

I say to the Senators on both sides of the aisle, welcome to health care reform. Welcome to the health care issue. It is back. How ironic it is that when historians write about the 104th Congress, they are going to say that the 104th Congress had to address health care reform, how to finance it, how to deliver health care to people out in the communities in an affordable, dignified way. The reason the 104th Congress finally moved on this question is that some Senators realized, finally, that the only way we are really going to have deficit reduction based on a standard of fairness and the only way we are going to make sure we are able to provide decent health care coverage for all of our citizens, regardless of age or where they live or income, is with significant, meaningful health care reform.

I am ready to work with colleagues on both sides of the aisle, because I think that will now have to be one of our major priorities.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. BOXER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague for really putting out in very clear and simple terms the kind of crisis that we knew about. Indeed, President Clinton was so clear in his very first and second State of the Union Address when he said, "If we want to have meaningful deficit reduction, we better address the issue of health care reform."

Here we have a situation—and I serve on the Budget Committee. I am waiting for the Republican budget, by the way. It is way late. Since I came here, I have been on the Budget Committee, and the Budget Committee has been on time. Not this year. Do you know why? Because the Republicans have promised certain things they just cannot keep: huge deficit reduction, increases in the military, big tax breaks for some of the wealthiest again. Guess what? They said they would not touch Social Security. Thank goodness. Frankly, I think a lot of my colleagues made that point clear in the balanced budget debate. So the only cash cow they can look at is Medicare. And at this point, they want to cut hundreds of billions of dollars out of Medicare, and they realize, how can we sell that to the seniors? So they are creating this big crisis.

We talked about the need for health care reform. My friend, Senator WELLSTONE, was one of the leaders in this fight. So I say to my friend, thank you for your remarks this morning. It is almost poignant that we are at this point. Does he not agree?

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from California for her gracious remarks. It is ironic that indeed we have now come full circle back to the last Congress.

The very people who were so proud of having blocked health care reform are now talking about a crisis in Medicare, talking about how we will finance it,

and are now making a proposal, I say to my colleague, for rather draconian cuts in Medicare. But they do not want to talk about rationing. Now they really are making proposals that will ration.

I think there are certain realities now that we all hope we will face up to and move forward on health care reform. It is the only way to do it. Otherwise, it will be disastrous.

The kind of proposals I hear people making now to cut Medicare will not only hurt senior citizens, but as I said, will create absolute utter chaos in this health care system. They do not deal with preexisting conditions, they do not deal with any of the bias of not having community rating, they do not deal with how to make it affordable. If anything, it will just have a severe impact.

Mrs. BOXER. I just want to thank my friend again. He is, of course, correct. The kinds of cuts that my colleagues on the Republican side are talking about out of Medicare simply will ruin Medicare. We cannot possibly, in the name of deficit reduction, destroy the Medicare system or the Medicaid system, for that matter.

SENATE AGENDA

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am very pleased that the leader has reserved some time to discuss general matters. I want to tie a few pieces together.

Before Senator WELLSTONE took to the floor, the Senator from Missouri was praising a Supreme Court decision that gave more power to the States. Rather than get into that decision, I want to point out that in vote after vote, the vast majority of my Republican friends here in the Senate have voted in these last few days to replace State product liability laws, State medical malpractice—indeed, all other civil laws—with Federal laws, with Federal caps.

We certainly know—at least I certainly feel confident in stating to the American people—that these changes are going to hurt them. They are going to hurt consumers in our Nation by substituting politicians' judgments for local judges and juries.

Here we have spent many, many days and many, many hours on a power grab—essentially, a Federal Government power grab—brought by this Republican Congress in the Contract With America, a power grab to say that we in the almighty Senate know better than a judge or jury what someone who has been burned beyond recognition ought to be able to get from those at fault; what someone who perhaps was paralyzed should get; what someone would be able to get if a physician, perhaps in a stupor, makes a dreadful mistake. We have heard of some of those situations occurring.

I think it is very ironic that Senators would come to the floor on the Republican side and talk about how they

think more power ought to be invested in the States and then support this kind of a bill.

I hope today, when we vote cloture, that we will be able to stop this horrific bill from becoming a law of the land.

