

I think we will find truth and truth will prevail.

I yield the floor.

Mr. GRAMS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

SECURITY—AT ANY COST?

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I want to talk a little this afternoon not so much about taxes but taxpayers' money and about security.

Mr. President, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is certainly the most famous residential street address in America. It is, of course, the address of the White House—the crown jewel in a city that attracts 15 million visitors every year.

Part of the excitement for White House guests is discovering that their President lives right alongside a busy street, just like many of them do, that his house has an address, just like theirs does. The mail carrier really does deliver letters each day to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, just exactly as it happens at every other home, in every other town in America.

The White House is called the People's House because of its close relationship with the American people. It is a familiar place where visitors instantly feel at home.

The city has certainly grown around them, but Pennsylvania Avenue and the White House have actually changed little since 1791, when George Washington gave his approval to Pierre L'Enfant's magnificent city plan. The bold stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue that shoots from the Capitol to the White House links the executive branch to the Legislative, physically and metaphorically.

By the early 1800's, Pennsylvania Avenue had become a busy thoroughfare, bringing people closer to the White House, and closer to their Government.

Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House was a natural place to hold the official ceremonies of a young nation. From there, President Lincoln reviewed troops heading off to battle in 1861. Later, dignitaries would gather on the avenue for inaugural parades.

People who were lost and looking for directions used to pull their carriages up to the front door of the White House to ask for help. By the middle of this century, it was station wagons and tour buses that made their way past the Executive Mansion. Families on vacation, eager for a close-up look at the home of the President, would travel the same route their ancestors might have traveled.

When ordinary citizens could drive past the White House or walk past its gate, well, that said something special about the unique openness that exists between the people and their President.

By 1995, Pennsylvania Avenue—the Main Street of America—had grown up. Over 80 feet wide, the modern, seven-lane thoroughfare was being used by more than 26,000 vehicles every day in the three-block stretch fronting the

White House. That is, until May 20 of this year, when all traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House came to a halt. In the wake of the tragic bombing in Oklahoma City, and citing a security risk for the President, the Treasury Department shut down three blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue. For the first time in the 195-year-history of the Executive Mansion, the people are no longer allowed to drive past the people's house.

The Secret Service says the street is not actually closed in front of the White House. In the Washington-speak that infects so many here, the roadway is merely restricted to vehicular traffic. Even the President, when he gave the order to close Pennsylvania Avenue, said the decision would not change very much except the traffic patterns in Washington. But a great deal more than that has changed. If you want to experience intense security, try driving to the White House—even as an invited guest, with permission to park on the grounds. A bunker mentality has taken hold.

Massive concrete barriers block Pennsylvania Avenue, keeping out unwanted traffic. The fortress-like effect is compounded by dozens of concrete posts inset into the White House sidewalk.

Police cruisers patrol every intersection.

Vans—engines running, manned by officers with dogs—wait in the parking areas.

Uniformed Secret Service officers guard their new security stations, circulate among the tourists and patrol the White House lawn.

Motorcycle officers and even officers on bicycles are there, too.

If you look carefully, you will see figures on the White House roof itself, binoculars in hand.

Drive into a parking area and you are stopped by armed officers who ask if anyone has given you explosives to carry.

You are told to pull forward, where you are met by another officer, who asks to check your trunk as he puts his bomb-sniffing dog through its paces.

Mr. President, I think it is safe to say that very few visitors feel at home these days at the White House. The openness is gone. The closeness is gone. It has all been replaced with intimidation and fear. The place is secure now—secure as a fortress—but what have we sacrificed for that security?

The cost of trading security for freedom cannot be calculated mathematically, but the cost can indeed be measured in three ways.

