

Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. I announce that the Senator from Wyoming [Mr. SIMPSON] is absent due to a death in the family.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Wyoming [Mr. SIMPSON] would vote "yea."

Mr. FORD. I announce that the Senator from Louisiana [Mr. JOHNSTON] and the Senator from Minnesota [Mr. WELLSTONE] are necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Minnesota [Mr. WELLSTONE] would vote "yea."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 87, nays 10, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 63 Leg.]

YEAS—87

Abraham	Feinstein	Lott
Akaka	Ford	Lugar
Ashcroft	Frist	Mack
Baucus	Glenn	McCain
Bennett	Gorton	McConnell
Bond	Graham	Mikulski
Boxer	Gramm	Moseley-Braun
Breaux	Grams	Moynihan
Brown	Grassley	Murkowski
Bryan	Gregg	Murray
Bumpers	Harkin	Nickles
Burns	Hatch	Pell
Campbell	Heflin	Pressler
Chafee	Helms	Pryor
Coats	Hutchison	Reid
Cochran	Inhofe	Robb
Cohen	Inouye	Rockefeller
Conrad	Jeffords	Roth
Coverdell	Kassebaum	Santorum
Craig	Kempthorne	Shelby
D'Amato	Kennedy	Simon
Daschle	Kerrey	Smith
DeWine	Kerry	Snowe
Dodd	Kohl	Specter
Dole	Kyl	Stevens
Domenici	Lautenberg	Thomas
Dorgan	Leahy	Thompson
Faircloth	Levin	Thurmond
Feingold	Lieberman	Warner

NAYS—10

Biden	Exon	Packwood
Bingaman	Hatfield	Sarbanes
Bradley	Hollings	
Byrd	Nunn	

NOT VOTING—3

Johnston	Simpson	Wellstone
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So the amendment (No. 238) was agreed to.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to vitiate the yeas and nays on the amendment numbered 237.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment, as amended.

So the amendment (No. 237), as amended, was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to refer, as amended.

So the motion, as amended, was agreed to.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRIST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

HELIUM PROGRAM

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, Tuesday's business section of the Washington Post had an interesting article in it on the termination of the helium program, which is a target as elusive and difficult to rein in as the helium gas itself. The subheading of the article was entitled, "Helium Bureaucracy Targeted by Clinton Has Survived Many Budget Cutters."

The story in the Post went on to recount how termination of the helium program has been on the target list for elimination by those seeking to find ways to reduce the Federal bureaucracy.

The story talks about how this helium program has been on the list for ways to reduce the Federal bureaucracy and the Federal deficit, but that it has survived many attempts under the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations, precisely because of the usual constituencies and political horse trading that tends to keep these programs alive.

Mr. President, I suggest that this helium program is exactly what this balanced budget amendment debate is all about, or maybe the better way to say it is, is what this balanced budget amendment debate should be about. It should be about how we are actually going to balance the budget.

On January 4, the first day of this Congress, I introduced legislation, S. 45, which would terminate the Federal helium program and sell off the crude helium that the Federal Government has stockpiled to pay off the \$1.4 billion in program debt that has accumulated. We have good bipartisan support on the legislation. Senators HARKIN, LAUTENBERG, LEAHY, REID, KYL, BUMPERS, and CAMPBELL have all cosponsored this effort, once again, to try to get rid of the helium program.

It did not happen to be part of the plan I proposed to reduce the deficit during my campaign. But I had not thought about that one. It is important to add new ideas because, obviously, some of the things I wanted to cut, you cannot cut. There are not the votes for it.

So the helium program was a great one to add on because we found out it really does not make sense anymore. I, along with the cosponsors, want to see the 104th Congress be the Congress that finally gets rid of this program.

For this reason, I was delighted when the President highlighted, as the first program he mentioned for a cut in his State of the Union Address on January 24, the helium program. He said it is one of the businesses that the Federal Government ought to get out of running. I was also pleased, of course, to see that the President added this proposal into his budget, and that the President submitted that to Congress on Monday of this week.

In my mind, this is exactly the step-by-step approach that real deficit reduction is all about: Proposing a bill, hoping the President will push for it in his budget, getting it down here, and hoping we will get to work on it right away instead of waiting for the balanced budget amendment to be approved or not and waiting for the States to ratify it or not.

