budget by 2002, drastic cuts in programs will have to be made in the 2 years after the President leaves office. The President's proposed budget acknowledges that the deficit will increase, from about $107 billion in 1996 to $121 billion in 1998. That is not responsible and courageous leadership for next year, let alone the next 50 years. Responsible leadership requires the tough decisions to be made now, instead of continuing to ignore the problem and forcing future leaders to balance the budget when a slower economy may make it more difficult to get it done.

As the late Senator Paul Tsongas said, ''There are a lot of votes in deficit spending. There are no votes in fiscal discipline.'' Former Senator Paul Simon also said, ''People in public office like to do popular things, and there is no popular way to balance the budget.'' To these two highly esteemed former Democrat Senators, a balanced budget constitutional amendment is the only guarantee to fiscal discipline. It would require Congress and the President to make some unpopular, but desperately needed actions to control Federal spending. If we have the best economy in the post-World-War II era, why can't we balance the budget in fiscal year 1999, and make the necessary cuts now, instead of later when uncertainty of the future economic condition is greater.

I challenge the Members of this body and the President of this great Nation to balance the budget now, while the economy is growing. This would cause the economy to flourish even more, reducing interest rates and guaranteeing investors that a balanced budget will occur. It is also Social Security's only hope.

The Federal Government should be in the business of doing a few things well, instead of many things poorly. Our Federal budget is pockmarked with programs that do not work as intended, whose missions are obsolete, and have grown out of control. The balanced budget amendment would force the Government to prioritize programs, and then perform with better results. The American people have always been fearful of an overly intrusive and powerful Federal Government.

There is still a certain amount of anti-federalism in each of us. The natural response to the constraints put on Government by this amendment would be a limited government. This leads me to point out the advantages of a biennial budget. A biennial budget would complement the balanced budget constitutional amendment by allowing Congress to spend more time ironing out the details of a budget. A biennial budget would also allow Congress more time for oversight, making sure the various agencies and departments are effectively, accurately, and honestly performing their mission. It would also allow longer range planning by the Federal agencies, and State and local governments. The current annual budget and budget reconciliation process causes shortsighted planning. A biennial budget would allow more time for Congress to prioritize the agencies' and departments' functions.

American essayist, Artemus Ward said, ''It ain't the things we don't know that hurt us—It's the things we do know that ain't so.'' I am talking about capital budgeting. A few opponents of the amendment have called for capital budgeting. As the U.S. Senate's only accountant, I can tell you that you are not being told the whole story.

It is misleading to speak about the need for a capital budget at the Federal level, as though it is an idea which has been championed for some time in this Chamber. It is being used solely as a means to confuse the issue on the appropriateness of the balanced budget amendment. The comparison has been made to the practice in State budgeting of separating capital and operating expenses, and paying for capital improvements through the method of issuing debt. The Federal budget has even been compared to the family budget and a home mortgage.

There are some distinctions which need to be made with the practice of sound capital budgeting in our States and homes and what has occurred here. First, a plan must be in place to replace or expand facilities and equipment based on its reasonable economic life. I would question whether or not the Federal Government even has an inventory of our existing facilities and equipment, let alone a plan for its replacement or expansion.

Second, both the States and our families borrow with a purpose, and with the full intent and capability of repayment of both the interest and the principal over a fixed period. The annual cost of this debt repayment is included within the annual budget. We not only lack a capital budget, we incur debt for day-to-day expenses. No State or family, if it hopes to remain solvent, incurs debt for the cost of operations or day-to-day living with the intent of only paying the interest.

This is exactly what we have been doing since 1969. Given the affinity of the Federal Government to borrow for normal day-to-day living, I can only guess at the problems we could generate if we were to create additional debt to finance capital improvements. It is a reasonable premise of borrowing that you don't loan money to a person who has shown that they cannot be trusted to repay what they already owe.

I will conclude with the famous words of Benjamin Franklin: ''Work while it is called today, for you know not how much you may be hindered tomorrow. One today is worth two tomorrows; never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today.'' Now is the time for hard work and seriousness.

