

cut out all congressional pay and send all of us home. That would certainly go a long way toward balancing the budget now.

Everybody understands we cannot balance the budget now. We presented a budget that will balance the budget of this country in the year 2002. Everybody knows and understands that, I hope, and I hope the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. VOLKMER] will better understand that. He said he has been here since 1981 and frankly that is part of the problem. We have had too many people who have been here too long, who have spent too much money over the years and, by golly, it is just time we stopped spending so much money.

I really got up here, though, to talk about another matter that I am extremely excited about and something that took place on the floor of this House several days ago, and that is the passage of the national Defense authorization conference report. The report passed in the House, it also passed in the Senate yesterday, and it is headed to the White House as we speak.

The President has given every indication that he is going to use the same veto pen that he used on several other authorization bills and veto this bill. I hope he changes his mind. I want to encourage him to change his mind, because in my opinion the national Defense authorization conference report that we passed in the House, has been passed in the Senate, is a good bill. It is not a perfect bill. There are a lot of ways that perhaps we could improve it. But it is a good bill, and it does a lot of things that are absolutely necessary from the standpoint of the national security of this country that have needed to be done for many years.

First of all, one thing this bill does is give all of our active military personnel a pay raise. Admittedly, it is only 2.4 percent, I wish it could have been 24 percent, but it does give the military personnel of this country an immediate pay raise.

I am very pleased, when I go on the three military bases that are located in my district and have an opportunity to talk to the young men and women, all of whom are volunteers in the military, when I talk to those young men and women and find out that without question they are absolutely the finest young men and women that America has to offer. It gives me a real sense of pride, and I am extremely proud of those young men and women. If anybody deserves a pay raise at this very difficult time in our budget process, it is the men and women in military service.

Right now here we are at Christmas-time. Here we are dealing with a very serious crisis in a very cold and distant land called Bosnia, a country which a lot of folks in this country had never heard of before 30 or 60 days ago. We are sending 20,000 of our finest to Bosnia at this time of year. The President has an opportunity to give those folks a very special Christmas present, to say thank you for a job well done.

That Christmas present will be a 2.4-percent increase in their pay.

Another thing that this bill does is it provides a 5.2-percent increase in what we call BAQ housing allowance. What BAQ housing allowance is, it is a provision which pays to military personnel a certain amount of money to allow them to rent an apartment or rent a home that is off the military base where they are serving.

If we do not have military housing on base, a lot of times our personnel are required to go off base, and we provide them some money to do that with. It is never enough to fully fund what it costs for an apartment or a house but it does help out. We provide an increase in that. Mr. President, that increase is needed. I urge you to sign it.

Another thing we do is we equalize the retired military COLA's to retired civilian COLA's. That is something that is an extremely important aspect of this bill. Mr. President, I urge you to look at this bill. If for no other reason than from these standpoints, please sign the Defense authorization bill.

THE BUDGET PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

BOSNIA

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, let me pick up where the previous speaker left off in the sense of talking about Bosnia for a second. The first West Virginians are now passing through Fort Dix, NJ, Mr. Speaker, en route to Bosnia.

As Reserve units are called up and others are activated and, of course, active duty, I think it is most likely that we will see a lot of West Virginians going to Bosnia. West Virginians always answer the call. Certainly the C-130 squadrons, the 167th in Martinsburg and the 130th in Charleston, are just about everywhere on the globe anytime there is a problem. They have been to Bosnia as well before.

And so at this Christmas time we need to reflect on what is happening, and as these West Virginia troops pass through Fort Dix and as the others activate or are shipped out.

I voted against the initial military involvement, not because I questioned the good intentions of the policy, and certainly it is well-intentioned, but I questioned whether or not the military would have the ability and means to carry it out.

That question has been answered in an affirmative vote here on the House. The decision has been made. The troops are going, and we must now all stand behind our troops and I am going to make sure they have whatever is necessary to carry out their mission.