I hope, before this Congress adjourns, we will have completed this task and turned this program over to the private sector. If there is any reality at all to all this talk behind a balanced budget amendment, then surely the helium program should be on its way out.

There is simply no good reason for the Federal Government to continue to stockpile helium or run a public program when a perfectly viable private industry has developed that supply that we need for all of the Nation's helium requirements.

Mr. President, this program, like many of the deficit reduction targets that I have been involved with trying to get rid of—like Radio Free Europe or the wool and mohair program—was begun decades ago, when there was a different need and purpose. These programs, however, seem to survive long after the original purpose, because the constituencies build up that are dedicated to one cause, and that is simply preserving and continuing their existence whether we need the program or not. This is certainly true of the helium program.

This program dates back to the Wilson administration, when observation balloons were thought to have strategic merit. The Helium Act of 1925 authorized the Bureau of Mines to build and operate a helium extraction and purification plant in Amarillo, TX, in 1929.

According to the GAO, a nominal private helium industry existed in the United States before 1937. Between 1937 and 1960, the Bureau of Mines was the only domestic helium producer, selling most of what it produced to other Federal agencies, but also supplying some to private firms.

This program got an additional boost in 1960 when the Eisenhower administration feared there would not be a sufficient supply of helium to meet the demand for strategic blimps to spot

enemy submarines in the Atlantic, and for maintaining fuel tank pressure and rocket engines for the fledgling space program at the time.

The 1960 act created incentives for private companies to return to the market and, as a result, we finally did have four private natural gas producing companies building five helium extraction facilities, and they entered the market.

What is happening now, as of 1995, is that 90 percent of the helium produced in this country does come from these private operations.

Unfortunately, though, the 1960 act also led to a growing Government-run operation and the stockpiling of helium purchased by the Federal Government.

The act also stipulated that the Bureau of Mines set prices that would cover all of this Government-run program's costs, including its debt and interest, and that Federal agencies and contractors were then required to buy helium from the Bureau of Mines.

Today, Mr. President, that debt is approximately \$1.4 billion, and some have suggested that our current stockpile could supply the Government's needs, if you can believe it, for the next 80 to 100 years. Although the proponents of the program have a complicated argument about how this program does not really cost the Federal Government any money, the point is that the Federal Government does not need to run a helium program anymore. There is a private sector helium industry that can and does provide the necessary helium to the Government.

By terminating the program now, Mr. President, selling off the helium reserves over time to ensure that the taxpayers receive a fair price for the helium they have financed, we can pay off the debt and, according to the CBO, we could recover between \$1 and \$1.6 billion from the reserves if sold at current prices. CBO also believes that we can double annual revenues from the program by doing this over time.

Mr. President, achieving deficit reduction is a very difficult task. Programs like the helium program were created to meet certain needs. The defenders of the program have a variety of arguments to justify its continued existence, but the reality is that it appears over and over again on target lists for deficit reduction because it no longer makes any sense for the Federal Government to continue to run this program. It has not been terminated despite attempts of the Reagan, Bush, and now the Clinton administration because powerful constituencies fight to keep these types of programs alive.

Mr. President we simply cannot afford to keep these programs going. The 104th Congress should be the place where this program is terminated.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article I referred to earlier from the Washington Post February 7, 1995, business section relating to the helium program be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the editorial was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 7, 1995]  
ODORLESS, COLORLESS—AND HARD TO KILL  
(By Cindy Skrzycki)

Deep in the earth near Amarillo, Tex., the federal government is sitting on a 32 billion-cubic-foot stash of crude helium—enough to last 100 years—and an inflated bureaucracy built on the premise that you can never have too much helium.

President Clinton burst the balloons of the helium reserve program's 195 workers in his budget request yesterday, singling out the federal program as one that had outlived its usefulness and proposing that it be phased out. Estimated savings: \$16 million by 2000.

The program dates back to the observation balloons of World War I and got another boost in 1960, when Congress and the Eisenhower administration feared there would not be enough helium for Cold War strategic uses, including the expanding space program. The program's debt to the U.S. Treasury has grown from \$252 million to \$1.3 billion—just as impressive as the supply of helium in its Texas stockpile.

