has a direct impact on today's seniors because they do not have the pool of money coming in to sustain today's Social Security needs.

So when there is a proposal made to cut back the amount of contribution by individuals to give them 2 percent of whatever it might be for their own self-directed investment, the obvious question is, Who will pay it? Who will pick up the difference?

The basic Social Security benefit is pretty modest across America, but it is important. For workers with a history of average earnings who retired in 1999 at age 62—most people retire before they reach the age of 62, incidentally—their monthly benefit is $825. For the lower earner, the benefit is $501 a month. Despite these modest amounts, Social Security is the major source of retirement income—50 percent or more—for 63 percent of the older population.

The whole point of having Social Security is to provide workers with a predictable retirement benefit.

Mr. Bush's plan affects these basic retirement benefits in two ways.

First, the program has a long-term deficit of about 2 percent of payroll. The deficit isn't Governor Bush's creation, by any means. It confronts anybody attempting to reform the system. But Governor Bush's proposal makes the problem worse by pledging not to add any new money to the Social Security system.

Vice President GORE has said, let's take the surplus and pay down the national debt by paying off the internal debt of Social Security and Medicare. We collect $1 billion in taxes a day from businesses, families, and individuals to pay interest on our national debt.

I think the most responsible thing we can do, in a time of surplus, is to take the extra dollars and reduce that debt and reduce the interest we pay and our children will pay for things we did many years ago. I know that is conservative. It isn't as flashy as proposing tax cuts. But I think it is sound. We do not know if these surpluses will be there forever, but as long as they are here, let us pay down the debt of this country. That is the position of President Clinton, Vice President GORE, and the Democratic side of the aisle.

On the other side, from Republican Governor Bush, and many Republican leaders, we are told, no, no, no, take this surplus, as it exists, give tax cuts to certain people, and change the Social Security system, and do not address the fundamental concern about this $6 trillion national debt we continue to finance on a daily basis to the tune of $1 billion a day in Federal tax collections.

I hope during the course of this debate on reforming Social Security, whether the proposal is from the Democrats or the Republicans, that families across America will look long and hard at whether these proposals are in fact honest, whether they use real numbers, whether they really affect the future of America in a positive way and can continue this economic growth we have seen, and whether they are in fact the kinds of things which reflect the values of this country.

When we take a look at some of the proposals coming from the candidates in the Presidential race, particularly on Governor Bush's part, I do not think they meet that test.

I am going to close now because I see my colleague from Arkansas has come to the floor.

Mr. President, I yield the floor to Senator LINCOLN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KYL). The Senator from Arkansas.

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THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT AND THE SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, today I rise to call attention to the needs of our Nation's seniors. Although Social Security, Medicare reform and prescription drugs make daily headlines in newspapers across the country and are the topic of Congressional and Presidential debates, there are two other important programs for seniors which do not receive the media attention they deserve. These two programs are the Older Americans Act and the Social Services Block Grant.

As a member of the Senate Special Committee on Aging and a Senator representing the State with the highest poverty rate among seniors, I want to reinforce to my colleagues in the Senate the importance of these two programs, which are lifelines to low-income, homebound and frail seniors.

First, we need to reauthorize the Older Americans Act. It is our country's main vehicle for providing a wide range of social services and nutrition programs to older men and women. Unfortunately, the Older Americans Act has not been reauthorized since 1995—absolutely inexcusable—making this the sixth year without a reauthorization of such a vital program for our Nation's senior. Because this year marks the 35th anniversary of the Older Americans Act, Congress has a unique and timely opportunity to improve the Older Americans Act.

If we don't act, we will be sending the wrong message to our Nation's seniors. We would be telling them that they are not a priority in this Nation. This is absolutely the wrong message to be sending to those who helped create this incredible prosperity in our Nation. I say to my colleagues, we can do better. We must do better.

The South not only has some of the highest poverty rates among seniors, but the South is the home of the majority of seniors in the country. Here are some statistics that might surprise you: Florida, West Virginia and Arkansas rank among the top five States nationally with the highest percentage of seniors over the age of 55; through 2020, the South will see an 81 percent increase in its population of persons age 65 to 84 years of age; and for people age 85 and over, that increase in the South will be 134 percent—phenomenal in terms of what we will see in the South with elderly individuals dependent on programs that the Older Americans Act provides—and over half of all elderly African Americans live in the South.

Based on these compelling statistics and the pending ''age wave'' that is coming to the South, the time to act is now. We must update the formula used to calculate Older Americans Act funds so Southern states receive their fair share of the funds. Currently, 85 percent of Older Americans Act funds are distributed to States based on 1985 numbers. This is neither fair to southern States nor is it good public policy to be using such outdated information. Without a formula update, States like Arkansas, and other southern States, with greater numbers of seniors will continue to be expected to do too much with absolutely too little.

