

or his designee be in control of the first 40 minutes and that Senator THOMAS or his designee be in control of the remaining 20 minutes.

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

Mr. NICKLES. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE DEMOCRATIC AGENDA

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, we had asked for some time today to discuss the agenda that we have developed over recent months, to talk about what we think we ought to be doing and where we think this country ought to be heading. I am going to speak for a few minutes. My colleague, Senator REID from Nevada, will address a number of the topics, and our colleague, Senator BOXER from California, will address a number of them. We will similarly have a discussion tomorrow about the same issues.

The reason we wanted to do this, it is easy to be against things. It does not take any skill or any great intelligence to be opposed to things. I think it was Mark Twain who once, when asked if he would participate in a debate, said, "Fine, provided that I can be on the opposing side." They said, "Why?" And he said, "That will take no preparation."

It takes no skill, time, or preparation to oppose. Those who oppose can do it immediately and quickly without much thought.

The question is not what are we opposed to. The question in Congress is, what do we stand for? Why are we here? What are we doing? What do we want for this country?

I begin by saying, in the end and in the final analysis, the question of whether we are on the right track in this country, whether we are headed in the right direction, is not measured by any myriad of statistics put out by the Federal Reserve Board or the Treasury Department or the Census Bureau or any organization in this town or elsewhere; it is, finally, measured when people sit down at the supper table at home at night and ask themselves, how are we doing? Is our standard of living improving? Are we moving ahead? Are we able to find good jobs, keep good jobs? Are our children able to find good jobs? Are we secure? Is there crime in the street that threatens us? Do our kids have an opportunity to go to good schools? Are our roads in good shape?

A whole range of questions like that relate to the determination of whether individual families are doing better. In shorthand, the way of saying it is, if at the end of the day the standard of liv-

ing in this country is not increasing, then we are not moving in the right direction. The question is, what kind of choices, what menu of opportunities exist for us to make decisions in this country in both the private sector and the public sector that increase the standard of living, keep us moving forward?

As a society, if you read the history of our country, you will discover that we have always had a circumstance where, generally speaking, parents believed things work better for their children and they were willing to do things to make life better for their children—investing in schools, for example, so that we would have the best education in the world. Those are the kinds of things that created a circumstance where our economy has been a remarkable economy, producing jobs and opportunities, so that standards of living increased in our country routinely and regularly.

We have now reached a period where we are more challenged in those areas. We now have what is called a global economy in which 2 or 3 billion workers around the world now compete with about two-thirds of the American work force, and many of those other people around the world work for very low wages. It is not unusual to hear the stories of 10-year-olds, 12-year-olds, 20- or 40-year-olds working for 10 cents an hour, 20 cents an hour or \$1 an hour, for 10 hours or 15 hours a day in other parts of world. The product of that work shows up in Pittsburgh or Denver or New York or Fargo, to be sold on the shelf and purchased by the American consumer.

It all relates to this question: Are we doing the things necessary in the public sector and the private sector to improve life in America and to increase the standard of living in our country?

About a year ago, Senator DASCHLE, the minority leader, asked Senator REID and myself to engage in an effort with other members of our caucus, a fairly substantial group of the Democratic caucus, to put together an analysis of what is it that represents our positive agenda, what kind of things do we want to see accomplished in Congress, what kind of ideas exist that we think will improve life in America. We held meeting after meeting and tried to get the best ideas that existed among those from the Democratic side of the aisle here in Congress in order to develop an agenda. The Senator from Nevada was very active in that with me, and the Senator from California, Senator BOXER was very active. We developed an agenda and worked with the Democratic caucus on that agenda.

Following that, we took that as a starting point and then worked with the members of the Democratic caucus in the House of Representatives and with President Clinton and others and synthesized this and developed this into a fairly common agenda that says: Here is what we are for, here is why we are here, here is what we want to have

happen that we think will improve life in America.

Let me give you some examples. The agenda talks about "families first." This is families first. I talk about it in the context of jobs, kids, and values. That is what people who sit around the dinner table talk about. What kind of jobs do we have? What kind of opportunity do we have? What kind of security do we have? What about our kids; how are the schools? What about crime? What about values? What are they seeing on television? A whole series of issues surrounding families, American families.

