That is the strong message my freshman colleagues and I bring with us back to Washington. And for our colleagues who may not have ventured beyond the confines of the Beltway recently, that is the message the American people are demanding we do not forget.

Mr. HELMS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

Mr. HELMS. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. HELMS and Mr. FAIRCLOTH pertaining to the introduction of S. 1520 are located in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

FRESHMAN TOUR

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I rise to follow my friend, the Senator from Minnesota, in noting what I thought was useful, and that was the tour of freshman Senators throughout the country, actually, starting here in Washington, on through the Midwest, and ending up in Cheyenne, WY.

It seemed to me to be a very useful kind of an activity. Our theme was ''Promises Made, Promises Kept.'' I think it was appropriate that 9 of the 11 new freshmen in this body participated. We made 10 stops in 9 States to talk about this kind of commitment to the things that had brought us to the Senate in 1994. I think we all agreed in general that there was a message in 1994, and that message basically was the Federal Government is too big and costs too much and we need to change the regulatory restrictions on the opportunities in this country.

That has been the effort of this freshman class, and to a large extent this body during that year. We have felt some kinship in that we have come here together, we did share this commitment, and we were committed to change. We had just come from an election where, I think, that message perhaps permeates a bit more than those who have been here before, perhaps.

There has been a great deal of success, I think, in that message. We have not accomplished specifically all the things that we would like to but the major change has been the turn of the debate. I think most anyone who has watched the Congress over the last 25 years would have to say that the conversation has basically been centered around those programs that have been in place for 25 years. They largely came in the Lyndon Johnson Great Society time, and each year most of the time has been spent saying, ''How much more money do we put into the program? If it has not worked as well as it should, we will put more money in.''

Now that debate has changed somewhat. The debate has change markedly. We are talking for the first time in 25 years about a balanced budget. We are talking for the first time in 25 years about how you spend less rather than more. That is a significant change in the framing of the debate in this country, a significant change in the direction that this Congress would take, and hopefully that this country would take.

We have talked about things like reducing spending as opposed to continuing to add more to the deficit, to add more to a $5 trillion debt. We talked about a balanced budget. We have not had a balanced budget in almost 30 years. This is the first time that a balanced budget has been presented to the President of the United States. Unfortunately, he saw fit to veto it.

We have talked about entitlement changes. Most anybody who looks at our financial situation fairly has to see that we have to do something about entitlements. You cannot change the direction of spending by simply talking about those things that are discretionary. Two-thirds of the spending is in entitlements. You have to change that. Of course it is difficult. But we have set about to do that. We have talked about welfare reform, to make welfare the kind of program that most everyone believes it ought to be, where you help people who need help, but help them get back into the system, back into the workplace.

Middle-income tax reform—instead of the largest tax increase in the history, which is what we had 2 years ago, we are talking about middle-income tax relief. Also line-item veto, term limits, regulatory reform.

That is what has happened. We are very pleased about that and we took that message to the country. In addition to that message, I think we took some facts. We sort of evolved into politics by posturing and to a situation of policy by perception rather than facts. It is ironic. We have the ability to present facts to the whole world in a second. Fifty years ago it was months after something was done here before people even knew about it. Now we have this great opportunity, but unfortunately we are doing governing by advertising, doing governing by spinning.

We talk about gutting Medicare. Nobody in this place is interested in gutting Medicare. In fact, when you look of course at the numbers, why, obviously, it is not. That is what we talked about.

We talked about fundamental change. We heard a great deal of positive response to that. People who are aware of the benefits that come from balancing the budget, the fact that we can lower interest rates, reduce the cost of mortgages, and reduce the cost of loans to send your kids to school, and we can talk about being responsible for going into a new century without continuing to add costs to the debt for our kids to pay.

I want to say that I think this trip was very useful and I am pleased that my colleagues were willing to take their time to go. I am particularly pleased they went to Cheyenne, WY. We had the largest town meeting we have ever had there. Not everyone is in agreement how to do it, but the preponderance of people say we need to be responsible. We need to look to the future. One little guy in the audience had a computer. We talked about $5 trillion debt, he divided it by the number of people and announced we each owe $17,000, and we were dazzled a little by the technology, but the answer is right, we do.

Mr. President, what we need here is leadership. We need to provide for the direction of this country. We do not need obstructionism. We do not need insistence on the status quo. This is a great country with a great future. We have the best opportunity that we have ever had to strengthen that future and make it a land of responsibility and the land of opportunity.

EXTENSION OF TIME FOR MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time for morning business be extended until 3:40.

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

CONCERN OVER CONGRESSIONAL RECESS

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to express my concern about our being out of session for the next considerable period of time in the context of the gridlock and breakdown over the negotiations of the budget. It is my hope that the negotiators will continue the budget negotiations because of the importance of reaching a resolution on those subjects, and that we will not have a recurrence of the shutdown of Government, as we have had twice in the course of the past several weeks, or that there will not be a resort to the debt ceiling issue as an instrument of, candidly speaking, political blackmail—which I think will be unsuccessful. If we are not able to resolve the budget disagreements, that we will at least crystallize the issue and make that the election issue in 1996.

I made this point back on November 14, on the second day of the first governmental shutdown. It seemed to me from the start that this was bad policy. From the reaction of the American people, that view was confirmed. That is simply not the way to run the Government of the United States.

I think the budget negotiators, however, have worked hard and there has been considerable progress made. I have taken a look, in reviewing the issues, and believe that the negotiators with more work can come to a conclusion. The central point is to have a balanced budget—a matter of enormous importance.

There has been an agreement in principle by the Republican-controlled Congress and Republican-controlled White—almost a Freudian slip, to make the Republicans control the White House as well. We have a divided