We must pass the balanced budget constitutional amendment. I urge all Americans to write or call your Representatives and Senators and tell them to pass the balanced budget amendment now. No more excuses—the future of our children and grandchildren and parents and grandparents is at stake.

I yield the floor.

DAIRY FARMERS AND MILK PRICING

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, the dairy farmers of northeastern Pennsylvania, and for that matter the entire State of Pennsylvania, and for that matter the entire Nation, are suffering very materially because of low milk prices. It is a national calamity, where dairy farmers all across the country are facing the prospect of bankruptcy because the costs of producing milk have risen so tremendously and the price of selling milk has decreased very rapidly in the course of the past several weeks and several months.

Because of this emergency state, Senator SANTORUM and I and others on the Pennsylvania delegation and really others in the Congress have been taking a close look at what is happening on the pricing of milk. This morning, the Secretary of Agriculture, Daniel Glickman, accepted the invitation from Senator SANTORUM and I and others in the Pennsylvania delegation to travel to Keystone College, located on the outskirts of Scranton, PA, to meet with and to hear the concerns of farmers. We had a very large crowd, hundreds of people. I am reluctant to say quite how many until I read tomorrow morning's newspapers, perhaps as many as 1,000 farmers.

At that time, we heard the economic plight of the farmers in very graphic and very emphatic terms. The highlight of the meeting occurred when a woman named Mrs. Swetter made the point, very, very emphatically, about the imminent difficulties faced by the farmers and how answers were needed now. This Mrs. Patricia Swetter made that point with special gusto, as did quite a number of the other farmers who spoke at the hearing.

Secretary Glickman responded that there would be an effort made to do what was possible now but commented about the difficulties of an immediate solution. That prompted a discussion on one point which I think has the prospect of doing something immediately, and that is delinking the price established by the Cheese Exchange out of Green Bay, WI, and have the Secretary of Agriculture develop an equivalent price for cheese.

Now, some may wonder why the talk of a price for cheese on the discussion of a price of milk. The reason is that the price of cheese is a very key component in establishing the price of milk. For every 10 cents on an increase in the price of cheese, the price of milk goes up $1 per hundredweight. There have been some indicators that the price of cheese is not accurate as it has been currently established. The Secretary responded in a dialog that a

number of us had—the Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Glickman, the farmers who were there, myself—that he would be willing to work now to develop an equivalent price of cheese, so that we could have a reevaluation as to the price of milk. There has been some indication that there has been some manipulation of the price of cheese. It may be that this is a subject which ought to be a matter for a hearing by the Judiciary Antitrust Subcommittee. It may also be that there ought to be a hearing from the Agriculture Subcommittee of Appropriations, or from the Agriculture Committee, on the pricing of milk, taking a close look at the issue of developing an equivalent price for cheese.

I intend, Mr. President, to submit to the Senate a sense-of-the-Senate resolution to urge and/or direct the Secretary of Agriculture to move promptly on this issue of the price of cheese, with a view to having some immediate modification on the price of milk. Secretary of Agriculture Glickman has stated his willingness to do so, recognizing the plight of the farmers but, obviously, requiring a sufficient evidentiary base to be able to make that modification.

So we are in the process now—my staff and I started in mid-morning—to try to make the determination as to the price of cheese in America, because the price established by the so-called Green Bay Cheese Exchange is about one-half of 1 percent, and may well not—in fact, probably does not—reflect the price of cheese across the country.

When we talk about helping the farmer, we talk about a great many items. We talk about increasing exports, which we are working on systematically, we talk about programs to increase cheese consumption at schools on programs purchased by the Federal Government. But the issue of milk pricing is something which requires our attention now.

It is true that the Secretary of Agriculture has a second track to change the price of cheese under a procedure that calls for public hearings and inputs, but that doesn't eliminate the basic authority. The Secretary of Agriculture explained to me that he does have the power to go on a separate track and to unilaterally delete the price of cheese from the Cheese Exchange and to establish an equivalent price for cheese. That is a matter we are pursuing, and I think a sense-of-the-Senate resolution would be a very substantial impetus to move that process along.