We talk about it in the context of responsibility and security. First, we say we believe that we ought to have a balanced Federal budget. We believe it is possible, we believe it is achievable, and we believe it ought to be done. It ought to be done the right way.

There are some who would balance the budget with all the wrong priorities. Last year I spoke at length about those who would say, "Let us cut the Star Schools Program by 40 percent and increase the star wars program by 100 percent."

Now, that is a wrongheaded approach, but we should balance the Federal budget. The era of big government is over. Our agenda does not suggest that Government can, should, or will solve all of the problems of this country. But we can contribute in the right way. So we say we ought to balance the Federal budget. That is part of the democratic agenda.

We ought to help small businesses, medium-sized businesses, and others in this country thrive, survive, and create jobs and compete. There are a series of ways to do that, and we talk about that in the agenda.

We ought to also reinvest in our communities and infrastructure. We ought to make sure that the basic things that deal with everyday life—roads, bridges, rail systems, and others—are up to date and are not decaying.

Then we talk about individual responsibility and a welfare system that works. We call it work first. That is what we stand for—work first. We say, especially in this proposal for welfare, that we ought to get tough with deadbeat parents. Why on earth should other taxpayers be stuck paying tens of billions of dollars that is owed especially by fathers who have left their families and decided they are not going to pay a cent for the welfare of their children, so those deadbeats say to the rest of the taxpayers, "You pick up the tab of something I will not pay for," which is basic care for their children. We say that has to stop. That is part of welfare reform as well.

A national crusade to end this burgeoning teenage pregnancy in this country is part of our agenda. That, of course, starts at home, in the home, in the community. But we believe that is an important element of what we ought to be doing to try to improve life in this country.

On the issue of security and crime, we think the President's proposal to put more cops on the street, on the beat, to have more community policing, makes eminent good sense. We support that and would increase it. We believe that there are initiatives to keep kids off the street and out of gangs that ought to be employed. Communities know best how to do that, and we can help those communities with programs and resources.

We believe that we ought to make an even greater effort to clean the drugs out of our schools. We ought to say to everybody in this country who is on probation or on parole that you are going to be drug tested while you are on probation or parole.

Our agenda talks about retirement security. We say those who would dip into employee pension funds and leave the pension funds vulnerable are doing a disservice to the people who work in this country. Stiffer penalties for the abuse of pension funds and a crack-down on companies who have taken the money that you have earned and that you have saved in that pension funds is part of our agenda.

Making pensions portable, to move from one job to another, encouraging companies to make pensions available. Half of the American work force does not have a pension.

The issue of health care. We have already passed a health care bill that we have pushed hard for, which makes health care insurance portable and eliminates, in many instances, the pre-existing-condition requirement.

Those are the kinds of things that are in our agenda. With respect to the issue of jobs, we believe that it is time to say to American corporations, and to all companies, that we want you to create jobs in this country, not move jobs overseas. Our agenda says we are going to take the first baby step—and it is only a baby step, but we are going to force it to be taken—to shut down this idiotic and perverse tax benefit that says you can close your American plant, move your jobs overseas, and the taxpayers will give you a benefit. There is \$2.2 billion of reward in our Tax Code to go to companies who close American plants and shut off jobs here and move overseas. We say in this agenda that, if you cannot take that first baby step, we do not have a chance of solving the jobs problem in this country.

Well, Mr. President, the families first agenda is not a big government solution to what ails our country. This is a wonderful, remarkable country filled with strength, filled with, I think, hope and optimism, a country that needs to be led by people with a vision and agenda that says here are the practical steps that we can take to make this a better country, to provide for opportunity and to provide for hope for all Americans. That is why we constructed an agenda. Is it perfect? No. Does it move us in the right direction? Yes.

This is not about appealing to special interests. It is not, as so often happens

in this town, responding to the needs of the powerful. But it is about putting the families first, trying to understand that when all the dust settles and the day is ended, the standard by which we measure whether America has progressed is one in which we ask ourselves: Have we improved life in this country for working families?

Mr. President, let me now turn to my colleague from Nevada, Senator REID, who cochaired the effort with me in the Senate caucus, and Senator REID will continue to discuss part of this agenda. He will be followed by Senator BOXER.