Yesterday, Clinton proposed canceling the debt, saying that it would not affect the federal budget deficit.

Its tale is one of yet another federal government program that has had more than nine lives. The program has ducked budget cutters in the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administration, allowing employees such as Armond Sonnek, assistant director for helium, and Dale Bippus, the plant's general manager, to amass about 75 years of combined federal service until their recent retirements. Still on the job is John D. Morgan Jr., 74, chief staff officer of the Interior Department's Bureau of Mines, who can trace the origins and applications of helium in his head.

Ironically, the helium program escaped its latest brush with death in the name of stemming the growth of the deficit. Just when it looked like getting rid of the program was what Clinton-style reinvention of government was all about, the now-defeated congressman from Amarillo, Democrat Bill Sarpalius, became a key vote for the president when Clinton was trying to pass his contentious budget bill in 1993.

After Sarpalius voted with the president—providing Clinton's 218 to 216 margin of victory—the program was floating high again. The administration offered legislation to cancel the program's debt and make it more efficient. The measure never got off the ground.

Now, the administration proposes getting out of the helium business, liquidating the stockpile and selling the production facility in Amarillo.

That would end the government's involvement in helium, which began in 1971, when the Bureau of Mines began researching uses of the odorless gas for the military. Research and production continued through World War II, when the government used blimps to spot enemy submarines in the Atlantic Ocean. Even now, though using helium for blimps is a tiny portion of its consumption, the airships are used for surveillance on the U.S. borders and weather observation—and, it has been reported, there may even be a stealth blimp.

The gas, a nonrenewable resource, is more commonly used today for special welding procedures, the fueling process of space shuttles and magnetic resonance imaging. For those applications, it has no replacement.

It wasn't until 1960 that the Cold War scared the government into buying, refining and stockpiling helium. It feared shortages

that would leave the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Pentagon flat. So the Bureau of Mines became owner and operator of a helium-refining plant, a 425-mile pipeline, railroad cars and an unusual underground helium storage facility.

It filled an underground reservoir called the Cliffside Field, near Amarillo, with helium crude bought from natural gas companies. Helium, which natural gas producers had vented into the air, was being captured and sold to the government.

"It was a good investment," said Carl Johnson, Chairman of the Helium Advisory Council, a trade organization representing the nation's 11 helium producers, refiners and marketers. "Without the helium collected in Cliffside field, the industry wouldn't be as vibrant as it is now."

All this was done with a \$252 million loan from the Treasury to the Interior Department—which has never been repaid. With back interest, the debt has grown to \$1.3 billion. The program was intended to be self-supporting through the sale of helium, but sales projections proved too optimistic.

In the minds of some, such as officials at the General Accounting Office, the debt doesn't exist—it was merely an intergovernmental transaction between the Treasury and the late Fred Andrew Seaton, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's interior secretary, who signed the note.

Helium program staffers like to think they cost the government no money since the program covers its operating costs and, in 1994, returned \$10 million to the federal till. Plus, they point out, the government does own 32 billion cubic feet of crude, unrefined helium which, at current prices, is worth about \$600 million.

"Our employees think they are giving money back to the taxpayer," said David Barna, spokesman for the Bureau of Mines. "They feel pretty good about it."

There is some dispute over how the government should phase out the helium program. The companies that now supply 90 percent of the market don't want the government opening the spigot and depressing prices. After all, how many Barney balloons can you sell? There also is a vocal constituency for paying back the loan from the sale of the crude.

An administration source said the government wants to "sell into a rising market" but it needs to start liquidating. The calculation is that the market could absorb 300 cubic feet of crude helium annually and not be the worse for it.

And, the \$1.3 billion debt?  
Ever heard of forgive and forget?

#### UNITED STATES-CUBAN RELATIONS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, yesterday, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Senator from North Carolina, introduced legislation on Cuba which, with all due respect to the chairman, I think is the wrong policy at the wrong time. In seeking to strengthen an already tight trade embargo, punish non-American investment in Cuba, and increase funding for TV Marti, this proposal puts United States policy toward Cuba on the wrong track. While I oppose strongly the totalitarian rule imposed by Cuban President Fidel Castro, I do not see any way that the island Nation of Cuba now poses a military or economic