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Senate

(Legislative day of Wednesday, April 5, 1995)

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Father Schlegel. He is president of the University of San Francisco. He has been endorsed by Senator HATFIELD and Sheila Burke. We are very pleased to have him with us.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Father John Schlegel, office of the president, University of San Francisco, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray:

God, designer of life and author of all that is good and beautiful. We know You to be a God of harmony and wholeness; a God who seeks justice and rewards goodness.

You give to Your daughters and sons many gifts, talents, opportunities, and challenges. You have endowed those elected to this Chamber great opportunities and great responsibility in conducting the public work of this land for the common good of all.

As they deliberate may they be motivated by service and guided by conscience.

Grant the Members of this Senate and the whole Congress: wisdom to their minds; clearness in their thinking; truth in their speaking; love in their hearts; and enthusiasm for their work. Help them be a source of unity not division. Help them be seekers of justice and forgers of equality. Help them to set the interest of the Nation above all else.

Guide them, finally, to exercise their power to assist our fellow citizens to feed the hungry among us; to ease the burden of those in pain; and to make our country, our communities, and our homes better places to live and to work.

As we make this prayer today as every day, we make it in confidence knowing You are a God of faithfulness and covenant, a God of love, a God of peace. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished Senator from Wyoming.

SCHEDULE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, let me say this morning that the time for the two leaders has been reserved, and the Senate will immediately resume consideration of H.R. 1158, the supplemental appropriations and rescissions bill. It is the hope of the majority leader that a unanimous-consent agreement can be reached that will enable the Senate to complete action on the supplemental appropriations bill today.

If an agreement cannot be reached, Senators are to be reminded that a cloture vote on the Hatfield substitute is scheduled for 2 p.m. today. Members should be aware that rollcall votes could occur throughout the day.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADERSHIP TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time has been reserved.

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 1158, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1158) making emergency supplemental appropriations for additional disaster assistance and making rescissions for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1995, and for other purposes.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

Pending:

Hatfield amendment No. 420, in the nature of a substitute.

D'Amato amendment No. 427 (to amendment No. 420) to require congressional approval of aggregate annual assistance to any foreign entity using the exchange stabilization fund established under section 5302 of title 31, United States Code, in an amount that exceeds \$5 billion.

Murkowski-D'Amato amendment No. 441 (to amendment No. 427) of a perfecting nature.

Daschle amendment No. 445 (to amendment No. 420) in the nature of a substitute.

Dole (for Ashcroft) amendment No. 446 (to amendment No. 445) in the nature of a substitute.

Mr. THOMAS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is now recognized.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed as in morning business.

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

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, this request has been agreed to by both the minority and the majority leaders.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now turn to the consideration of the conference report to accompany

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



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S. 244, the paperwork reduction bill; that the conference report be agreed to; and that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

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

The clerk will report.

The assistant clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 244) to further the goals of the Paperwork Reduction Act to have Federal agencies become more responsible and publicly accountable for reducing the burden of Federal paperwork on the public, and for other purposes, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of April 3, 1995.)

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I am pleased to state that our bipartisan efforts to strengthen the Paperwork Reduction Act, which began in the last Congress, has now in this Congress become bicameral. The conferees were able to resolve the differences between the Houses so that before the week is over the Congress will have concluded its work on a bill that significantly improves upon current law.

As my colleagues know, the 1980 Act established within OMB the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs [OIRA]. That office was directed to review the paperwork burdens created by the Federal Government. All collections of information from 10 or more persons must, with very few exceptions, be reviewed by OIRA for their need and practical utility and must receive a clearance number before they can become effective.

The fundamental purpose of this review process is to reduce the paperwork burden on the American public. Hence, the name given to this legislation. However, before this legislation now pending, because of the Supreme Court decision in *Dole versus Steelworkers*, not all paperwork burdens caused by the Federal Government had to be reviewed and cleared. The Court said that the act applied to paperwork that flowed from a private party to the Federal Government and not to instances where the Federal Government required a person to provide information to another person.

As a policy matter, I have never favored the distinction made in the *Dole* case. The conference report makes clear that neither House of Congress accepts this distinction. The *Dole* case is overturned, and the scope of OIRA's review authority is, as a consequence, enlarged by 50 percent. This change marks a major breakthrough in our paperwork reduction efforts.

In noting the major effect of this legislation, I do not mean to imply that it was a major issue with the House. It was not. In fact, in view of the breadth of this legislation, the issues in disagreement were relatively few.