Mr. President, while I feel we should not be doing that, there are many other things I feel we should be doing here in the Senate, that we should be working on.

One of those, certainly, to my mind, is the confirmation of a new Surgeon General for this country, Dr. Henry Foster. I want to say that, in between my going to committees and my work on the floor, I have watched Dr. Foster. I am very proud of the way he handled himself.

I see, today, he has gained the support of one Republican on the committee, assuring that there will be at least a tie vote. I want to reiterate to the majority leader, Senator DOLE, what I have written to him twice about. I see that the Democrat leader is on the floor and I want to thank him for being so clear on this point.

Americans are fair, Mr. President. Americans are just. The fact is, this man deserves to be heard on this Senate floor.

We have an AIDS epidemic, we have a breast cancer epidemic, we have a lung cancer epidemic, we have an epidemic of teen pregnancies, we have too many cases of Alzheimer's, cancer, and heart disease in this country.

We have too much smoking going on in this country, too many young kids taking up smoking. We need a Surgeon General. I do not know why it has to take 3 more weeks for the committee to vote out Dr. Foster, but so be it.

I want to say today on the floor what I have written to Senator DOLE, that if Senator DOLE refuses to bring this nomination to the floor, even if it is a tie vote or, Mr. President, even if it is a losing vote, if Senator DOLE refuses to bring this nomination to the floor, I reserve my right as a Senator to object to Senate business until we can have this nomination on the floor. Senator DODD yesterday said he thought it would be childish for Members to avoid this discussion on the floor and I want to, again, say that I agree with that.

Now, Mr. President, I would like to speak to one question in my remaining 5 minutes. Where is the Republican budget? Where is the Republican budget? By law, the Budget Committee was required to complete work on that budget by April 1. It is May 3, 33 days after that date, and we still have no budget. By law, the entire Congress is required to complete work on the budget by April 15. It is May 3—18 days after that date—and still no budget.

For years, my Republican colleagues have said we could easily eliminate the deficit, and we know how. Not one of my Republican friends voted for the budget last year, which cut \$500 billion from the deficit—not one. They said, "We can do it better; we can do it

quicker; we can do it." Where is the budget?

My Republican friends have overpromised: More military spending; balancing the budget by 2002; tax cuts, going up to over \$200,000, people will get tax cuts. Yes, they have a problem. They looked at that budget and they saw only one place to go—Medicare. When it got out that they were looking at cuts of \$250 billion out of a program that 75 percent of Americans treasure, they started to get a little weak in the knees. They said: What are we going to do? Tell the people that Medicare is in crisis. This is the new turn of events. Medicare is in crisis, they say.

Well, I have looked, looked at all the reports that have come from the Medicare trustees over the years. There has not been a year when Medicare trustees did not say, at some point in the future, Medicare will be in trouble. This year is no exception, because when this Congress was Democratic, we voted to shore up the Medicare fund by making some tax law changes.

The Republicans in the House repealed that. If their law continues, Medicare will be in trouble in 1999. If we can stave them off, we have the fund solvent until 2002.

Yes, we have to fix Medicare. Yes, we have to reform Medicare. Yes, we have to do it right. But not slash and burn. And not outside of the context of comprehensive reform.

I will say that if the Republicans succeed in this, our seniors will be thrown into managed care; they will lose the doctor of their choice; they will have to pay more out-of-pocket expenses, and many hospitals in California are going to close.

Let Members stand tall as Democrats in this U.S. Senate. Let Members demand to see this budget. Let Members say to our seniors that we will stand for seniors and we will not allow the seniors of this country to have the budget balanced on their backs. They deserve more respect than that; they deserve much more than that.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the minority leader from South Dakota.

WHERE IS THE BUDGET?

Mr. DASCHLE. I rise to commend my colleagues for their eloquent presentation this morning. The Senator from California could not have said it better.

The Senator from California knows, as my other colleagues have also indicated they know, the ramifications of this budget resolution and the extraordinary problems we face as we consider some of the implications of the huge cuts in Medicare that are now being proposed, as well as the extraordinary link between those cuts and the tax cut for the wealthy that some of our Republican colleagues have proposed over the course of the last several months,

and, as we have already indicated, the House of Representatives has already passed.