Each year Title III funding provides seniors around the country with hot, nutritious meals in senior centers and other congregate settings. In addition, millions of meals are delivered each year to homebound men and women who rely on this program not only for nutrition, but for companionship and human contact which volunteers provide when they visit the person each day. I have made those rounds with constituents, delivering meals on wheels to our seniors in rural areas. It means so much to have someone bring a nutritous meal and to visit.

For many seniors, the only human contact they have each day is with the person who delivers their meals. During extreme weather conditions, home-delivered meal volunteers are able to check on seniors and make sure they are not ill or suffering from extreme heat or cold.

In Arkansas, we deliver 2 million home meals a year to the elderly and provide another 2 million congregate meals. However, many seniors are still unable to receive meals. About 1,300 frail, homebound elderly men and women are on waiting lists for home-delivered meals. This number only represents a fraction of low-income seniors who need meals but can't get them, because those living in rural areas that are not served by programs like Meals on Wheels are not counted for waiting lists.

Here is a story which was sent to me by an Area Agency on Aging caseworker from Fulton County, AR. She writes about a couple by the name of John and Reba.

John and Reba live in a mobile home near Salem, Arkansas. They started receiving home delivered meals in October 1999. Both of them are physically handicapped and are barely able to get around. John is on oxygen and has severe heart problems. Reba has heart problems and arthritis.

At the time they began receiving meals they were physically and financially burdened and didn't know how they would buy

food for the next meal. Reba said getting the meals had relieved them from a great burden. She said they can hardly wait each day to get their meals. They really look forward to seeing the volunteer and the van coming to their trailer.

Here is another story about an Arkansas senior. Mr. Black is 71 years old and lives alone in an old farmhouse in an isolated, rural area in Van Buren County. In the winter you can feel the wind blow through the house and in the summer the heat is unbearable. Mr. Black does not have any immediate family to check on him. He only has a microwave to cook in. He lives on a fixed income and has no transportation to get into town to purchase groceries on a regular basis.

Mr. Black said this about the home delivered meals he receives, ''They help me out a lot. The meals are better than the food I can buy. I can't buy much on a fixed income.'' Mr. Black has told his case manager on more than one occasion that he does not know what he would do without the meals. It is a real hardship on him if he misses his home delivered meals. One week he missed all of his home delivered meals because of doctors appointments and it was very difficult for him to buy food and prepare meals that week. He just went without.

The Title V senior employment program is one of the best kept secrets in the country. Through this funding mechanism, older Americans who want to work can go to a senior employment agency in their community and learn of available job opportunities.

No matter what type of training seniors need to fill these jobs, training is made available to them. For example, if seniors need training to work in a modern office environment, they learn how to surf the internet, use computers and send faxes. Nationally, over 61,000 seniors a year are employed through senior programs.

Some of Arkansas's finest employment programs for seniors are operated by Green Thumb and other outstanding Area Agencies on Aging. I have met many older workers and listened to them talk with enthusiasm about their jobs. I only hope that when I'm 75, 80, or 85 I will have half of their energy and zest for life!

The senior employment program is a win-win proposition for both sides. Low-income seniors who need additional income to supplement their Social Security checks have an opportunity to find a job placement and any necessary training through a Title V contractor. This not only generates additional income for seniors but a sense of purpose and a chance to stay engaged in their community and make a contribution—something we all want to feel, and that is needed.

The community and employers benefit by hiring honest, loyal and dependable persons who are committed to showing up for work every day and doing a good job. Especially in booming economic times when the job market is tight, seniors can fill jobs that employers otherwise might not be able to fill. The senior employment program makes good economic sense. It also provides for the workers: the quality and guidance of seniors who exemplify a tremendous work ethic and bring a lot to the workplace.

Here is a remarkable story of a woman from Texarkana, AR, whose life was transformed by the Green Thumb program. Olla Mae Germany came to the Green Thumb program at the age of 65. She had been a victim of domestic violence. She had never worked, could barely read and had walked to the interview. She told the coordinator that she was ''dumb, stupid, ugly, ignorant, and no one cared about her.'' During that meeting she also shared her hopes for the future—she wanted to learn to read, achieve a GED, gain clerical and computer skills, and get a job.

Ms. Germany was assigned to the Literacy Council in Texarkana. Her job entailed clerical duties and literacy training. After receiving her first pay check, Ms. Germany told her boss that she bought a new outfit for work and had her hair styled professionally for the first time in her life. She was especially pleased that the people in her office noticed her appearance and told her she looked pretty. With increased self-esteem she became more confident in her abilities. Only 24 weeks after her Green Thumb enrollment, Ms. Germany learned to read and significantly improved her office skills. She began making public speeches on behalf of the local literacy council.

