

week, my colleagues and I on the Judiciary Committee's Crime Subcommittee completed 2 days of hearings on this bill.

These hearings, which featured law enforcement officials from across the country, revealed how desperately this legislation is needed. There is an overwhelming sense in this country that violent crime has robbed the citizens of a sense of safety and security that they have a right to enjoy. That is what my crime bill will help accomplish.

Not too long ago, a popular preventive crime ad campaign encouraged citizens to take "A Bite Out of Crime." After decades of one Democratic-controlled Congress after another jawboning the problem of crime with lots of taxpayer money but little to show in the way of results, we are finally on the way to passing a crime bill with real teeth.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

(Miss COLLINS of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Miss COLLINS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the balanced budget amendment House Journal Resolution 1. I support fiscal responsibility. However, I do not think an issue such as balancing the Federal budget should be handled too hastily. The current proposal for a balanced budget amendment as outlined in the Republican Contract With America is a knee-jerk approach to a complicated and multifaceted problem.

For instance, if Social Security is not specifically exempted, this measure would allow for drastic cuts in Social Security. We must not forget our responsibility to provide for our Nation. To make Social Security subject to this measure will result in devastating results that will be felt in the years to come.

During this year alone, Social Security will take in \$31 billion more than it pays out in benefits. Social Security is not the cause of our national debt. To cut Social Security because it is a significant portion of the national budget is an easy way out for those who simply want to achieve their political goals by any means necessary. We should not put ideology before people.

THE TRAGIC EARTHQUAKE IN JAPAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COMBEST). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. PELOSI] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, my district in San Francisco, indeed the entire State of California, is blessed with a very large Japanese-American population. On behalf of my constituents, the Japanese-Americans, and indeed all of them, I rise today to extend my sympathies to the people of Japan now

that we are in day 7 of the tragedy that struck Kobe last week.

As you know, last Tuesday Japan was struck by the deadliest quake in more than 70 years. Today's AP wire has an update on some of the tragic statistics. The death toll is topping 5,000, with more than 100 people still listed as missing. More than 26,000 people were injured, 300,000 people were left homeless, and 56,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed. There are 1,000 relief centers trying to house the 300,000 people left homeless. Indeed 2 million survivors of the earthquake in that area have been impacted very negatively as well.

Mr. Speaker, today, Monday in Japan almost yesterday now, there have been strong aftershocks in buildings in Japan. They had three aftershocks at about 4.0, and I have been told aftershocks of up to 6 points on the Richter scale are possible.

In addition to that, there is the physical toll, in addition the personal toll. Japan has different construction standards for highways and for buildings. The huge pillars supporting raised roads consisted of concrete cores surrounded by vertical steel rods that are then wrapped with vertical steel hoops and surrounded by another coat of concrete.

Mr. Speaker, just as a sign of how fierce this earthquake was in Kobe, many of the structures ruptured and the reinforcing rods snapped like matchsticks.

The economic toll is great. Kobe is a major manufacturing center, the country's busiest container shipping port and an important transportation hub for moving component parts to factories throughout Japan and abroad. That is having a tremendous impact on the economy there.

Estimates of the economic impact vary widely. The Transport Ministry estimated it would cost \$4.12 billion to repair damaged railway lines and stations alone. The head of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce estimated the overall cost of the quake would amount to more than \$100 billion.

Of course, these are staggering statistics, but the worst of all is, of course, the personal toll. Today's AP wire carries a story about a father who lost his daughter in the earthquake. He says, "My daughter's voice, 'Dad, dad, please help me,' sticks in my ear." He lost his teenage daughter when their house collapsed. "It just doesn't go away," he said. "I just couldn't save her."

Mr. Speaker, that is just one of many, many similar stories. Another, of a young man whose house collapsed, his mother was in the house. The neighbors and others decided to help where they heard voices, and they were able to save the lives of some. But since they heard no sounds coming from his house, that did not become a priority, and his mother—he said, "I wanted to save my mother, but was not able to."

The list of these stories goes on and on.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is with great sorrow—of course, in our area, Mr. Speaker, we had the experience 5 years ago of the Loma Prieta earthquake in San Francisco, and just eerily, just 1 year before this earthquake, the Northridge earthquake shook Los Angeles. So we all have our own memories of personal devastation and personal loss from earthquakes. That is why we have so much sympathy for those in Japan.

It is with great sorrow I convey on behalf my constituents, both Japanese-Americans and others as well, to the Japanese ambassador the condolences of the people of San Francisco and wish for him to convey our condolences to the people of Japan, especially those affected by the earthquake, but to all the people of that area. They must be assured that they are in our prayers.

A BIPARTISAN BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. PAYNE] for 60 minutes.

Mr. PAYNE of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, on Friday of last week there was a press conference held. That press conference was to talk about an important event, important because for the first time in the history of our country we know there are enough people in the House of Representatives who are committed to vote for a balanced budget amendment to ensure that a balanced budget amendment can be passed.

This press conference was among the Democratic Caucus, and some 66 members of our Caucus signed a letter to our Speaker. The Speaker was notified that 66 Democrats were prepared to vote for a balanced budget amendment this week, and the 66 Democrats, along with the Republican Caucus, would give you enough votes for the required two-thirds' majority or the 290 votes to pass this balanced budget amendment.

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I think this is good news in that we have a bipartisan agreement now so that Democrats and Republicans alike can do what is best for America. This comes at a time when our debt is now \$4.7 trillion, when our interest payments will equal \$300 billion as a nation; \$300 billion we paid last year alone as interest on our national debt. This is money that, had we not had debt and we balanced our budget for many years before this, we would have had that same \$300 billion to use to cut taxes. We could have used that money for other purposes such as fighting crime, such as improving education. But instead we do not have that, and in fact we are spending more money each year than we take in, and last year we spent \$300 billion in interest payments.

Now this balanced budget amendment, as my colleagues will hear from