Perhaps the most significant disagreement concerned the duration of

the authorization of appropriations for OIRA. The Senate bill provided \$3 million for each of the next 5 years, while the House had an indefinite and permanent authorization. The conferees compromised on the Senate version for an additional year. This 6-year authorization will prompt us to review the legislation at some future time, which was the underlying rationale of the Senate provision.

The House argued that OIRA has clearly been established as a matter of policy, if not in law, as a central organ of the Federal Government and a key instrument of current regulatory reform efforts. The Senate responded that it was not its position to sunset either the Paperwork Reduction Act or OIRA. The lack of a permanent authorization of appropriations for OIRA has never before, even when it has expired, caused OIRA to terminate.

I agree that OIRA has become a necessary and permanent policeman of paperwork and regulation. But I also continue to hold my longstanding commitment to limited authorizations. Six years is a substantial period of time. A lot can change in 6 years. In 2001, it is entirely appropriate that Congress review the status of our paperwork reduction efforts and the role of OIRA.

A second major issue of disagreement between the Houses concerned the annual percentage goals for Government-wide reductions in paperwork burdens. The Senate set a 5 percent goal for each of the next 5 years. The House set a 10 percent annual goal forever. Of course, all the conferees would like to see substantial reductions. The question was a practical one: what goal was realistically achievable? Once we had decided on a 6-year timeframe, the issue became more focused. While the House conferees made clear that their 10 percent goal was to be set annually with respect to a new paperwork baseline that would include new congressional paperwork mandates, Senate conferees were still concerned that 10 percent a year for 6 years was unrealistic. After some discussion, it was agreed that the paperwork reduction goals of the Federal Government should be set at 10 percent for each of the first 2 years and 5 percent for each of the other 4 years.

A third major issue of disagreement concerned the House provision which permitted OIRA to charge the users of Government information more than the cost of disseminating such information. While there might be some instances where such an authority would be appropriate, the House provision was not crafted in any such limited manner. The Senate conferees thought it was a little late in the legislative process to start isolating circumstances where charges in addition to dissemination costs might be appropriate. Not having addressed this issue at all in the Senate bill, the Senate conferees asked that the House recede. And the House agreed.

Mr. President, the topic that captured more time in conference discus-

sion than any other was that of re-drafting section 3512, which provides public protection against agency non-compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act. Since 1980, the act has provided a fundamental protection to every citizen that he or she need not comply with, or respond to, a collection of information if such collection does not display a valid control number given by OMB as evidence that the collection was reviewed and approved by OIRA. And if the collection does not display a valid control number, the agency may not impose any penalty on the citizen who fails to comply or respond.

In order to strengthen and underscore congressional desire to protect the public, the conferees included a definition of penalty at the end of section 3502 to make clear that the term not only applies to the payment of a fine but also to the denial of a benefit. What this means is that if an agency does not comply with this act, it is in serious trouble. If an agency does not act on a citizen's request for a Government benefit because the citizen did not complete a form that fails to display a valid OMB clearance number, it is the agency—not the citizen—that stands in violation of law. Once this is determined, the agency would not only owe the citizen the benefits due but also perhaps interest as well.

Now there are some who may grumble that this provision is too weak. Since 1980, section 3512 has included an alternative clause of public protection requiring the collection of information to state that if it did not display a valid OMB control number, it was not subject to the act. Some may view that second clause as a tautology. That is how agencies have interpreted it. But some others have believed that it requires: First, that every effort by the Government to collect information, even those not covered by the act, be accompanied by a statement advising that such collection is not required to have a clearance number; and second, that consequently a failure to provide such advice would subject the collection of information to the public protection sanctions of section 3512, even though the collection was not subject to the act.

Now the act specifies in section 3518 certain exceptions from the act. A subpoena is one example. Also, by definition, a collection of information falls under the act only if 10 or more persons are involved. My view is that since a subpoena is not covered by the act's clearance requirements and since a request for information made to nine or fewer individuals is likewise not covered, then in such cases the sanctions of section 3512 have no application. It is simply foolish, in my opinion, to require an agency to inform a person it is

dealing with about the laws that do not apply.