First, the knee-jerk closing of a major artery such as Pennsylvania Avenue has had a devastating financial cost for the District of Columbia and its businesses, its commuters, its tourists, its residents. With the avenue closed for three blocks, and several surrounding streets blocked off as well, the people who live, work, and visit here and give life to this city are begin-

ning to feel choked off from it. Nearby businesses and offices are no longer as accessible to employees and clients. Traffic hassles compound the problem. A great deal of parking space has been eliminated. And most troubling is the fact that the President ordered the closing of Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Treasury Department carried it out, without any consultation with the District, without any direct public input from the people this action would most disrupt. Add up the lost parking revenue, the cost of changing street signs and signals, higher Metrobus subsidies, and police overtime, and as of June 30 of this year, the District estimated that closing Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House had cost nearly \$750,000. No one is willing to guess how high that figure might be today.

And that does not begin to take into account the other indirect costs of the closing. How has this affected tour bus operators? They can no longer drive their customers—many of whom are strapped for time, or unable to walk the extra three or four blocks—to drive past the White House.

How has this affected the public bus system? In order to provide the same services it offered before the Pennsylvania Avenue shutdown, transit officials estimate they will have to spend up to \$200,000 more every year by adding new buses and new drivers.

How has this affected local businesses and the customers who park nearby? That impact has yet to be calculated.

Mr. President, the people who depend on open access to Pennsylvania Avenue for their livelihoods say they have accepted the present closure, but they are not going along with the idea that the avenue must be blockaded forever. That case has simply not been made, they say. I agree.

The second measure of the cost of this closing is the direct hit it means for the taxpayers. The Federal Government has since repaid the District for some of the \$750,000 in costs but, of course, that means the taxpayers have once again been handed the bill. And there are more bills to come.

At an open house today at the White House Visitor Center, the National Park Service is soliciting public input into the future of this vital stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue. They have devised what they call an "interim beautification plan" for the 1,600-foot strip of the avenue between Lafayette Park and the White House. It involves replacing large sections of the asphalt with grass, replacing the police cruisers at each end of the avenue with guard booths equipped with steel barricades, and replacing the old concrete barriers with new concrete barriers disguised as planters.

"Beautification," if that is what you want to call it, does not come cheaply. Implementing this plan will cost the taxpayers an additional \$1.3 million, and it is only temporary. The proposed

permanent, and certainly more expensive, plan for the site will be put in place just a couple of years from now.

Most Americans will not have the opportunity to visit the White House Visitor Center today to offer their comments. Most will not even know that the future of Pennsylvania Avenue is under discussion. But if they were here, I know they would have strong feelings they would want to share about the Government's plans to limit public access to the White House.

And that is the third way to measure the price we pay when we trade security for freedom: by calculating the high cost of Washington's paranoia on the national psyche.

Mr. President, all Americans are deeply concerned about the safety of their President. The security measures used to protect him must be well thought out, appropriate, and thorough. I do not question the desire to afford him every ounce of security we can muster, but I do question whether we can satisfy that desire without sacrificing the people's freedoms. The balance between security and freedom has been tipped too far in favor of security.

Mr. Mark McCurry, the President's spokesman, says the American people "will have greater access to the front of the White House as a result of some of the changes they want to make." But that just is not so. How can we cut off traffic from a historic stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue and claim we are improving access?

Once the ball starts rolling, where does it stop? Already, the drastic security measures undertaken on Pennsylvania Avenue have set a precedent and are being mirrored here on Capitol Hill. Access to two streets on the Senate side of the Capitol have been shut off. Parking has been eliminated or restricted in many places. Security at the Capitol itself has been tightened dramatically. Officials in other Federal buildings are asking that parking meters be removed from their sidewalks, too.

Where does it end? How much of Washington, DC, are we going to have to rope off before the public figures out we simply do not want them here? As tragic as it sounds, that is the message we are sending to America.

Mr. President, on behalf of the American people who are not here to stand up for themselves, I ask my colleagues to join me in denouncing the assault on our freedoms being undertaken on Pennsylvania Avenue. President Clinton has gone too far, but it is not too late to halt his efforts to close off the people's house on America's Main Street from the people themselves.

I urge that we take action now, before a single spadeful of earth is turned.

