who have been experienced, four of whom were appointed by the President, four by the Speaker of the House, the majority leader of the Senate, two by the minority leader of the Senate and minority leader of the House, to come to agreement is difficult in the best of times. But when the President, in his State of the Union message, pulled like a genie out of the bottle, I am willing to put $700 billion on the table, and by the way, I will bring the drugs in, throwing a party, the difficulty of coming to agreement in the Medicare Commission was blurred. It sounded as though there was more money available than anyone thought, and that it is relatively simple to move prescription drugs into a Medicare solution.

The folks who are the participants in Medicare, the providers, the taxpayers, and the beneficiaries, all had a sigh of relief that the problem has been solved, when in fact, as we are now discovering, as Samuelson's excellent guest editorial in the Washington Post today spelled it out, that there was a lot more smoke and mirrors in the President's budget than anyone anticipated.

Just a couple of examples of the difficulty. When the President said that he was going to put $700 billion on the table, that is not the case. When the President said we should have a prescription drug benefit in Medicare, everyone nods their head yes, and we are in agreement that that should occur. But what is not explained, and what most people do not realize, I would say to the gentleman from Georgia, is that 65 percent of the seniors on Medicare have some sort of prescription drug program. What we need to do is examine the 35 percent who do not and create a program that brings them into a protective structure to shelter them from the full cost of prescription drugs, without driving out those other 65 percent who do have a drug support program in some way.

It just seems to me that for the President to make the statements that he did in January and February, when we are on the verge of having to make an agreement in March, that advertently or inadvertently he has created a far more difficult problem for us than we had prior to what he considered helping statements. That is exactly the wrong kind of approach to solving a very difficult problem in terms of the kind of help the President could give. If the President showed leadership, if he brought ideas to the table, if he empowered his appointees to sit down and work with the Senator from Louisiana, the chairman of the committee, Senator BREAUX, all of those would be positive.

Our hope is that in the remaining weeks of February, the President will engage, he will lead and assist us in reaching a solution that all of us want: a better Medicare for our seniors.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the other gentleman from California (Mr. OSE).

Mr. OSE. Mr. Speaker, I realize my time is short. I just would like to emphasize, following the comments from my distinguished colleague from California, the importance of this issue for me personally. I can recall on numerous occasions being visited by residents of the Third District talking about their need for adequate medical care. We are going to work on this, this year. The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) is leading us forward, together with the gentleman from Louisiana. I think we are going to make progress.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, what we are trying to do is find the balance to protect and preserve Medicare, not for the next election, but on a bipartisan basis for the next generation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TIAHRT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER TREATMENT ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I would like to highlight an issue that is of great importance to the future of our wonderful country. I want to talk about a rapidly-growing, pervasive disease that is affecting the stability of many families and many homes throughout our land.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about breast and cervical cancer and how it is up to each and every one of us to eradicate this disease, and how each one of us could be faced with the opportunity to help eradicate these diseases by cosponsoring the bill sponsored by the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO), The Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act of 1999.

Breast and cervical cancer do not discriminate. These diseases can affect every mother, daughter, sister, including ours. And although these diseases are not as of yet preventable, they can be stopped in their tracks with treatment if they are detected early in their development.

Congress has gone as far as passing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, and this provides screening for women who do not have health insurance coverage and who do not qualify for either Medicaid nor Medicare. While this was a great advancement, it became evident that it was only an initial step and that a more viable yet long-term solution was needed. What is needed is funding for treatment services once a woman is diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer.

What happens to the woman who is diagnosed with this through the Federal CDC program and is not able, not financially able to afford treatment? Should she be left to die? Should she be forced to spend her days holding bake sales and car washes to get the funds needed to treat her potentially fatal disease? Should she be forced to let time elapse as she scrambles for money from various health care agencies and dwindling State funds?

Unfortunately, this is the scenario that is occurring in the lives of many women who are diagnosed positively through the CDC program. In my congressional district of Miami, for example, Mr. Speaker, a lady named Yolanda qualified for a free mammogram screening, and after suspicious results, was recommended for a surgical biopsy. This recommendation took place a year ago, yet Yolanda has yet to undergo a biopsy for fear of placing an even bigger financial burden on her husband, who holds only a low-paying job.

Another constituent of my congressional district named Maria was recommended to undergo diagnostic procedures after an abnormal screening in 1996. Although she qualified for free diagnostic procedures, she was told that treatment would not be covered. As a result, Maria has yet to undergo these necessary procedures for fear that she would not be able to pay for treatment if, in fact, the treatment is needed.

The bill of the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO), The Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act, will put an end to the cruel and heartbreaking irony of providing screenings, yet no treatment. His bill will provide States an optional Medicaid benefit to provide coverage for treatment to low-income women screened and diagnosed with breast and cervical cancer through the CDC early detection program.

Fortunately, the number of women who need actual treatment for these cancers are not many. In fact, through the CDC program less than 4,000 women have been diagnosed with breast cancer and less than 350 women have been diagnosed with cervical cancer over a period of 9 years. With little cost to the taxpayer, the legislation of the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) would positively impact the lives of thousands of women and their families by providing guaranteed access to treatment.

I salute the National Breast Cancer Coalition and especially my constituent, Jane Torres, who is the President of the Florida Breast Cancer Coalition, for bringing this important issue to the forefront of our agenda. Through their many years of hard work and dedication to advocate sufficient funding for research and education, and for ensuring quality in health care for all without fear of discrimination, many of these women have been helped.

