

Cuban people. I do not want to do that, and I know none of my colleagues do either. Certainly, we all want to see an end to the Castro regime—a cold war relic whose time has passed. I believe, however, that Castro's days are numbered. Communism has fallen around the world, and it will fall in Cuba as well. We should let it fall of its own weight, and then be there to assist the Cuban people in developing and nurturing a new democratic successor. This bill will not achieve that goal—in fact, it will move in the other direction. I urge Senators to oppose it.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent to now proceed as in morning business.

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

#### SCHOOLBUS SAFETY

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to discuss a matter that I have discussed on several other occasions on this floor over the last few months, and that is the issue of schoolbus safety in this country. I would like to update the Senate on the progress that we are making in this particular area.

The bad news, Mr. President, is that there are still, we believe, over 100,000 unsafe schoolbuses on the road in this country today, 100,000 schoolbuses that at this moment, at least in the Eastern time zone, the Eastern part of the country, are in the process of taking children home from school.

I have been involved in, and my staff has been involved in, trying to alert the school officials, schoolbus safety officials, in all the 50 States to this particular problem. And I think we are making progress on a number of fronts.

First, one of the major causes, as I have talked about before on this floor, of schoolbus fatalities is the drawstrings that appear around the waist and other parts of clothing of the coats worn by many schoolchildren today. As children get off of schoolbuses, this drawstring is liable to get snagged in the gap that exists between the bus wall and the handrail itself.

Since 1991, at least five children that we know of have been killed in this manner, have been stuck on the bus that that particular drawstring has caught, and they have been dragged by the bus and they have been killed.

I am pleased, Mr. President, to report that the Consumer Product Safety Commission is taking action on this

problem. Last month they recommended to the American Society of Testing Materials, the ASTM, that the drawstrings be shortened. Experts agree that this measure will help prevent these accidents.

This is, Mr. President, a big step—a big step—in the right direction. As a result of CPSC's recommendation, the ASTM has already announced a voluntary standard for the drawstrings. Drawstrings that are 4 or 5 inches in length are now banned.

The ASTM also announced plans for a research project to determine if there is any ideally safe drawstring length. The results of this study are to be announced on November 30.

Second, we, as a country, are starting to fix the buses. A bus manufacturing company bought some of the assets of another bus company, a company had gone out of business, a defunct bus company that was purchased. And the new bus company has decided voluntarily to provide materials to retrofit many of the dangerous buses made by the defunct company. It will do this at cost. That particular company is also trying to identify other unsafe buses that are still on the road so they, too, can be retrofitted.

Third, I have brought with me to the floor, Mr. President, a copy of a pamphlet that children are getting in an elementary school in my hometown of Cedarville, OH. This particular pamphlet gives good advice to parents. "Teach your children to look out for the straps and drawstrings. Be very careful when you are getting on and off the schoolbus."

This was provided courtesy of the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, 1-800-836-2210. It is a very simple brochure, but a brochure that we hope will do some good.

Mr. President, in conclusion, I think parents all over America should get a pamphlet just like this. It is available from the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute. Let me again repeat the number, 1-800-836-2210. As the pamphlet says, "Schoolbus safety is a team effort." So, Mr. President, let us work together to make all these schoolbuses as safe as they can be.

#### RECONCILIATION

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I would also like to talk about another issue this afternoon, and that is an issue that I discussed briefly this morning, an issue that we in the Senate will be debating for the next few weeks and an issue that has, I believe, historic importance, not just in this Senate but to this country, not just to this generation but to our children's generation and our grandchildren's.

I rise specifically today, Mr. President, to discuss the reconciliation bill that we expect to reach the floor sometime in the next 2 weeks.

This bill embodies the decision that the American people expressed last November. The American people last De-

cember decided that we need to make a fundamental change in course for our U.S. Government.

Many of us ran, many of us talked about these issues, and what were the commitments? I think we can summarize them as follows. There are many, but four essential commitments were made last November, four commitments that we will work over the next few weeks to carry out:

First, we need to balance the budget.

Second, we need to replace the welfare system with a system that rewards work and creates opportunity.

Third, we need to rescue Medicare from bankruptcy.

And fourth, we need to give some tax relief to the hard-working families of this country. Four basic simple things that I believe, if passed, if enacted, will fundamentally change the direction of this country.

While these are simple, I think it is fair to say that this is really an extremely ambitious agenda. Even to consider an agenda of this magnitude would make this a truly historic Congress. But in this reconciliation package, the Senate is about to pass this agenda, to actually pass it, and to send it on to the President of the United States.

Except for a few days at the beginning of 1953, the last time a Democratic President had to deal with a Republican Congress—with a Republican Congress—was from 1947 to 1949. In the 1948 election, the Democratic President accused the Republicans of running a do-nothing Congress. The current President is very well equipped with rhetorical ammunition. They work very hard on this at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, but I think that the charge that this is a do-nothing Congress is not one the White House will be using any time soon, or at least the White House will be using successfully any time soon, because the fact is, this Congress has stepped up to the plate and made some extremely tough decisions.

This Congress has passed a balanced budget plan for the first time, if we carry it out, since 1969. This Congress is fundamentally overhauling the welfare system, and just a few weeks ago on this floor, this Senate passed a historic welfare bill.

I believe this Congress will take the steps to save Medicare from bankruptcy.

This Congress is working to relieve the tax burden on working families.

Mr. President, this is the historic agenda the 104th Congress is prepared to send to the President of the United States. Let us make no mistake, this reconciliation package is the only proposal on the table that will achieve the goals of the American people.

Our national goals are to balance the budget and to let working families keep more of their own money. The Republican reconciliation package accomplishes both of these goals. Indeed, Mr. President, if you look at it a certain way, these two are, in fact, the