

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. SPECTER. I fully appreciate the objection. And I thank my colleague. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996—CONFERENCE REPORT

The Senate continued with the consideration of the conference report.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I see my colleague from Florida is seeking recognition. The Senator from Arkansas has just about a 3-minute statement, if he will permit me to go forward. I will just take a few moments of the Senate's time this evening.

I rise tonight to voice my very, very strong opposition to the Department of Defense authorization conference report that is now before the U.S. Senate.

This conference report takes the unthinkable step of actually repealing a bipartisan piece of legislation which was written in 1983, by Senators ROTH, KASSEBAUM, GRASSLEY, myself and many others in this body. We set up a process for an office to test new weapons, in an independent, unbiased, untainted, and a very, very, realistic environment.

If enacted, this conference report that we are now discussing would be a gigantic step backwards in the war against \$600 hammers, thousand-dollar toilet seats, guns that do not shoot, bombs that do not explode, and planes that do not fly.

I truly believe, Mr. President, that if this conference report is enacted in its present form, the lives of our men and women who serve this country in the Armed Forces will be put needlessly at risk.

I hope my colleagues in the Senate are aware that this conference report contains a provision that would virtually eliminate the Pentagon's Office of the Director of Operational Testing and Evaluation by absolutely revoking its charter. Mr. President, no one has yet explained any reason whatsoever to take away the office and the department in that area of our Department of Defense that tests weapons before we go into mass production. It simply does not make sense.

Over the past 12 years, this testing office has been an unparalleled success. It has saved time, money, and, most importantly, it has saved the lives of our fighting forces by making weapons better and by keeping flawed systems out of the hands of our soldiers.

Support for the testing office has always been bipartisan, Mr. President. Former Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said that an independent weapons testing office "saved more lives" during Operation Desert Storm than perhaps any other single initiative. The current Secretary of Defense, William Perry, recently described this office as "the conscience of the acquisition process."

Mr. President, I was shocked to learn that this conference report revokes the charter for independent testing of our weapons. I could not believe it.

Because of this provision, I cannot and I will not vote for this conference report. I urge my colleagues to defeat this legislation.

Mr. President, I want to make it very clear that I do not fault my very good friend from South Carolina, the distinguished chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator THURMOND, for this language that undermines independent testing. From all reports that I have, he tried to keep the office of independent testing alive. I have always known that this flawed initiative originated not in the Senate but in the House of Representatives. In fact, the Senator from South Carolina, the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, supported the sense-of-the-Senate resolution approved by this Chamber as recently as August that voiced the Senate's strong opposition to revoking the charter for independent weapons testing.

Unfortunately, Mr. President, the Senate's position did not prevail in the conference committee. The wishes of the U.S. Senate to uphold and to support and to continue this office of independent testing were not granted.

I want to thank the chairman at this time for doing what he could in conference to stop, or at least to delay, the elimination of the office of independent testing. I only wish that he had been more successful in keeping the conference committee from endorsing an absolutely terrible idea.

As we begin sending American troops into Bosnia, it is wrong, it is dangerously shortsighted, for this Congress to propose eliminating that very office that has been so helpful, so successful in making sure that our weapons work properly in combat.

Mr. President, I will be voting against this conference report.

I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I would like to point out an inadvertent omission in the conference agreement statement of managers with respect to Air Force Program Element 602601F, Advanced Weapons. The conference agreement increased the authorization of the requested amount of \$124.4 million by \$11.0 million. Of that increase, \$5.0 million was intended by the conferees to authorize the continuation of the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program. As pointed out in the statement of managers accompanying the conference report, the conferees intend the remaining \$6 million of the increase to authorize the rocket propulsion technology program described in the House Report 104-131.

Mr. DOLE addressed the Chair. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, if I could just take a minute here, let me indi-

cate that I still do not know for certain what the program will be today, tomorrow, and Sunday. I had hoped we would have some serious budget negotiations.

I have just listened to the President of the United States. I must say I do not know who gives him advice, but I do not think he is telling the American people the truth. If he thinks he is engaged in serious budget discussions, then he ought to take a look at the budget.

I must say that this administration is for a one-way street. It is all right to cooperate with them, but they are not going to cooperate with anyone else. And I have made an effort to do that as recently as 48 hours ago on this floor.

I am a little frustrated that we have been 26 days now waiting for the administration to give us a legitimate offer to balance the budget in 7 years, using Congressional Budget Office estimates. It was my understanding, in talking with the President yesterday, that there would be a serious offer given to Republicans today. Anyone with any knowledge of the budget process could look at the offer made and tell you very quickly that it was not a serious offer. But here the President of the United States is getting on television saying that Republicans are recommending devastating cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, the environment and student loans after we put money back into those programs in our legitimate offer earlier today.

So I am almost convinced that there is no real desire on the part of this administration to do anything except to play politics with the budget—and play politics with senior citizens and play politics with every other interest group in America. We have made an effort time after time to meet the President halfway.

I believe the American people want a balanced budget in 7 years. They have indicated that. The President agreed to it, but we cannot do it with the same old smoke and mirrors.

In fact, \$54 billion of the savings today was "baseline adjustments," which is one example, and there are other examples in the President's bill. Tax cuts—he has tax cuts in his bill, too, I think—in what, the 5th year. If everything was not in balance, you would trigger over those tax cuts. That is another way of how they save \$23 billion. That is something that even Darman had not thought of when he was here. So they thought of a lot of good things down there.

But I would hope the President of the United States would contact this Senator and the Speaker of the House of Representatives—the three of us sit down and get serious. This is serious business. If we do not have some agreement, if we do not pass the continuing resolution by Sunday evening, the Government will shut down again.