Mr. REID. Would the Chair advise the Senator how much time is left under the control?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota has 27 minutes 35 seconds.

Mr. REID. Will the Chair advise the Senator when I have used 10 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as Senator DORGAN indicated, we were asked by the minority leader to be coauthors of a Democratic task force to come up with an agenda for the Democrats. We were coauthors, and we had a number of people who worked on the task force. The Senator from California, Senator BOXER, was one that attended, I think, every meeting that we held of the task force. I also think it is important, Mr. President, to note that we did not do any polling to determine how we should stand on issues. We had people come in and talk to us. We came up with an agenda not based on opinion polls, but based on our gut, what we felt was the right thing to do for this country.

After having made that decision, Mr. President, we presented our task force results to the Democratic minority, the leadership here, and they accepted, with some revisions, what we did. We then asked every member of the caucus to make some remarks, to go over what we had done, and to get back to us with the changes they thought should be made in our agenda. A significant number of Senators told us what they felt should be changed. Many of those we were able to incorporate in the final product.

After that, Mr. President, we went to the ranking members and made a presentation to them of what we had come up with. They approved of what we did. After that, we again took it to the entire caucus. They accepted what we did. At that time, the minority leader, Senator DASCHLE, started a series of meetings with Representative GEPHARDT, the minority leader in the House of Representatives. After several weeks of consultations and meetings, there was an agreement on refining what we had done here in the Senate. Following that, the presentation was made to the President, the executive branch of Government, and they approved of it. Then there was a final roll-out of this product. We are very proud of what we have done. We believe that this agenda gives Democrats

across the Nation a view of how we stand on issues.

The agenda is designed to do some good for American families, instead of what we believe is a misguided scheme to reshape America, which has been offered this past year and a half.

This new agenda features realistic, moderate, achievable ways to help every hard-working American family. It is the families first agenda, Mr. President. It is an important program because we, first of all, talk about security. There are all kinds of different securities that we must be concerned with. A healthy, safe family certainly is a start. Before you can discuss any of the security issues, you have to understand that we believe American families deserve economic and personal security, paycheck security, health care security, retirement security, and personal security.

Let us first talk about personal security. Never in the history of this country have we had such difficult problems with security for kids. I am a father of five children, and it was a big occasion for us when our kids started school because the kids were getting into a new environment. It was a big occasion in our life when we would take the kids to school the first day. But basically after that the kids were safe. They either went on a bus or lived close enough that they walked. Kids did not have to worry about being beaten up or shot on the way to school. But now they do. I can remember a real trauma in the life of one of my children. They had been sprayed with a water gun on the way home. Not anymore. Kids are sprayed with bullets from real guns. They are injured, maimed, and killed. These days we have to be concerned about a world where we have this violence. All across America violence from drugs and gangs is creeping into the halls of our schools and streets in neighborhoods all over America.

The Presiding Officer is from the beautiful State of Colorado. Mr. President, Colorado has gang problems. Colorado has drug problems. That would have been unheard of to talk about 10 or 15 years ago. But not anymore. It is that way all over America. You cannot escape random violence and problems.

Parents across this Nation in cities, suburbs, and small towns alike are increasingly worried about their children's safety. No one will ever come up with a single magic solution for the crime problem. But we can take a strong step to fight crime by giving our police and community leaders the tools they need to tackle violence and combat the influence of this pernicious drug problem.

We want to make sure we have enough police on our streets, and we will work to keep our promise of 100,000 new police officers for local communities. We are about 40 percent of the way there.

I can speak being a Senator from Nevada. These police officers have helped. Even in Nevada, the tourist mecca of

the world, violent crime by adults is going down. We have problems with violent crime by kids as we do all over America. But we are making progress all over America. We are making progress because we have come to the realization that it is a small number of criminals—about 8 percent of the criminals—that contribute to over 70 percent of the violent crime in America, and we are taking steps to make sure that we do something with that 8 percent.

We have to be concerned—that we not only have to do something about crimes being committed, but law enforcement must be involved in programs to give them greater power to intervene with kids before they commit crimes. That is before it is too late.

We want to help local community groups offer supervised places where kids can go after school to stay out of trouble. We spend these huge amounts of money on capital construction for schools, and after 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon the fences are put up, the lights are turned off, and they are not used. We believe they should be used.