So with the concurrence of all the Senate conferees, this second clause was rewritten to be both feasible and useful. It now requires the agency to inform the person who is to respond to collections of information governed by the act that such person is not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a valid control number from OMB. This statement of how section 3512 operates to protect the public technically need not appear on the collection of information itself. That is because the term collection of information includes more than Government requests for information. An example of an additional item included within the definition might be a recordkeeping requirement. In such case, the collection of information might not be a Government form but instead a legal requirement about which the agency provides instructions.

While the conferees provided some flexibility regarding the second clause of section 3512(a), it is their intention that the agency inform those who are to respond in a manner reasonably calculated to bring the matter to their attention. If the collection is a Government form to be completed and submitted by a person, then that form should bear the necessary statement to fulfill the requirements of section 3512(a)(2). If the collection concerns something else, such as recordkeeping, then the agency should make it section 3512(a)(2) statement as clearly as possible in some document, such as instructions regarding such recordkeeping.

Moreover, in section 3512(b) the conferees made clear that the protections of section 3512 may be raised at any time during the life of the matter. The protections cannot be waived. Failure to raise them at any early stage does not preclude later assertion of rights under this section, regardless of any agency or judicial rules to the contrary.

I believe that as a result of our changes to section 3512 we have substantially strengthened that section and, in turn, the entire act. Any agency that fails to comply with the clearance provisions of this act does so at its peril. Any collection of information, unless excepted by this act, must be cleared by OMB. And this applies to all agencies, including independent agencies.

Neither the House nor the Senate sought to change the policy of the 1980 Act that all agencies, including independent agencies, have their information collections, even those by regulation, subjected to OMB review and approval. So while exceptions are made for certain law enforcement and intelligence activities, none is made for duck hunting or the safety and soundness regulations of banking agencies. Apparently, no difficulties have arisen in the last 15 years under the 1980 Act. So no change is made from current law.

The final major item of disagreement concerned the standard by which regulations which include information collections are judged. Under current law, OMB reviews such agency rules and comments thereon applying the standard of section 3508—whether the collection is unnecessary) and thereafter approves or disapproves after receiving the agency's response to OMB's comments. By what standard does OMB decide? Current law allows OMB to disapprove if the agency's response was unreasonable. The House sought to tidy up by cross-referencing section 3508 rather than using the current law's formulation of unreasonable.

As a practical matter, there is no real difference between whether the agency's response to OMB's comments are unreasonable in light of OMB's views on whether the agency's collection is unnecessary under section 3508 and whether the collection is unnecessary under that section. Since both standards—unreasonable and unnecessary—lack precision, there is nothing in current law to stop OMB, unless persuaded by the agency's response, from disapproving a regulatory collection because it would be unnecessary under section 3508.

Some of my Senate colleagues believe that the House position undermined an important difference—a zone of deference to be accorded agency rulemaking. The argument is that OMB may disapprove a regulation only if the agency's response is unreasonable even if OMB believes that collection is unnecessary. While the argument tracks the words of current law, I am not persuaded that the zone of deference has any dimension to it at all. Nor do I see what benefit would derive from making a distinction between collections undertaken as part of a regulation and those outside of a regulation, which are covered only by section 3508. Either way, if the collections are unnecessary, they should be disapproved. What is the compelling argument for allowing unnecessary collections to burden the American public simply because the agency's response was not unreasonable?

Ultimately, the conferees decided to keep current law because it satisfied more conferees than did the House version's unambiguous language. Current law satisfies the majority of conferees who believe that nothing stops OMB from disapproving a regulatory collection found to be unnecessary while it allows others to argue that some metaphysical zone of deference is preserved for regulatory collections.

Mr. President, when we last came to the floor on S. 244, the Senate adopted several amendments that did not directly bear upon the Paperwork Reduction Act. Only one of those amendments survived the conference. That amendment by Senator COVERDELL sought to reduce small business compliance burdens with the Quarterly Financial Report Program at the Bureau of the Census. With some minor modi-

fications, this provision has been transformed in conference from a pilot project to a permanent program change. The provision, as modified, has the support of its original sponsor and of the Census Bureau.

Two amendments dealing with the elimination of unnecessary reports to Congress—one by Senator MCCAIN and one by Senator LEVIN—were dropped at the insistence of the House. Conferees had received correspondence from various congressional committees and agencies raising technical and other concerns about these provisions. Representative CLINGER, who chaired the conference, indicated that he favored the purpose of the reports-elimination provisions but could not hold up the Paperwork Reduction Act while various concerns with these nongermane amendments were addressed. He said he would introduce a companion bill in the House and would seek to move the legislation there.