Today, Ms. Germany continues to work toward self-sufficiency. She has a new job with a Texarkana agency that promotes neighborhood revitalization and economic development. She is learning new technology skills. She is also studying for her GED. Recently, Ms. Germany was able to buy her very first car, thanks to the money she has earned from her jobs. With new marketable skills, a confident self-image and dependable transportation, Ms. Germany is well on her way toward achieving her goals for a brighter future and making a contribution to her community.

I know Democrats and Republicans on the Special Committee on Aging disagree over the allocation of Title V monies. I think groups like Green Thumb have proven their ability to train and place older workers successfully in the community and I urge my colleagues to allow the national Title V grantees to continue receiving a majority of Title V funds.

The reauthorization of the Older Americans Act will also include a new authorization for the National Family Caregivers Act. I am an original cosponsor of this bill in the Senate because I believe that our country needs to find a better way to support family members who serve as caregivers. No one wants to leave their home just because they are aging and/or disabled. The inclusion of a National Family Caregivers Act is foreward thinking and family friendly. Baby boomers need support to care for their family members and it is high time that we provide Federal leadership in this area of home care.

Finally, the other program I will focus on is the Social Services Block Grant, better known by its acronym SSBG. States use SSBG funds to support programs for both at-risk children and seniors. In Arkansas, a significant portion of SSBG funds are used to support and operate senior centers, to provide Meals on Wheels for frail, homebound elderly, and to provide transportation for seniors, especially those living in rural areas.

Over the past five years, Congress has cut SSBG funds by $1 billion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 5 additional minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are operating under a consent agreement with the Republican side.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Perhaps the chairman of the Aging Committee will allow me 5 additional minutes.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent that we extend for our side as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Republican side will have 5 additional minutes, and the Democratic side will have 5 additional minutes.

Mrs. LINCOLN. This year alone, the Senate Labor-HHS Subcommittee on Appropriations cut SSBG by $1.1 billion. This translates into a cut of nearly two-thirds. Arkansas will lose over $11 million in FY 2001. This draconian cut comes on the heels of a $134 million cut in FY 2000 in which Arkansas lost $1.3 million.

What does this dramatic funding loss mean to senior services in my home state? Because Arkansas spends a majority of its SSBG funds on senior services, 40 senior centers around the state may have to shut down or dramatically reduce operating hours. In addition to providing social activities and hot, nutritious meals to seniors, senior centers also provide seniors with rides to the doctor's office, the pharmacy and grocery stores. As one Area Agency on Aging administrator in Malvern, Arkansas wrote to me, ''for many of our seniors, the senior center is their lifeline. It provides them with a reason to get up in the morning.''

I would like to read to you what a social services case manager sent me about an aging client in northwest Arkansas.

When Delbert was in his early 50's he suffered a stroke that left him with paralysis on the left side and confined to a wheelchair. He has no children and his only family support comes from a sister and brother-in-law in Atlanta, Georgia. They help him with money management. Case managers and case workers with the Area Agency on Aging helped him find a personal care assistant on a temporary basis through the state's Supplemental Personal Care Program.

In the meantime, Delbert applied for and awaited approval from the Alternatives Program for Adults with Physical Disabilities, a state Medicaid program. Once approval came, he received funding and assistance in having his bathroom retrofitted to be handicapped accessible.

He was also provided with personal care and housekeeping assistance. Delbert also began to receive home delivered meals. Last October, Delbert celebrated his 65th birthday. Because he was confined to a wheelchair and very isolated and lonely, his doctor prescribed socialization and exercise to combat his depression. Now, every Tuesday and Thursday Delbert rides in a handicap accessible van to the Benton County Senior Services Center where he participates in an exercise program.

He now enjoys his newfound friends and enjoys games and other activities at the senior center. Thanks to these aging and disability support services, Delbert lives with dignity and independence. Without this assistance he would, no doubt, have spent the past few years in a long-term care facility at enormous cost to the public.

If SSBG gets cut severely this year, millions of Meals on Wheels to homebound seniors may not be delivered next year to people who rely on them. States are already scaling back congregate and home delivered meal programs because of last year's Federal funding cuts. Although Congress increased Older Americans Act funds for home delivered meals by 31% last year, it simultaneously cut the Social Services Block Grant and the USDA Nutrition Program for the Elderly, which resulted in a net loss of $300,000 in Federal funds to Arkansas. Unless we act, this year's cuts will be even greater.