The families first agenda calls for putting more cops on the beat, keeping kids off the streets and out of gangs, cleaning drugs out of schools, and testing drug offenders.

Mr. President, security covers a lot. Safer families—we talked about more cops on the beat. We talked about keeping kids out of gangs and off the streets.

But we also have to be concerned about paycheck security. Mr. President, paycheck security is something that we talk a lot about. But we do not do a lot about it sometimes. It used to be when people went to work they stayed on the job a lifetime. Now the average life of a job is a little over 6 years. People are continually afraid of losing their jobs. We are concerned about that also. We believe that if we are going to have paycheck security there are certain minimums we must have.

First, affordable child care—if we are going to get women off welfare because—the vast majority of people who get aid to families with dependent children are women. If we are going to get women into the job market, we are going to have to do something about child care. There is no other way.

We have to ban imports using child labor. And we have to have fair pay for women; that is, we do not shy away from it.

This is a specific plank of the Democrats' families first agenda—fair pay for women. We just passed yesterday the minimum wage bill. Most people think the minimum wage bill is for teenagers at McDonald's flipping hamburgers—not true. Sixty percent of the people who draw the minimum wage are women. For 40 percent of the women it is the only money they get for themselves, and their families. We believe we have to have fair pay for

women, and we did it a little bit yesterday—a small step by making sure that we increase the minimum wage.

Retirement security—many Americans cannot afford to worry about a secure retirement until it is far too late because they are preoccupied paying the bills, keeping their kids clothed, fed, and in school.

Many parents do not realize the limits of their pension plans until they are ready to retire, and there is nothing more they can do. Retirement security can also be easily thrown into jeopardy.

For elderly couples, their fixed-income pensions are dramatically cut because of a company bankruptcy, or one of the mergers that is taking place in the last 10 years. Merger mania has run rampant in American business.

Middle-aged workers are forced to change jobs, and they lose years of equity in their pension plans, and sometimes totally lose their pension plans. Women learn after it is too late that their husband unwittingly signed away their survivor's benefits.

We want to make people's pensions more secure and more flexible. We want to give more people access to pensions, including employees with small businesses. We want to let people take their pensions when they leave a job—portability.

We want to give families flexibility to use their IRA to buy a home for the first time, or maybe even pay for college tuition. We want to protect widows from unethical insurance companies who try to mislead them into signing away their survivor's benefits.

Most importantly, we want to stop companies from raiding employee pensions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. SNOWE). The Senator has used 10 minutes.

Mr. REID. We have 17 minutes remaining. Is that right?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. REID. I ask for 3 more minutes. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. The families first agenda calls for pension reform, making pensions portable, and protecting women's pension benefits.

Madam President, it is important, if we are going to have retirement, that it be dependable. And that is why we talk about protecting the pension savings to include Social Security and Medicare—better access and protection for women of the pension plans that they should be able to have at the right time.

We want an opportunity for a better future, to create jobs at home, boost small businesses, invest in our communities.

Education—we want educational opportunities.

One of a parent's proudest moments—and we have all been to them—is when they get a diploma. It does not have to be a diploma from Harvard or

Yale or UCLA. It can be a diploma from a trade school. A parent is just as proud.

We have to make sure that a person's ability to go to college is not dependent on how much money their parents have.

That is what our families first agenda talks about.

For parents lucky enough to get children through school, the most common graduation present is thousands of dollars in student loan debt, and that applies whether the student goes to Harvard or Yale or a trade school. Parents have to borrow the same.

Education is the key to opportunity. We want to offer families a helping hand—a way to make sure their kids get to college or to a trade school without busting the family budget. We want to make sure that all children have the opportunity to advance educationally.

That is why we will offer some new scholarships to children who make good grades and stay away from drugs—a new tax deduction making college and vocational school tuition tax deductible to help families afford education and job training. Our families first agenda calls for a \$10,000 tax deduction for college and job training—2 years of college for kids with good grades. And this includes trade schools.

We need affordable education. We have to make sure that our young people can advance to the best of their ability. This requires responsibility from all of us.