I am encouraged by the fact that the rules of engagement for these troops are different than we have seen in Somalia, than we have seen in other areas, where we have now the ability to hit back and hit back hard should our troops be threatened in any way.

But as these troops leave this country, millions of American citizens are asking, what about the other parts of our Government? We know these troops are going to operate efficiently and effectively and carry out their mission. Why are not other parts of Government?

Why do we have parts of our Government shut down? That is a fair question. We are now in our 11th day cumulative this year, the Federal Government or parts of the Federal Government not working. That is an all-time record, I believe, for the Republic, certainly for this century.

There are two parts really that have to be dealt with. Unfortunately the two processes have been brought together by the leadership of this House. One part is the annual budget, what you do to fund the Government on a day-to-day basis for a year at a time, for the fiscal year 1996.

The other part is the budget debate that is taking place in negotiations between the White House and the Republicans and Democrats in the House and the Senate for a 7-year balanced budget. Running the Government day-to-day, one process. Balanced budget, the next. Regrettably, the leadership under Speaker GINGRICH have chosen to tie these two inextricably, and so the Government is held hostage while these important negotiations take place.

So what happens to those who say, well, really are we seeing much of a shutdown in Government? Yes, we are seeing cumulative right now about 60,000 students who will not be able to fill out applications for Pell grants and other student loans as the next semester comes on. We are seeing thousands who had vacation plans turned away.

Well, vacation plans, is that very important? No, but what about people who call the EPA hot line for drinking water violations and want some assurances about the environment? We are finding that those folks are not going to have their calls answered.

When this leadership, the Republican leadership, took over in the spring, I complimented them, not because I agreed with the Contract with America, but I thought that they brought it to the floor in an orderly way and in a very purposeful way and they moved it through quickly. It was not much fun for anybody but they did it. They demonstrated an ability to command the floor.

Unfortunately I have to say, in the same vein, I have seen a total breakdown of that ability in the appropriations process. I recognize this is a complicated area. It sounds like it ought to just be beltway gobbledygook except for this.

The appropriations process is very important. We have 13 appropriation bills that fund the Government on a yearly basis. October 1 is the deadline to get them all passed. We had a handful at best, three or four, that had

passed and been signed into law on October 1.

By just this week, I believe we now have seven that have been signed into law. We still have six, and they are fairly big ones, that have not been signed into law. Some of them have not even been taken up by the other body.

I yield to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DURBIN], a member of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to report to my colleague from West Virginia that I just left the conference committee on the District of Columbia. The gentleman would not believe what is going on there.

The Republicans have failed to enact the District of Columbia appropriations bill which was due October 1. We are now almost 3 months into this fiscal year. The District of Columbia Government, their local funds as well as Federal funds, are all appropriated funds, so this government is literally running without authority.

In providing police protection, they are trying to keep the streets safe for us to drive on, they are trying to keep the community as safe as they can for the tourists who are visiting Washington, and some of my colleagues who have just joined me on the floor here from the State of Georgia as well as from the State of Wisconsin blame President Clinton for this. They said the President is responsible, and yet the fact is we have not sent the appropriation bill to the President, almost 3 months into this fiscal year.

A REPUBLICAN VIEW OF THE BUDGET PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SCHIFF] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I want to take up where the gentleman from West Virginia just left off. That is, when we talk about in the short term why is the Government in this partial shutdown mode, as it has been called, the gentleman is mechanically correct when he explains how our systems work, that a number of agencies are funded through a total of 13 separate appropriations bills, and of those 13 appropriations bills, 7 have been passed by Congress and signed by the President.

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Once that occurs, there is no longer a need for a continuing resolution to be passed to keep these agencies open, which is to say the agencies function whether there is or whether there is not a continuing resolution.