Finally, an amendment that expressed the sense of the Senate regarding the Oregon option was also dropped in conference at the insistence of the House conferees.

Mr. President, the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 passed both Houses on rollcall votes with not a single dissenting voice. I am pleased to report that the conferees have resolved all differences between the two bodies with the result that we have even a stronger bill than before. It should be noted that we could not have moved so swiftly to passage and through conference without the bipartisan cooperation of Senator NUNN, the chief sponsor of S. 244, and Senator GLENN, the ranking minority member of the Committee on Governmental Affairs. I commend them for their hard work on this legislation not only in this Congress but in the last. Their effort set a mark not only in the Senate but in the House and made enactment of this legislation possible within the first 100 days of the 104th Congress.

I urge my colleagues to approve this conference report.

Mr. GLENN. Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to rise before my colleagues today and urge their acceptance of the conference report on our bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Paperwork Reduction Act. This day has been a long time in coming. At long last, we can take our final step toward presenting the President with a bill that I am sure he will sign and that I am equally confident will reduce paperwork and improve the management of Federal information resources.

Passage of this legislation is an accomplishment that I am very proud of. Reauthorization of the act was one of my major priorities during my 6 years as chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee. After several years of discordant debate about the act's implementation, we fashioned a bipartisan bill that resolved outstanding issues and moved the act forward to more clearly address new Information

Age issues. This bill was unanimously passed by the Senate on October 6, 1994.

Unfortunately, the House was unable to act before the end of the 103d Congress. The legislation that we have before us today is this same bill, with only a few minor changes. This year's House bill itself was also modeled very, very closely on our bill. I am thus very proud of the leadership our committee provided in the last Congress, the bipartisan cooperation that continued into this Congress, and the accomplishment that we now have before us.

The Paperwork Reduction Act is a vitally important law. Originally enacted in 1980, and reauthorized in 1986, the act serves two closely related and very essential public purposes. First, the act is key to the ongoing effort to reduce Government paperwork burdens on the American public. Too often, our citizens—individuals, businesses, State and local governments, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, and more—are burdened by having to fill out questionnaires and forms that simply are not needed to implement the laws of the land. Too much time and money is wasted in an effort to satisfy bureaucratic excess.

The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 took up the battle by transforming a leaky review process—created in 1942—into a strong centralized OMB clearance process to control the information appetite of agencies all across the Federal Government. The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 strengthens this process, primarily by increasing the paperwork reduction responsibilities of the individual agencies, so that we can make new progress in fighting Government redtape.

The act's second core purpose is to improve Federal information resources management. This is not a separate or secondary goal. Reducing the costs and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Government information activities is an essential element of paperwork reduction. As the 1977 Federal paperwork Commission commented, how can Federal agencies reduce paperwork if they don't know what information they possess or how best to use it? We simply cannot reduce paperwork burdens on the American people unless we can get more efficient and effective information activities out of Federal agencies.

Our entry into the Information Age signals an even more fundamental truth. We cannot provide efficient and effective Government operations without efficient and effective information activities. Program operations, service delivery, agency policy formulation and decisions—all now depend increasingly on information technology.

The scale of this transformation of the Government from a paper-driven to a computer-driven operation is staggering. The Federal Government is now spending over \$25 billion each year on information technology. We have truly entered the Information Age. Automated data processing for program ap-

plications, electronic benefits transfer for food stamps distribution, electronic data interchange to speed up Federal contracting, direct deposit for more efficient delivery of pay and retirement benefits, computer matching to catch tax cheats, high capacity telecommunication networks and videoconferencing for more efficient work across the Nation and even the globe. These innovations are already a part of Government. They also suggest some of the opportunities still to come for improving Government operations.

Unfortunately, as oversight by our committee and others has shown, the Government is not realizing the full potential of this technological revolution. The Federal Government is simply wasting millions and millions of dollars on poorly designed and often incompatible systems. This must stop.

The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 took a first step on the road to reform when it created information resources management [IRM] policies to be overseen by OMB. The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 strengthens that mandate and establishes new requirements for agency IRM improvements. These requirements focus on agency responsibility for IRM improvement, including results-oriented performance standards. These strengthened requirements add needed detail to the larger IRM framework, with its essential oversight role for OMB, to ensure that we have both management results and accountability. The legislation balances process controls with program and management responsibility to provide IRM improvements without stifling micro-management.