That is why we have supported a balanced budget without destroying Social Security and Medicare. We want to make sure that we do what we can to have corporations with a conscience.

We want to make sure that corporations have a conscience, and we feel that must be done legislatively. They have to have environmental responsibility. And certainly, can we not do away with giving tax breaks to companies that move overseas and take jobs with them? The answer is yes. We need personal responsibility. That has to be part of the program, and that is why we have called for welfare reform that requires work. We want to crack down on deadbeat parents, and we want to do what we can to attack teenage pregnancy. It is not enough to say what we stand for. We have a responsibility to tell America what a Democratic Congress would stand for, and that is what the families first agenda does—tells the American public what we stand for.

Mrs. BOXER addressed the Chair. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I would appreciate it if you would inform me when I have used 10 minutes.

Madam President, I am very proud to be here today speaking on behalf of the Democrats' families first agenda. I thank my colleagues, BYRON DORGAN and HARRY REID, who preceded me today. We think it is important, as Senator REID has said, the American

people know what Democrats stand for. We have been fighting for a lot of things this year. Sometimes we have won those battles. We have turned back the deepest cuts ever offered in Medicare. We have turned back the deepest cuts ever offered in Medicaid. We have turned back some of the most outrageous attacks on our environment.

We have not won every battle at all. If one looks at the budget that passed this Republican Congress, it still calls for huge cuts in Medicare and Medicaid and tax breaks for the wealthiest. So those battles are still out there. But we Democrats believe it is important for us to tell the American people not only that we are going to fight against these misplaced priorities but also that we have a positive agenda that addresses the needs of America's families, wherever they live in this great Nation of ours.

Why was it that we also felt we needed a Democratic agenda? Quite clearly, the voters sent us a message in 1994 when they said, Democrats, you are not going to control Congress anymore. We are going to put the Republicans in control of the Congress.

Frankly, many of us were very stunned by that, but when I looked back on it, I realized that what happened was we did not do a good job of letting the people know what we believed in. We assumed they knew. We assumed they knew we were fighting for families. We assumed they knew we were fighting for children. We assumed they knew we were fighting for the environment. We assumed they knew we were fighting for choice, a woman's right to choose, individual rights, and for a budget that moved toward balance but reflected our shared values.

Well, we were wrong. We were wrong. People did not really know that. Therefore, we decided to put together an agenda that spoke to the American people. We have had many, many meetings, as Senator DORGAN has stated, and I was very glad to be at some of those meetings to put together this agenda that we bring to you.

In this agenda, we make clear our priorities. Yesterday, for example, we tried to make sure that the minimum wage went to all of the workers at the bottom of the ladder. I was very appreciative that three or four Republicans crossed over the line, and we defeated a Republican leadership amendment that actually would have deprived half the people on the minimum wage of the increase they deserve.

So I really do think that it makes a difference who is here, and although we turned back the most egregious of the amendments, we still have a policy where the people who are tipped employees are frozen at \$2.13 an hour in this year, 1996, when it is hard to make it. It is hard to make it even on a salary that is far greater than that.

The Democratic agenda stems from three ideas.

One is security. There are various aspects of feeling secure in your life. Cer-

tainly paycheck security is a part of it. It is very important. We need to know that we can pay for a roof over our family's heads. We need to know that we can put food on the table; we can pay for health care bills; we can pay for college education, or at least afford to pay back the loans. So that is very important.

We need to know that we are safe in our streets. That is why we Democrats applaud what President Clinton has done to put thousands and thousands of police in our communities. We applaud him for his courage in getting assault weapons out of the hands of gangs. We applaud him for signing the Brady bill, where thousands of people with criminal records have been denied applications for guns. This has made America safer.

We have more to do. We Democrats want to put more cops on the beat. That is part of our security agenda.

We also do not want to see pensions taken away from people.

There was an extraordinary story on the front page of the Wall Street Journal about the employees of a company called Color Tile working day in and day out, putting aside for their pension. Do you know what happened to their pension? The boss put it in the company, and when the company went bankrupt they not only lost their jobs, they also lost their pensions.

That is wrong, and we Democrats are going to fight for pension protection. That is just one example of it. There are many, many more.

