ''emergencies'' will not change my commitment or determination.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAMS). The Senator from North Dakota.

THE BUDGET

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to respond to some of the things I have heard over the weekend, and now some of the things I have heard on the floor of the Senate. I heard over the weekend on some of the talk shows that the reason the Congress does not have its work done for the year, the new fiscal year which began October 1, is that it is the President's fault.

We have no budget resolution passed by this Congress. For the first time in 24 years, there has been a failure to pass a budget resolution. That budget resolution was due by April 15. The President plays no role in a budget resolution; that is the responsibility of this Congress. In fact, the President does not even have a chance to sign or veto a budget resolution. It is purely the responsibility of this Senate and the House of Representatives, and these bodies have failed in their responsibility, and they have failed for the first time in 24 years.

It is easy to blame the President for everything in this town, but when it comes to a failure to pass a budget resolution, it is not the President's fault. The fault lies right here, right here in the U.S. Senate and at the other end of this building in the House of Representatives. It was our responsibility to pass a budget resolution. It was our obligation to pass a budget resolution. That is the blueprint that is to be followed in order to coordinate all of the appropriations bills.

Little wonder, now that the new fiscal year has already started. The new fiscal year started October 1, and we don't have our work done. In fact, most of the appropriations bills have not been passed. That is not Bill Clinton's failure. That is not President Clinton's failure. That is the failure of this Congress.

I also heard colleagues assert that the President is proposing spending the surplus. That is not true. The President is not proposing spending the surplus. The new spending on education the President is proposing is to be fully offset. He is not spending the surplus on education. That additional spending will be paid for by reducing other spending. That is the President's proposal, not spending the surplus.

Then we hear assertions that the President is proposing spending the money on emergencies. Anybody who understands the budget rules of Congress understands that we set the budget rules and we say that if the money is for an emergency, it does not count in the normal budget process. Those are our rules. Now I hear my colleagues standing up and blaming the President. It is not his fault that we have said if it is emergency spending it is outside the normal budget process.

What are these emergencies? I heard a lot of talk moments ago that this is for bureaucrats in Washington. Wait a minute. What are the emergencies that have been designated by our own rules as emergencies?

First of all, money for the farm crisis that is occurring across America. If that is not an emergency, I don't know what is. We have had a series of natural disasters all across America, and much of this spending that the President has proposed as emergency spending is to respond to natural emergencies, natural disasters. That is exactly what we should do.

It doesn't stop there, because we also have a crisis in agriculture because of collapsed income. In my State, from 1996 to 1997, farm income dropped 98 percent. If that is not a disaster, I don't know what is. I will just say to my colleagues who say the disasters in agriculture are not emergencies, go ask your farmers and see what they say. I tell you, the farmers in my State say it is an emergency. They understand they have had extraordinary natural disasters, from the incredible drought in Texas and Oklahoma to the extraordinary wet conditions in my part of the country that has led to an outbreak of a disease called scab that has decimated the crops. That, according to our own budget rules, is an emergency, and when you have an emergency, it is outside the normal budget process. The President is not advocating spending the Social Security surplus, he is following the rules that we have laid down.

What are some of the other emergencies the President has asked us to