United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 106th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 146 WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2000 No. 136

Senate

(Legislative day of Friday, September 22, 2000)

GOP ATTACK ON VICE PRESIDENT GORE

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, last month, and again last week, the Republican staff of the Senate Budget Committee released two reports criticizing what they wrongly described as the economic plan proposed by Vice President GORE and our distinguished colleague, Senator LIEBERMAN. I wanted to come to the floor to discuss these reports, which I believe were inappropriate, and a misuse of taxpayer dollars. They also were grossly inaccurate and unfair.

Let me read from a section of the Senate Ethics Manual.

CAMPAIGN USE OF OFFICIAL RESOURCES

Official resources may only be used for official purposes. It is thus inappropriate to use any official resources to conduct campaign or political activities.

Mr. President, as we all know, and the Senate Ethics Manual makes clear, it is inappropriate to use any official resources to conduct campaign or political activities. Of course, it can be difficult to draw a clear line between official Senate business and campaign activities. And reasonable people can disagree about many of the documents that are produced routinely here in the Congress. But, having said that, the reports issued by the Budget Committee staff, in my view, go well over the line. These reports are focused entirely on AL GORE's campaign proposals, or at least the staff's erroneous interpretation of those proposals. And their obvious purpose is not to provide an objective analysis, but to attack the Vice President. These staff reports aren't just biased, they're pure propaganda. And I would note that the latest report was issued just hours before the last Presidential debate. Not surprisingly, they issued no comparable critique of Governor Bush's budget plan.

Now, Mr. President, I recognize that the Budget Committee is not like the Joint Committee on Taxation, which is supposed to operate in a nonpartisan manner. The Republican staff of the Budget Committee makes no pretense to being nonpartisan, and serves only on behalf of Republican Senators. So one would expect them to issue reports that further a partisan agenda. But, Mr. President, that does not justify the issuance of reports that are so obviously intended for campaign purposes, and that are so blatantly misleading and factually inaccurate.

Mr. President, I could take a long time reviewing the many flaws of the Republican staff reports, but let me

NOTICE—OCTOBER 23, 2000

A final issue of the Congressional Record for the 106th Congress, 2d Session, will be published on November 29, 2000, in order to permit Members to revise and extend their remarks.

All material for insertion must be signed by the Member and delivered to the respective offices of the Official Reporters of Debates (Room HT–60 or S–123 of the Capitol), Monday through Friday, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. through November 28. The final issue will be dated November 29, 2000, and will be delivered on Friday, December 1, 2000.

None of the material printed in the final issue of the Congressional Record may contain subject matter, or relate to any event that occurred after the sine die date.

Senators' statements should also be submitted electronically, either on a disk to accompany the signed statement, or by e-mail to the Official Reporters of Debates at ''Records@Reporters''.

Members of the House of Representatives' statements may also be submitted electronically by e-mail, to accompany the signed statement, and formatted according to the instructions for the Extensions of Remarks template at http://clerkhouse.house.gov. The Official Reporters will transmit to GPO the template formatted electronic file only after receipt of, and authentication with, the hard copy, signed manuscript. Deliver statements to the Official Reporters in Room HT–60.

Members of Congress desiring to purchase reprints of material submitted for inclusion in the Congressional Record may do so by contacting the Congressional Printing Management Division, at the Government Printing Office, on 512–0224, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. daily.

By order of the Joint Committee on Printing.

WILLIAM M. THOMAS, *Chairman.*

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Printed on recycled paper.

mention just a few. Perhaps most importantly, the reports dramatically and inappropriately exaggerate the costs of the Gore plan. First, they suggest that the Vice President's $360 billion Medicare ''lock box'' represents new spending that somehow would use Social Security funds and increase the budget deficit. This claim is preposterous. In fact, the Medicare lock box reserves funds for debt reduction, not new spending. It wouldn't spend a penny of Social Security surpluses, or any surpluses, for that matter. Yet by, in effect, counting as spending the $360 billion Medicare lock box, and an additional $99 billion of General Fund transfers to Medicare, the Republican staff has artifically created a $450 billion raid on Social Security that simply does not exist. And, Mr. President, that's just the beginning.

The GOP staff also charges the Vice President with the costs of budget proposals put forward by President Clinton, even though the Gore plan clearly does not endorse the entire Clinton budget. This results in doublecounting many similar proposals put forward by both Clinton and Gore, such as their different retirement savings plans. And, of course, it exaggerates the real cost of the Gore/Lieberman plan. Another way that the GOP staff inflates the costs of the Gore plan is to adopt its own scoring rules. The GOP staff went well beyond the scoring of the Congressional Budget Office or the Office of Management and Budget. It created its own special methods of evaluating the costs of the Vice President's proposals. And it shouldn't come as any surprise that they lead to much higher cost estimates.

Take, for example, the Vice President's Retirement Savings Plus proposal, which the Gore campaign says would cost $200 billion. The Republican staff cites a figure of $750 billion. This number is simply made up, and is not backed up by any official CBO or OMB estimate. Similarly, the GOP staff exaggerates the cost of Vice President GORE's preschool proposal. Their report characterizes the Gore plan as if it were an open-ended entitlement, with no state match. That leads to much higher costs. In fact, though, the Gore proposal is for block grants that require a state match.