So I thank the Secretary for coming to northeastern Pennsylvania. He was up very, very early this morning. He had commitments back in Washington at noontime. I met him at the Scranton Airport shortly before 8 a.m. this morning. So it was an early start for him and for the rest of us and for all the farmers who appeared there. But I do think something material can be done to assist the farmers on this very important issue of milk pricing.

HONORING THE ACKERS ON THEIR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, families are the cornerstone of America. The data are undeniable: Individuals from strong families contribute to the society. In an era when nearly half of all couples married today will see their union dissolve into divorce, I believe it is both instructive and important to honor those who have taken the commitment of ''till death us do part'' seriously, demonstrating successfully the timeless principles of love, honor, and fidelity. These characteristics make our country strong.

For these important reasons, I rise today to honor Wilford and Jerry Acker of Weaubleau, MO who on May 10, 1997, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. My wife, Janet, and I look forward to the day we can celebrate a similar milestone. Wilford and Jerry's commitment to the principles and values of their marriage deserves to be saluted and recognized.

U.S. FOREIGN OIL CONSUMPTION: HERE'S THE WEEKLY BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute reports that for the week ending January 31, the United States imported 7,140,000 barrels of oil each day, 246,000 barrels more than the 6,894,000 imported during the same week a year ago.

Americans relied on foreign oil for 52.4 percent of their needs last week, and there are no signs that the upward spiral will abate. Before the Persian Gulf war, the United States obtained approximately 45 percent of its oil supply from foreign countries. During the Arab oil embargo in the 1970's, foreign oil accounted for only 35 percent of America's oil supply.

Anybody else interested in restoring domestic production of oil—by U.S. producers using American workers? Politicians had better ponder the economic calamity sure to occur in America if and when foreign producers shut off our supply—or double the already enormous cost of imported oil flowing into the United States—now 7,140,000 barrels a day.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, February 7, the Federal debt stood at $5,301,813,739,040.73.

One year ago, February 7, 1996, the Federal debt stood at $4,987,177,000,000.

Five years ago, February 7, 1992, the Federal debt stood at $3,797,118,000,000.

Twenty-five years ago, February 7, 1972, the Federal debt stood at $423,588,000,000 which reflects a debt increase of more than $4 trillion—$4,878,225,739,040.73 during the past 25 years.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ASHCROFT). Morning business is now closed.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of Senate Joint Resolution 1.

The clerk will report the pending business.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution, S.J. Res. 1, proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to require a balanced budget.

The Senate resumed consideration of the joint resolution.

Pending:

Durbin Amendment No. 2, to allow for the waiver of the article in the event of an economic recession or serious economic emergency with a majority in both houses of Congress.

Mr. SPECTER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to speak in favor of the balanced budget amendment.

Mr. President, this amendment has come up repeatedly during my tenure in the U.S. Senate, and I have consistently supported the balanced budget amendment because of my deep-seated view that the Congress needs this discipline if we are to balance the budget on a permanent basis. It is a very fundamental principle that people ought to live within their means—if you or I do not, we end up in the bankruptcy court—and that governmental entities must live within their means. The only exception to this issue of living within one's means has been the Government of the United States of America, which goes into further debt each year with deficits of $100 billion or $200 billion, or more, establishing a national debt in excess of $5 trillion.

This issue came into sharp focus for me recently when my wife and I were blessed with two grandchildren. We would certainly never think of imposing our financial obligations on our grandchildren, or spending money on their credit cards for them to pay at some later date. But that is precisely what we have done as a society. We have undertaken a variety of methods to try to move toward a balanced budget with Gramm-Rudman and the so-called automatic sequestrations. That did not work. Nothing has worked, which is why I believe, in the final analysis, we need to move to the balanced budget amendment.

We had the vote last year, coming within one vote of having the amendment pass. The President is opposed to the balanced budget amendment. But I do believe that just the pendency of the amendment has been a very substantial impetus moving the administration, the President, and the Congress to balance the budget without a constitutional amendment.