However, the gentleman did not mention the fact that with respect to the other six appropriations bills, three of them were passed by the Congress and were just recently vetoed by the President of the United States. The appropriations bill for the Veterans' Administration and independent agencies, for the Department of the Interior and for

the Departments of Commerce, State, and Justice, those are contained in three bills that the President vetoed. If the President of the United States had signed the appropriations bills for those agencies, they would be open right now regardless of the impasse over a continuing resolution.

Now, it is important to say that the Democratic side has continually said why does the Congress not do its job and pass appropriations bills, but when we do pass appropriations bills, the President vetoes them.

The gentleman is suggesting that is up to the President of the United States to sign appropriations bills as part of his duties. I do not think they are going to suggest that.

I would like to make the further point, Mr. Speaker, that the President vetoed these bills, these three bills because he felt the amount of spending or other policies within them does not fit his long-term view of where the Government should be going. The President has that prerogative under the Constitution to veto appropriations bills, or any other bills, for that matter. There is a specific procedure in the Constitution for that.

The point I am making is there is no difference, no difference at all, between the President tying long-term policy to his vetoing three appropriations bills which would have reopened those agencies today and the Congress tying the continuing resolution for the rest of the agencies or these agencies, too, without an appropriations bill to Congress' view of a long-term policy for the Government. Both sides are now doing the same thing.

The brings me to the central point of where why I took the floor right now, which is to talk about that long-range policy. Both sides, both the President and the Congress, have said we want to reach a balanced budget, and I hope that goes without saying. The national debt right now is almost \$5 trillion that our children and grandchildren will have to pay back someday.

Further, the interest we have to pay on this borrowed money, and we pay interest on money we borrow like any individual would or any business would, the interest we pay is over \$200 billion a year. That is more than 10 percent of our current budget.

When I talk about the effect, when I hear talk about the effect of spending on programs, imagine how much we could spend on important programs or allowing tax reductions if we had the use of \$200 billion plus a year that taxpayers already send to Washington and, from an economic point of view, we throw out the window because interest buys you nothing. But we have to pay it in order to borrow more, just like anyone else would.

When the Government went through this partial shutdown a month ago, the Government was reopened under an agreement between the President and the Congress that said, among other things, that by the end of the year the parties would reach a balanced budget

in 7 years, using the Congressional Budget Office economic projections, although the Congressional Budget Office was expected to, and I believe has, consulted with other agencies and other individuals, and protect certain spending programs. The Congress passed a budget that the Congress believes meets all of those requirements.

Now, I do not agree with every single item and every single choice in that budget. But the Congress as a whole, the majority, believes that it meets the requirements of our agreement of a month ago.

As everyone knows, the President vetoed that budget, vetoed it on the basis it did not adequately protect his spending priorities. Again, that is the President's prerogative.

What the Congress is saying now is, Mr. President, if you believe that the budget we passed does not comply with your priority of spending, show us what your priority of spending is under the terms of an agreement; in other words, put out a budget proposal which is balanced in 7 years and which uses Congressional Budget Office economic projections, and then show us how you would protect your priorities. There is nothing in that that says how the President of the United States has to set spending levels. There is nothing in there that says he has to cut spending for programs or anything else, only that the President of the United States abide by the agreement he made a month ago.

Today the Vice President of the United States said the President refuses to comply with the agreement he made a month ago, and that is why we are at this impasse right now.

THE BUDGET IMPASSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COBLE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. HOYER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, the American public must be very perplexed. In addition, of course, we know that they are very angry and, very frankly, a number of us that sit in this body are very angry.

We began this session with the election of a new leadership. Speaker GINGRICH announced a new order, an order committed to revolutionary change. We have had, to some degree, a revolution. It is not, as so many revolutions are, not a pretty thing to watch.

The Contract With America, which was the plan of this so-called revolution, talked about, in two of its first three items, responsibility, personal responsibility, and fiscal responsibility. Personal responsibility was urged on all Americans to do that which would make their lives better and, consequently, the lives of their families and their communities and their State and Nation better and more productive, more successful.