We read also in the area of pensions where people with 401(k)'s, again employer-controlled plans, they buy antique cars and decorate their offices with paintings. This should not be allowed. We need more protection for those pensions. People count on those pensions, and, in many cases, women suffer the most when a working spouse dies and they are not treated fairly.

I think we can really move forward on security—paycheck security, pension security, security from crime. These are the things that we are talking about.

We talk about providing kids, all of our kids, with health care. It is a travesty to see a situation where little kids cannot get health care, and then they wind up with serious problems, go to the emergency room, and it costs a fortune for society to pick up the tab when we should have provided, at a minimal cost, basic quality health care for those children.

So we have a lot to do, and I think we can deliver.

Opportunity is the second idea. That is security. This is opportunity. Educational opportunity. I am an example of someone who went to public schools all her life.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used 10 minutes.

Mrs. BOXER. And how much time do I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 3 minutes and 50 seconds.

Mrs. BOXER. I thank the Chair.

Educational opportunity. I got a public education all the way from kindergarten through college. I serve in the U.S. Senate and I go toe to toe with some folks here who have gone to the best private colleges. That is America. We give our young people the educational opportunity, regardless of their income. That is what separates us out from so many other countries. It is what makes us great. It is what has built the great middle class. We need to make sure all of our young people have a chance to go to college, and we Democrats say that is what we will do. Everyone will have a chance to go to college under our opportunity agenda, which will provide tax deductions for college and job training. For children with good grades and no drug records we have proposed a \$1,500 tax credit for the first 2 years of college in HOPE scholarships. The student has to maintain a B average and be drug free.

Economic opportunity. We are talking about making sure if you have a family business, you do not get taxed to death when it is passed to the next generations. We are talking about a special program called State infrastructure banks, where States can leverage small amounts of taxpayer dollars to build the physical infrastructure to make sure that we have safe highways and transit, to make sure we have a safe water supply.

We must take care of our air and water. Here in Washington, a water alert has just been issued. We ought to make sure around here that those who pollute our water are held responsible. We ought to make sure we invest in systems that work, that will provide that clean water. That is something else that we Democrats stand for.

We also stand for responsibility, not only on the part of the Government, but on the part of individuals. Yes, we call for a balanced budget. I voted for three different ones—every one of them I was proud to vote for, certified by the CBO to balance and did not hurt Medicare. You do not have to hurt Medicare, you do not have to hurt Medicaid, you do not have to cut education, you do not have to cut environmental protection to balance the budget. But the Republican plan, because of huge tax cuts to those who are doing just fine, makes unconscionable cuts in those important programs.

We Democrats stand in opposition to that. We want to bring everybody along. We do not want to give special deals to the people who earn over \$250,000 a year. They are doing just great. They are doing just fine. We need to make sure that average Americans can make it. We need to make sure they have that opportunity and that sense of security to make it.

So, I think, all in all, we have an excellent Families First agenda. I, for one, am very proud of it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All the Senator's time has expired.

Mrs. BOXER. So I think it is time to pass this Democratic agenda. I hope we will get that chance.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Madam 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. THOMAS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I think we had some time allotted. I would like to take that time now, as much as I use.

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

MEASURE PERFORMANCE RATHER THAN RHETORIC

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, we wanted to visit just a little bit about the program that has been set up by our friends on the other side of the aisle. I am delighted that there has been some kind of effort to put together an agenda. I think it goes to indicate a little bit about the differences that we have, in terms of solving problems for this country; differences that we have in terms of how we see the role of the Federal Government in our lives and, really, an issue about this whole matter of the end of big Government.

It is interesting. The Prime Minister this morning quoted the President and so on, saying "The era of big Government is over," yet our friends on the other side bring out an agenda that describes all the things that the Government is going to do. I have to tell you, I am a little impressed with the notion that it is a matter of some spinning for political purposes, rather than talking about what we really want to do.

The Democrats come out with an agenda to do something at the same time they are keeping from happening all the things practically that we decided to do this year. It seems to me it is a transparent kind of an idea of talking about it but not doing. Walking the walk? No. Talking the talk? Of course. And that is where we are.

So I really think we ought to challenge our friends over there to really take a look at what is happening here, and if they are talking, really wanting to do what they are saying, let us do it. Let us talk about health care. My friends on that side have not even allowed us to appoint conferees, to do something with the health care program that is there and ready to be passed.