In serving these twin, closely related statutory purposes of paperwork reduction and information resources management, the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 includes several notable accomplishments.

We reauthorize the act for 6 years. While the House proposed a permanent authorization, the conference agreement contains a definite reauthorization period. While the difficulties in reauthorizing the act between 1983 and 1986, and again from 1989 to the present, may suggest to some that the act ought to be permanently reauthorized, I draw a very different conclusion. It is precisely because the act is so important, because it concentrates significant power in OMB—which is the President's enforcer, if there ever was one—and because there has been so much controversy about OMB's actions under the act—and its related regulatory review powers—that every effort must be made to provide and sustain serious congressional oversight.

Without a periodic reauthorization schedule, I am afraid that our oversight would suffer. With the requirement for reauthorization, we are required to scrutinize the act and its implementation, and persevere in resolving differences and arriving at any needed statutory reforms. The reforms found in the Paperwork Reduction Act

of 1995 are the product of this reauthorization process and proof of its importance.

We strengthen the paperwork clearance process in several ways. The most important reform is the establishment of new detailed requirements for agencies to evaluate paperwork proposals and solicit public comment on them before the proposals go to OMB for review. These new requirements will, first of all, ensure the more thoughtful development of only truly "necessary" agency information collection proposals. Just as importantly, these requirements will also help agencies more clearly and thoroughly make their case for such proposals, and thus prepare for a fair hearing before OMB on what is or is not "necessary for the proper performance of the agency's functions," as the law puts it. Together, I believe, these expanded agency requirements provide the greatest opportunity for progress in the war against red tape.

We also strengthen the paperwork process by overturning the Dole versus United Steelworkers Supreme Court decision regarding OSHA's hazard communication standard, so that information disclosure requirements are covered by the OMB paperwork clearance process. This ends a controversy of several years and clarifies that the act covers all paperwork requirements, not just information that is collected for an agency's own use.

In other respects, the act's OMB paperwork clearance standards remain unchanged. In fact, the decision to overturn the Supreme Court "Haz Comm" decision is only appropriate given the continuing integrity of the procedure for OMB review of information collections required by regulation. As provided under the original 1980 act, after commenting on regulatory paperwork requirements in a proposed rule, OMB may disapprove a final rule paperwork requirement only if it finds that the agency's response to its comments are "unreasonable." As Senator KENNEDY said at the time, "[Without this provision,] this legislation would permit OMB to overturn * * * [an agency rulemaking] decision without even requiring OMB to justify its decision publicly. This violates basic notions of fairness upon which the Administrative Procedure Act is based, as well as concepts of due process embodied in the U.S. Constitution." (S30178, November 19, 1980). With this legislative history so clear, I am very pleased that the House receded to the Senate on this point in the current legislation—our committee and the Senate having already clearly decided to maintain unchanged the paperwork clearance standards of the act.

The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 also provides needed detail to the act's general provisions on information dissemination. OMB policy guidance responsibilities are delineated, as are the operational responsibilities of individual Federal agencies. The primary

theme running through these provisions is the obligation of Federal agencies to conduct their dissemination activities in such a way as to ensure that the public has timely and equitable access to public information. A major element of this obligation is the mandate to make information available on a nondiscriminatory and nonexclusive basis so as to avoid disadvantaging any class of information users. Public information is public. It should not become a source of revenue for agencies or a means by which to exercise proprietary-like controls on information.

Finally, the legislation requires the development of a Government Information Locator Service [GILS] to ensure improved public access to government information, especially that maintained in electronic format, and makes other improvements in the areas of government statistics, records management, computer security, and the management of information technology.

These are important reforms. Of course, reaching broad bipartisan agreement on this legislation has involved considerable compromise. There has been give and take on both sides. The result, like most compromises, has displeased some. I believe, however, that the legislation represents a practical compromise that addresses many real issues and moves the Government forward toward the reduction of paperwork burdens on the public and improvements in the management of Federal information resources. It should be supported for its very significant provisions.

Even with this accomplishment, it should be clearly understood that the legislative compromise does not resolve conflicting views on the OMB paperwork and regulatory review controversies that have dogged congressional oversight of the Paperwork Reduction Act. As I said in my additional views in our committee report:

Support for the original act and for the current legislation should not . . . lead anyone to overlook the problems that have frustrated full implementation of the law. Fifteen years of Committee oversight have produced a record replete with criticisms, largely directed at OMB, for unbalanced implementation of the Act. Slighting statistics, records management, information technology management, privacy and security, and other aspects of information resources management, OMB devoted itself to a paperwork clearance and regulatory review process that occasioned repeated charges of interference with substantive agency decision-making. I believe that this record should not be obscured . . ." (S. Report No. 104-8, p. 59):

This record should remind us of our continuing obligation to oversee the act, at the same time that we move forward with the current legislation to better fulfill its very important purposes.