Before my colleagues prepare to go back to their districts, I hope that all of us in the Congress will remember the Yolandas and the Marias in their

districts as well. I hope that they will acknowledge the many cases that resemble theirs and the many women who are counting on us to do the right thing. I hope that all of us will support The Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act, to give women a fighting chance against this disease and to truly reduce the incidence of death from breast and cervical cancer.

DEALING WITH THE DEFICIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, no problem loomed larger in our Nation than the growing, seemingly never-ending Federal debt. Now, we have gotten to the point where that Federal debt is at $5.5 trillion, and in the early 1990s we were adding to it to the tune of almost $300 billion a year and more, and projections showed that going up forever. It looked like it was never going to end and it did not seem like we were ever going to get out of the debt spiral.

I rise today to give a little good news, that we are headed in the right direction finally on the debt issue, but also to emphasize the importance of going the whole way: getting the budget balanced, and perhaps as important, paying down some of that debt.

Since 1992 we have seen reductions in the yearly deficit, to the point where in this past year that deficit is only about $30 billion.

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I know Members have heard we have a surplus, but we really do not, because we are still counting the money we borrow from the social security trust fund as income, and it is really not. We have to pay that money back. So within the unified budget we are $30 billion in debt this year, and have a projected surplus for 2001. So we are headed in the right direction, but we need to maintain that fiscal discipline to get there, to get the budget balanced.

To show just how big a problem the debt is, I have brought a chart with me today that shows where the Federal Government spends its money. It spends it in a variety of different areas. The third largest chunk of money going out of the Federal Government right now goes to interest on the debt. Fourteen percent of our budget, or $243 billion a year, is paid on interest on the debt.

What that means is that this money basically is not helping us do anything. It is not helping us cut taxes, it is not helping us cover social security or national defense or health care for seniors. It is simply going to service the debt we ran up over the course of the last 30 years.

If we can reduce this number we can do dramatically positive things for this country, either by reducing taxes or funding necessary programs. It is very important that in the next 10 years we do this, we start to reduce the debt, because the economy is strong now. We have an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent. We have record low inflation. Now is the time to pay down that debt.

A crisis will come. The economy cannot remain in boom times forever. When it does, we are going to need the resources to deal with that crisis. If we do not step up to the problem now, start paying down the debt during good times, we will be in horribly bad shape when the bad times come.

I rise with particular emphasis on this point as a Democrat because I think Democrats need to be for fiscal responsibility and emphasize that that is a cornerstone of our message, is to get the budget balanced, keep it that way, and pay down the debt. I think that is a very important principle for the Democratic Party to stand up for. I as a Democrat I am going to stand up for that. This will have dramatic effects on individual lives, as well.

Speakers who are going to follow me are going to talk a little bit about the positive effects of reducing interest rates on peoples' lives. If the government is not out there sucking up all of the money, that means that others, small businesses, farmers, individuals, people looking for student loans, home mortgages, will have access to that money and to borrow it at a better rate, because the government is not out there grabbing all of it. If the interest rates go down, that improves individual's lives in a wide variety of areas, some of which my colleagues will touch upon in a minute.

The bottom line point here is with the economy strong, with us headed in the right direction, finally, on fiscal responsibility, we need to stay with that discipline and get there, get the budget balanced, start paying down the debt so we can strengthen our entire economy, create more jobs, and create a better future for ourselves and for our children.

I strongly urge my colleagues today to maintain fiscal discipline and pay down the debt. That needs to be one of our number one priorities for the coming decade.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BOYD addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE NEW DEMOCRATIC COALITION STANDS FOR FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, the new Democratic coalition, several of my colleagues along with myself, have come to the floor to speak in favor of fiscal responsibility. We are faced with a philosophical and fiscal choice this year, and it is a wonderful choice to make. It is a choice on how we deal with a surplus.

I was a member of the Committee on the Budget, and in 1997 we came up with a plan to make sure that we eliminated the Federal deficit by the year 2002. Many scoffed that that plan, although it was adopted by this House, could not possibly achieve the objective by 2002. It is with some pride and some great hope that we are now, not in 2002 but 1999, wondering what to do with the Federal surplus. I believe we should continue the same fiscal policies that got us the surplus.

The choice before us is major across-the-board tax cuts that we cannot afford, or major Federal spending programs of tens of billions of dollars that we cannot afford, or alternatively, modest tax cuts and saving the lion's share of the surplus. It is that latter course, the course of fiscal responsibility, that is better not only for social security and Medicare but also for the business community, for middle-class families, and for the poor.

As a Democrat, many of my years were spent, and I got active in politics relatively early, focused on programs like the Great Society, programs designed to help the poor and the dispossessed, and make sure that we are brought together as one Nation.

But when I got to Congress we all focused on fiscal responsibility, not new government programs, as a way of achieving a great society. We were right to do so, because the greatest possible program for the poor is a national economy that is creating new jobs. What more proof do we need than just 2 days ago the announcement that Hispanic unemployment and African American unemployment reached the lowest levels in the history of those statistics being kept in America?

Lyndon Johnson would be proud, perhaps, that we achieved a goal that was always out of sight for the Great Society, but now is in sight for a fiscally responsible society. The best thing we can do for the poor is not necessarily a new Federal program, but it is keeping this Federal expansion going. Likewise, it is the best thing we can do for the business community and for middle-class families.

Yes, the business community likes and deserves and wants a tax cut. But today's market of, or nearly, a thousand on the Dow was not achieved in the 1980s when we had huge tax cuts, most of them focused on the rich and the business community and the corporate sector.

We have achieved near record levels and record levels on Wall Street not because of the lowest possible taxes, but because of the most responsible Federal government we have seen in modern history. While Europe, each country in Europe, tends to run a deficit of