To put the cost of home delivered meals in perspective, the cost of providing home delivered meals to a senior for one year costs about as much as one day's stay in the hospital for one person. I don't know about you, but I think that is pretty affordable.

The irony of the situation is that these draconian cuts to SSBG come at a time when our budget is experiencing unprecedented surpluses. That is why I respectfully disagree with some of my colleagues who support these crippling SSBG funding cuts. They argue that Governors can offset these cuts with tobacco settlement money or TANF funds, but I think this is unrealistic. Governors are spending most of their tobacco settlement funds on health related initiatives and smoking prevention programs.

I supported an amendment during last year's Labor/HHS/Education appropriations process to restore funding to the SSBG, although it did not pass. Recently I cosponsored legislation by Senators GRAHAM and JEFFORDS to restore SSBG funding. When I was in the House of Representatives and voted for welfare reform, an agreement was made between Congress and the states to decrease SSBG from $2.8 billion to $2.4 billion until welfare reform was firmly established. In FY 03, Congress was to restore funding to the $2.8 billion level. Clearly, Congress has not operated in good faith in honoring this agreement.

I believe that the Older Americans Act and the Social Services Block Grant are vital safety nets for our nation's seniors. I hope the Senate will do the right thing by passing a pro-senior Older Americans Act and restore funds to the Social Services Block Grant.

I don't know about my colleagues, but I do know there is not a day that goes by that I don't think of the contribution of an elderly person in my life.

I would like to close by reading a quote by Senator Hubert Humphrey that you may be familiar with:

> It was once said that the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life—the sick, the needy and the disabled.

I think we have a wonderful opportunity to help the young, the old, the sick, the needy and the disabled by restoring the cuts to the Social Services Block Grant and reauthorizing the Older Americans Act.

Let's get to work!

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

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THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to speak as a member of the Judiciary Committee, but I will back up the Senator from Arkansas on one very key point that I hope can happen in this Congress. I urge, as she has done, that a bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act come to the floor of the Senate because it has been so long since that law has been reauthorized on a permanent basis. I understand it has been reauthorized on a year-to-year basis, but not on a permanent basis as it ought to be, or at least for a multiyear basis. So I urge that action to be taken at this particular time.

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INTERNET MEDICAL PRIVACY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak on the subject of technology. The message on technology is very simple. Technology is moving fast, but somehow Congress does not pass laws that keep up with the technology. I wish to state the proposition that, from the standpoint of the right to privacy, our laws cannot be left behind. Every day, more and more Americans are waking up to what technology can do to improve their lives. Thanks to the hard work of the American people in the technology sector, we live in an amazing time. Congress didn't bring about this revolution, and Congress should not do anything to impede the rapid changes taking place in technology.

However, one of the main threats to the growth of electronic commerce is the risk of a massive erosion of privacy. While the Internet offers tremendous benefits, it also comes with the potential for harm. If we lack confidence that our privacy will be protected online, we won't take full advantage of what the Internet has to offer. The Judiciary Committee is now considering a bill to protect the privacy of Internet users. I want to focus on one particular issue, and that is maintaining privacy of personal health information obtained by web sites.

I happen to believe, as a matter of basic principle, that information about my health is very personal, and nobody else should know that without my permission. So I am pleased to join my colleague from New Jersey, Senator TORRICELLI, in cosponsoring an amendment on this issue before the Judiciary Committee. I think it will be up this week, on Thursday.

The amendment Senator TORRICELLI and I plan to sponsor will give citizens a chance to control any health information that they might provide while surfing the web. None of that will be passed on to others without their explicit permission. Our amendment simply provides that a commercial web site operator must obtain permission from a person before sending health information to another entity. In addition, it would require that individuals be told to whom their medical information will be released if permission is given.

I know to people watching this sounds like a pretty simple, commonsense thing, that there would be no dispute and it ought to be part of the laws of our country under our Constitution that personal information not be sold or used by anybody else without the personal permission of the person who that medical information is about. It sounds pretty simple that it ought to be part of our law. It appears to be such common sense that maybe we should not even have to deal with that; it is just common sense that nobody else should profit from your personal information without telling you about it and without your permission.

It is only fair—it seems to myself and to Senator TORRICELLI—to put that burden on the web site operator and not on the consumer. Medical information can be highly personal, and consumers face serious risk if it becomes a public commodity that can be bought and sold without the individual's consent. If that is allowed, then we are all at risk.

As far as your own personal information being a public commodity that can be sold—outside the fact that it shouldn't be done without your permission, not only to protect your privacy but you ought to know about the information being disseminated and to whom it is going, it is also the fact that personal health information, if it is a commodity, is under your personal, private property rights, and they ought to be protected just as personal property rights are protected under our Constitution.