In conclusion, the legislation before us strengthens the Paperwork Reduction Act. It also remains true to the intent of the original 1980 act. Both the administration and the General Accounting Office concur in this judg-

ment and support the legislation. I am very proud of our accomplishment in bringing this legislation to final passage of the conference report. This has been a cooperative bipartisan effort. We could not be here without the hard work of Senator NUNN and Senator ROTH, who is now chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee. I would also single out Senator BINGAMAN, my good friend from New Mexico, who, when he was on our committee, initiated the reauthorization effort in 1989. And, of course, as always, Senator CARL LEVIN of Michigan has played an important role, working to ensure that our committee's consideration of the legislation helped the fight both against paperwork and for Government efficiency.

This really has been a long-haul effort. And through those years, a small group of staff have labored long and hard, again and again working over drafts and coming up with legislative language to help us reach the point we are at today. I want to thank Frank Polk of Senator ROTH's staff, Bill Montalto with Senator NUNN, and Len Weiss and David Plocher of my staff. We could not be here today without their work. Finally, I want to thank Jeff Hill and Bruce McConnell of OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, and Dan Latta and Chris Hoening of GAO's Accounting and Information Management Division. Their technical assistance throughout the legislative process was essential, and they deserve our thanks for their help.

We are now one short step from final enactment of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. I strongly urge my colleagues to join in supporting this very important legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the conference report is agreed to.

So the conference report was agreed to.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed as in morning business.

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

FRESHMAN FOCUS

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, as you know, over the last several weeks, the Senate freshmen have taken time on various occasions to come to the floor to talk about the agenda that we believe was prescribed during the last election, the agenda that the 11 of us, as new Republican Senators, would like to see pursued in the Senate.

Our plan was to talk in morning business about that this morning. As you know, the order has been changed, and we respect that. But until such time as the majority leader and the minority leader are able to pull up the bill, we would like to proceed to talk about some of the things that we think are most important.

We call this the freshman focus, and we think we do bring to this body

something of a unique point of view in that each of us, of course, just came off an election, each of us campaigned for a very long time in our States, each of us talked to many people, and each of us believes that there was a message in the election and that the responsibility of responsive Government is to respond to that election and to the voice of the voters as we see it.

So, Mr. President, we, I think, have going on here a great debate. It may not take the form of great debate in terms of its physical approach, but the great debate is between the way we see things happening, the way we see ourselves as a society and as a country entering into the new millennium, entering into the year 2000 in a relatively short 5 or 6 years and what shape we see ourselves in as a nation going into that new millennium.

The great debate is whether or not we want to go into that new century continuing as we are financially, continuing as we are with the huge debt that we have, continuing as we are with deficits of \$250 billion in that foreseeable future or, in fact, whether we want to seek to make some changes so that we go into that millennium, so that we go into that new century, with a nation that is financially and fiscally responsible, and now is the time we have to do that.

That is the great debate, the great debate that has been going on in the House, the great debate that is going on here, the great debate that will take place over the next year in terms of the budget. Basically, the debate is overspending.

We all have charts. Unfortunately, I am not armed with a chart this morning. The chart would show, however, that spending has gone up in this kind of fashion, spending has gone up in the neighborhood of 5 percent a year for many years and is designed to continue to go up at 5 percent a year for the foreseeable future. The President's budget this year has a 5.5-percent increase in spending.

So we talk a lot about the deficit, the deficit which is a result, of course, of the difference between revenues and outlays, but really is the result of spending. If there was a message that I think was universally discernible in November, it was that Government is too big and that Government spends too much. Most people agree with that.

If we are to have a reasonable debate, there needs to be a couple of things agreed to, a couple of things have to be stipulated. One struck me some time back in our church in Cheyenne that we attend, and the message that the pastor had was that every day each of us has a responsibility to make this a better place to live.

Whether a person is a Senator, whether a person is a carpenter, whether a person is a rancher, we each, where we are, have a responsibility to make this a better place to live.

We do it in our own ways. We each have something different to contribute.