Our friends talk about balancing the budget. The Democrats were in charge of this place and the House for 25 years and never balanced the budget. Now the agenda is: Balance the budget.

Madam President, when you and I were in the House, we had a budget called "Putting Families First." That

budget included a \$500 per child tax credit, it included anticrime initiatives, it included welfare reform, it included market-based health care reform, indexed capital gains. Our friends opposed it. They said, "We can't do that."

That budget would have been putting families first, giving an opportunity for families to do the things for themselves that we think they ought to do—putting families first. I guess all I can say is I am really getting exasperated with this process of ours where the idea is to see how much you can spin and how much you can talk and how much you can say but not do anything about causing it to happen.

It is almost cynical that we have now the most technical, greatest opportunities to communicate so people can have input into their own Government and, at the same time, it is more and more difficult to really understand what people are for. And as this election comes up, that is what we ought to be deciding: What direction do we want this country to take, not what people are going to say but, in fact, what they have done.

The records do not match this kind of rhetoric. President Clinton opposed the balanced budget amendment. Those folks all voted against a balanced budget amendment, practically all. The President vetoed the first balanced budget in a generation. That is the walk, that is not the talk. We have had that this year.

Most of us came to the Senate and said voters told us very clearly, "We have too much Federal Government, it costs too much and we're overregulated," and we have tried to change that.

Frankly, the Democrats have done all they can do this whole year to keep things from happening. We had an opportunity and we still have an opportunity: the first balanced budget in a generation to reduce the size of Government, telecommunications reform happened this year, line-item veto happened this year. It never happened before. Congressional accountability, product liability. We have done those things, and we were able to achieve some of these goals, understanding that Washington is part of the problem, not, indeed, part of the solution.

So, Madam President, I have been very impatient with this idea of getting up and making all these great speeches about things we are for, and then when we have an opportunity to do it, we have an opportunity to put it into place, then all we find is opposition, all we find is, "Well, I'm for a balanced budget, but I can't be for this one."

"I'm for welfare reform, but I can't be for this one."

"I'm for sending Medicaid back to the States some more, but I can't be for this one."

That is what we have heard the entire year, and continue to hear that.

Now they come forth with the families first agenda, promoting most of

the things they have opposed throughout the year.

Madam President, I just find it frustrating, as you can probably tell. It is time that we begin to measure performance rather than measure rhetoric. We have an opportunity to do the things that we set out to do this year. We still have an opportunity to do it. We have an opportunity to have medical reform, we have an opportunity to have some welfare reform, we have an opportunity to balance the budget, we have an opportunity to reduce the size of Government, we have the opportunity to have some tax relief.

Which of those things have been supported on the other side of the aisle? None. But then they have an agenda, an agenda because that is what the polls say, and that is what it sounds good to say to people. It does not matter that it is not going to happen. It does not matter that they are not walking the walk, it is just talk the talk.

I suppose this is fairly harsh stuff, but I can tell you, I have watched this go on now for some time, and it continues. Of course, as we get toward an election year, it becomes more and more heightened in terms of the rhetoric that is there.

So I hope that as we make some of the changes that need to be made in this Government, a government of the people and people deciding, making decisions—that is what elections are about, talking about what direction this country will take, and we have an opportunity to really measure performance, not rhetoric, and that is what we have an opportunity to do.

Madam President, let me yield to my associate from Minnesota.

Mr. GRAMS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

WORKING FAMILIES DESERVE SOLUTIONS, NOT SLOGANS

Mr. GRAMS. Madam President, we have heard a lot of talk from Washington recently about the hardships that are facing working Americans. Tax rates are up, job opportunities are down, interest rates are rising while paychecks are shrinking and take-home pay is not going anywhere at all. But the families trapped on this economic seesaw are feeling anxious and unsure about the future, and they are looking to the Federal Government for some change.

Most everyone agrees that a fundamental responsibility of Congress and the President is to try to help ensure greater opportunities for working Americans, so men and women can seek better jobs that will lift their standard of living, and the real debate going on in Washington today centers around just how that should be accomplished.

The Democrats in Congress are saying the answer is to simply raise the minimum wage. But that is a political