In Le Roy, MN, population 900, the town's weekly newspaper reflected recently on Washington's current obsession with security. I would like to read some of it:

"We also wonder about the cost of the security around the Nation's capitol and if this much security is truly needed," wrote Al Evans in the *Le Roy Independent*.

"We are sure any midwesterner visiting there would question this. Perhaps we in this area of the country are too trusting, but there are limits to security measures.

The folks in Le Roy, MN, understand that closed streets do not equate with an open democracy. Why do not the Washington bureaucrats and politicians get it?

For 195 years, the address 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue has been a symbol of a government accessible to the people. Yet our government of the people, by the people, and for the people is slowly becoming a government just a little farther away from the people, too.

It is time we stood up and said "that is enough."

I yield the floor.

THE BUDGET

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I will just take a few minutes of the Senate's time to comment on the set of issues that we will be spending much time on over the weeks ahead, those specifically related to our budget, the reconciliation legislation, which will also include legislation to reduce the tax burden on Americans, and the whole issue that surrounds that concerning the economy of our country.

As I traveled throughout my State during last year's campaign and as I have traveled since that campaign, I have heard Americans and Michiganders in particular tell me two things. Both of the things they have told me I believe are included in and really are the centerpieces of the budget that we are working to achieve here in the U.S. Senate.

The first thing they tell us is that they want a budget that is in balance. Americans and people in my State are frustrated by the fact that the U.S. Congress has gone a quarter of a century without bringing the budget into balance. They have to do that in their families. Most of our States and our local communities have to balance their budgets. The American people are frustrated when Washington cannot do the same thing, when we cannot bring ourselves to establish priorities, to set an agenda that allows us to spend no more than we take in.

People in my State also want a budget that is balanced and that is balanced legitimately. They are tired of fancy bookkeeping in Washington, bookkeeping which allows us to think we are doing better than we really are. That is why, I think, many people in my State applauded the President of the United States when he came to Congress not too long ago and, with bipartisan encouragement, said that we should use the statistics and the revenue estimates and the budget figures of the Congressional Budget Office at

both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue to make determinations as to where our Federal Government's deficit was.

Interestingly, of course, we now have a slight change in direction here in Washington. Here in the Congress, we have stuck to the ideal of balancing the budget and we have used legitimate statistics compiled by the Congressional Budget Office in calculating our budget to make sure it would be in balance based on the accurate readings of the CBO.

Unfortunately, now, as the actual rubber hits the road, at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, we have a detour. There what we see is a diversion away from the use of CBO statistics, a diversion away from the idea of using the same budgeting calculations that are used on Capitol Hill, and instead a throwback to days gone by when statistics that are used in rosy scenarios, to balance the budget not with tough choices and setting priorities, but rather making unrealistic estimates as to the economy's growth and unrealistic estimates as to the needs for various promises and a variety of things allowing to balance the budget through fancy bookkeeping.

I have to ask today, Mr. President, why has this occurred? Why have we moved backward, and why has the White House chosen this course of action? Most people know the answer is simple. Without making those kinds of calculations that only can be made inside the Office of Management and Budget, tough choices would have to be made. Politically unpopular choices would have to be made.

I ask another question today as well: Where was the balanced budget fervor in the White House earlier this year? Why has it come about so late in the game? Again, I suggest that it is more politics than it is public policy objectives.

Indeed, I sit on the Budget Committee, and earlier this year, in the spring, we had several representatives of the administration come before us to discuss the President's budget. When they did, of course, that original budget was not in balance. It did not project a balance in years 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7.

I asked, did you ever go through the exercise within the administration of coming up with a balanced budget or a budget that would reach balance in 7 years, recognizing that you might have done it, and concluded, for whatever reason, not to offer it because you did not want to establish the priorities that would be required to balance the budget? To my surprise, I was told that no one had ever gone through the exercise. This is as recently as the spring and, indeed, the budget we had been offered by the White House, by the administration, was the only budget that had been put together.

It makes me very suspicious, now, as we come to the end of this process, that suddenly we are told there is a budget, suddenly we are told there is a commitment to a balanced budget, and