The concern I want to address just briefly this morning has to do with what happens when nothing happens. What happens when the budget resolution does not come to the floor in the manner the law requires? What happens to the debt? What happens to the cost of running the Federal Government each and every day that we delay?

It may come as a surprise to some who may be listening that each day we delay action on the budget, the Federal debt increases by \$820 million. The budget resolution, of course, was due on the 1st of April. The budget resolution was due almost 35 days ago. At that time, if you use the day before as the baseline, we increased the debt on that particular day by \$820 million. On April 2, only 2 days after the budget resolution was supposed to have been reported, the debt increase was up to \$1.6 billion.

As you can see, in just the first 9 days since April 1, the debt increased by \$8.2 billion simply because there has been no budget resolution and no opportunity for Congress to address the concern that so many of our Republican colleagues say ought to have the highest priority in the Congress today. Indeed, it should have that priority.

The situation is beginning to look very serious as you go from this chart to the next one. The next chart indicates that 10 days after the budget resolution was due the debt had increased by \$9 billion; 20 days after the budget resolution was due the debt had increased \$16 billion. So, in just 20 days, because of inaction, because we have not had a budget resolution, because we have not been given an opportunity to address the extraordinary consequences of failure in leadership here, in just 20 days we have seen an increase of \$16 billion in the total debt, directly attributable to the fact that we have not had a budget resolution.

It gets worse, Mr. President. This chart begins to depict how much worse. On April 21 that debt increased to \$17.2 billion. As you can see, slowly we are going off the chart now. The chart is not even big enough to show the debt that has accumulated by the last day of the month in which the budget resolution was due.

As we all said, we knew the implications would be serious, but this chart shows just how serious. On April 30 we now see the debt, as a result of not having a budget resolution, go off the charts to \$24.4 billion. That is \$24 billion more than it would have been had we been able to stop this growth, this excessive increase in debt, on April 1 when the resolution was due.

The real story then comes on the final chart. At least we hope it will be the final chart. The final chart shows that on May 1 the increased debt was \$25.2 billion; on May 2 it was \$26 billion; on May 3, another \$820 million

more than the day before—\$26.8 billion more than on April 1.

Today I will add yet the newest bar, for May 4, \$27.6 billion in additional debt as a result of the lack of action, as a result of the inaction of the Senate Budget Committee and our colleagues on the Republican side in failing to address this issue.

This is what we are facing. We are going to need charts that I will not be able to reach here by the end of this week, simply because we have not been given the budget resolution that the law requires. We all understand. When the American taxpayer is told that he has to produce his check to pay his taxes by April 15, people join long lines at the post office in order to ensure that they get their return in the mail and comply with the law. American taxpayers go down to the post office at midnight sometimes, on the eve of April 15, to ensure that they comply with the law. The law says everybody has to pay their taxes by April 15, and, indeed, the vast majority of American people, as law-abiding citizens, comply with the law.

The law also says that the budget resolution has to be passed out of the Budget Committee by April 1, and out of the Senate, the Congress, by April 15. But we have now seen the cost of inaction. We have now seen what happens if nothing is done. We have now seen how it is compounded, day after day, with increases in cost, increases in debt, increases in the complexity of the problem we are going to have to address in the coming days.

I must say, I think the biggest concern that many of my colleagues on the other side have as they consider all of the ramifications of a budget resolution is a promise that was made last November. We heard it time and time again. We heard that we can cut taxes, we can increase or at least maintain defense spending levels, we can balance the budget, and we can do all of that without touching Social Security.

Now, given the circumstances, it is becoming increasingly apparent that that is not possible, that there is no way to do all of that, as was promised last November. So, as we look at ways with which to begin to address it, they are coming to the conclusion that one of the biggest pools of resources from which to draw to pay for the tax cut they promised is Medicare. In the name of reform, some of our colleagues on the other side are suggesting that is really what we must do. Let us reform Medicare. And in reforming Medicare we just happen to see this new pool of resources so that we can pay for a tax cut for the wealthy.

Cutting Medicare benefits for the elderly in this way has nothing to do with reform. That is not reform. Certainly there has to be some appreciation of the difficulties we are facing in Medicare with the trust fund. Everyone is willing to concede that. But, to say in the name of reform we are going to cut benefits, in the name of reform we