Another trick that the GOP staff used to create a misleading impression about the Vice President's proposal was to deviate from standard practice and use a so-called ''freeze baseline.'' In other words, the GOP staff counted as a cost of his plan $1.2 trillion in discretionary spending, and related interests costs, that simply reflect the costs of maintaining current policy. These costs normally are considered part of the budget baseline, not new spending. The well-respected, nonpartisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities made this point in a sharp critique of the GOP staff report. The Center concluded that the Budget Committee's analysis, and I quote, ''is marred by several serious flaws''—unquote—which the Center said inflate the cost estimate assigned to the Gore plan.

Mr. President, the Republican staff was so intent on slandering the Vice President as a big spender that they went to extremes in characterizing some of his proposals. The GOP staff calls anything new spending—even tax cuts. Look at what they include in their long list of new ''spending and regulatory programs'':

Marriage penalty relief.

A long-term care tax credit.

A disabled workers tax credit.

Mr. President, is marriage penalty relief ''new spending''? Even George Orwell wouldn't go that far. In fact, the GOP staff's blacklist goes beyond tax cuts. It even includes gun control. Closing the gun show loophole. Banning junk guns. Requiring mandatory gun safety locks.

Mr. President, would closing the gun show loophole amount to a return of Big Government? Would requiring gun manufacturers to include trigger locks amount to a whole new spending program? I don't think so.

Mr. President, I could go on and on about the Republican report, but I won't. And, frankly, the misstatements and distortions in their report are only part of the problem. This report should not have been produced in the first place. It's obviously intended to be used in the presidential campaign to harm the Vice President. And it's just not the type of report that should be produced with taxpayer dollars. Campaign materials should be produced by campaigns, Mr. President, not congressional staff. And, at a minimum, if reports on issues related to the campaign are issued, especially this close to an election, they ought to at least be fair and accurate. I don't think that's too much to ask, Mr. President.

Let me recite some facts on GORE and the size of Government.

Under the Clinton-Gore administration Government is smaller: Between 1981 and 1992, the size of the Federal civilian workforce increased. Since 1993, however, the Federal workforce has been reduced by 377,000—a 17 percent decline.

The Federal workforce is now the smallest since the Kennedy administration in 1960.

Under the Clinton-Gore administration Federal spending is lower: Spending as a share of GDP increased between 1981 and 1992—rising from 21.7% to 22.5%. Since 1992, however, federal government spending as a share of the economy has been cut from 22.2 percent to 18.7 percent in 1999—its lowest level since 1966.

Although Bush promises to reduce government, under him, Texas government spending increased at twice the rate of the federal government. While the Federal workforce has been reduced by 17 percent, under George Bush, Texas has added 6,200 bureaucrats—a 2-percent increase.

With that, I will yield the floor.

THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT AMENDMENTS OF 2000—Continued

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I rise today to voice my strong support for the passage of H.R.782, The Older Americans Amendments Act of 1999. Even with the support of seniors' advocacy groups, it has taken the Congress a full five years to reach bipartisan agreement on this legislation. We should not miss this opportunity to keep our commitment to our most vulnerable senior citizens. I want to applaud the persistence, commitment, and leadership of Chairman JEFFORDS and Senators DEWINE, MIKULSKI and KENNEDY, their staffs, and other colleagues on the HELP committee who have been unwilling to give up during this long process.

With the enactment of the Older Americans Act in 1965, Congress created a new Federal program specifically designed to meet the social services needs of older people. In 1972, Congress added the best known program ''Meals on Wheels'' which brought nutritionally balanced meals to seniors' homes or to seniors in congregate settings. In Minnesota alone, 185,000 seniors benefit from this seniors' meal program. Whenever I talk with seniors or their family members in Minnesota, I hear about this valuable service that provides seniors with necessary nutrition and, in the congregate settings, necessary socialization.

On the 35th anniversary of the Older Americans Act, it is fitting that in a bipartisan bicameral manner we vote to continue the Act's broad policy objectives of providing programs related to health, housing, long-term care, employment, retirement, and community services for low and moderate income seniors. I hope the Senate will overwhelmingly pass this legislation, as did the House yesterday, and signal America's continuing commitment to our senior citizens.

In addition to Meals on Wheels, this legislation continues the popular senior jobs program which provides financial help for needy seniors, provides them with a sense of meaning and usefulness, and also expands their opportunities for needed socialization. During the 1999–2000 program year, Green Thumb (one of the grantees) in Minnesota has exceeded the major goals set by Congress and the Department of Labor, DOL, for job placement, while serving 1,188 mature job seekers. In addition, Minnesota seniors provided nearly 640,000 hours of community services to almost 500 public and nonprofit ''host agencies'', including schools, hospitals, rest homes, libraries, parks, senior dining sites and senior centers, museums, and many more.

During this past winter, Green Thumb in Minnesota engaged in a special partnership with the Census Bureau to assist in recruiting older census workers. As a result of Green Thumb's advertising, over 2,700 mature workers were referred to the Census Bureau. With support of the Older