One way to avoid that is to let us bring up the Labor-HHS bill, which the Democrats twice have objected to. We are going to ask consent—I guess we

have already asked consent. That has been objected to. There are about 180,000 Federal workers. But, again, the Democrats will not agree to bring it up unless we agree to everything they want—take out striker replacement, do not vote on the abortion amendments. In other words, what we will do as the minority, and then we will accept or let you bring it up on the floor.

So we would like to bring it up tonight and be on it all day tomorrow and all day Sunday. By Monday morning, maybe we could have it passed and go to conference and bring it back. That would be 180,000 Americans who could go to work.

We are going to send down to the President now State, Justice, Commerce. VA-HUD will be sent down to the President; Interior appropriations tomorrow. All he has to do is sign those bills, and that will take care of nearly all of the Federal employees. That will leave remaining the District of Columbia bill and Foreign Ops. If we can get an agreement to bring up Labor-HHS, let us pass that tomorrow or Sunday in the Senate.

So if the President is not willing to negotiate the balanced budget except on his terms, and he is not willing to sign the appropriations bills we send him except on his terms and is not willing to let us bring up one of the largest bills with the most Federal employees—Labor-HHS, we have been prepared for the past 2 or 3 months, but it has been objected to by the Democrats.

So I hope the American people understand, if people who are covered by that bill are not working on Monday, why they are not working on Monday.

So, again, I would say to the President of the United States, tell the American people the truth. Do not come on television, Mr. President, and say that we are devastating this and devastating that, because, in fact, you know that in our budget we added back billions of dollars in Medicare and Medicaid and made other real adjustments.

Maybe it is impossible. Maybe we are not going to get anything done.

If that is what the President wants, he ought to just tell us that so we can make alternative plans, pass a very stringent continuing resolution and assume that is all we are going to get done. But in the meantime, we are still working on our side. We are still trying to resolve the differences on the DC appropriations bill and on the foreign operations bill. And I hope that they would be ready for passage, if not today or tomorrow, on Monday.

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR,
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS
ACT, 1996

MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. DOLE. In an effort to make some headway on the Labor, HHS bill—we have already had two votes which we have lost on a party-line vote—I move to proceed to H.R. 2127, and I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to the consideration of H.R. 2127, the Labor, HHS appropriations bill.

Senators Robert Dole,
Arlen Specter, James
Inhofe, Rick Santorum,
Thad Cochran, Trent
Lott, Strom Thurmond,
Don Nickles, Craig
Thomas, Mitch
O'Connell, Slade Gorton,
Dirk Kempthorne,
Robert F. Bennett, Hank
Brown, Connie Mack,
and Mark Hatfield.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. I would only seek the floor if the majority leader is completed.

Mr. DOLE. I yield the floor.

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS AND THE
CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I did not have the opportunity to hear all of the comments of the majority leader. Obviously, there are legitimate points of view that are very different as we consider the circumstances we are in right now.

The majority leader said we ought to have the truth about what is happening right now. His version of the truth and mine could not be more different. My version of the truth is—and I think it is shared by virtually every Member on this side of the aisle—it was the Republicans this afternoon who got up and walked out of the room. They were the ones to say, "It's over. We don't want to deal with you any more. You're not acting in good faith."

My version of the truth is that there is absolutely no reason why we should connect the continuing resolution with our effort in the reconciliation bill, none at all. There is absolutely no connection. And the reason why we are going through this charade right now with the appropriations bills is because

they know that we are way overdue in completing these appropriations bills. We should have done them a long time ago.

And I will tell you one of the reasons we are overdue. Because they are putting stuff that does not belong in appropriations business on that bill. What does striker replacement have to do with health and human services? Absolutely nothing. We know that. They know that.

And on so many of these pieces of legislation there is absolutely irrelevant, completely unassociated matters legislatively that have nothing to do with appropriations, and that is the hangup, and they know it. If you want to pass that appropriations bill, we can do it by 6 o'clock, and it is now 5 to 6. We could do it by 6 o'clock if we would sit down in a serious way and take the extraneous things out and begin dealing with it.

That bill is going to be vetoed. We do not have to talk about it a long time. But we are not willing to do that because of those extraneous issues and everybody knows it.

So let us be clear. We do not have to shut the Government down because there is a pick with the President about whether he has been working in good faith or not. There is no reason to tell people one more time that they are out of work for whatever length of time. That is not necessary. We want a clean continuing resolution. We ought to have it tonight. We ought to pass it, and we ought to get serious about negotiations.

Now, we know as well that one of the biggest differences between Republicans and Democrats all through this reconciliation process has been the tax cut. And for whatever reason, the Republicans continue to say that is a nonnegotiable item; that we want to hold on to that tax cut virtually at all cost.

But that is not where we started. Where we started was the Republican insistence that we go to a 7-year balanced budget. The majority leader said it has to be on the President's terms. Well, the President said he had a 10-year balanced budget. And many of us supported the idea of balancing the budget in 10, 7, it does not matter, but the President had 10 years. The President said, "As an indication of my good faith, I will go from 10 to 7."

That is what he said. Now, the President also said we have a very big difference in our projection on what the economy is going to do when we balance the budget than what CBO does. There is a profound difference. CBO is saying that once we go through all the pain, there is really no gain. Once we cut all these programs as deeply as the Republican budget proposes and we balance the budget, interest rates are actually going to go up, unemployment is going to go up, corporate profits are going to go down, overall economic growth is going to do down, but we still think it is a great idea to get out there and balance the budget.