

Government that is going to keep running can run on a reasonable basis. If anyone doesn't think 98 percent is reasonable, welcome to the real world. Is there a family in America that hasn't had to make do with 2 percent less to spend? Is there a small business in America that hasn't made a 2-percent cut in their budget?

So if a Government employee tells me that the agency can't run at the 98-percent level, I would say that they are not qualified to manage their agency. We can save money to make sure that we are planning for the future. And that is another reason why I think we ought to pass this legislation right now. I think we should let our Government agencies know that if there is a disagreement in October, plan now to know that you are going to be able to operate at a 98-percent level. So, you can plan ahead, and if you need to make provisions, you can do it now. I think that is another good reason for us to do it early, rather than waiting until some other appropriations bill comes up to the floor, which might be in June or July. That is not as much planning time. So we are talking about good government. We are talking about responsible governing and trying to handle the issues for which we are responsible as a U.S. Congress in a responsible way.

Now, I think this is something that the Democrats would probably welcome because they have said, on the occasions where the potential for a Government shutdown has come, that they think this is not a responsible way to run a railroad. They have said that in many heated debates. I hope that they will come along and work with us—and I think they will, frankly. I think there are some Democrats who want to support this. Nobody has focused on it a whole lot because we have had the chemical weapons treaty for this week. But as people start to focus on it next week, I hope they will look at this and support it.

So what we are talking about is a safety net, a funding mechanism for fiscal year 1998 that would trigger on October 1, 1997, if any of the 13 appropriations bills have not been agreed to by the President and Congress. This is good government. This is responsible government, and I hope that we can do it in a bipartisan way.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. MCCONNELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I want to take the floor this morning to make a few comments in favor of the Government Shutdown Prevention Act, which we hope will be a part of the supplemental appropriations next year, which will be offered next week by Senator MCCAIN and Senator HUTCHISON and which, it seems to me, embodies the elements of good government.

We had a pretty contentious discussion in the last Congress about how

best to get a balanced budget. It led to a conclusion that no one was happy with. It involved several temporary shutdowns of the Federal Government. We think it is important that that be avoided for the future. Everybody now understands that was not a good result, and the amendment which will be offered by Senator MCCAIN and Senator HUTCHISON would prevent that.

It would simply provide 98 percent of the fiscal 1997 appropriations bill level and will be subject to all of the terms and conditions of the prior year's bill, with a specific prohibition on initiating any new projects or activities. To put it another way, if we are unable to reach an agreement, it provides for a reasonable funding level to avoid the Government shutdown.

It seems to me this is something we ought to pass on a bipartisan basis unanimously. Obviously, the American people are not interested in seeing the Government shut down again. They are also interested in seeing us reach bipartisan agreement to balance the budget, which we all hope will happen. But the McCain-Hutchison bill will eliminate the threat of a Government shutdown and leverage the President to garner additional funding for his priorities. It is a good-government proposal. It makes it clear that those on my side who thought the Government shutdown might be good leverage in the past decided that it isn't and that it should not be pursued.

It keeps the pressure on all of us to go forward to enact the appropriations bills, because that is what we would ultimately hope would happen in the course of this year as well. I think, Mr. President, this is clearly something that ought to be coupled with the supplemental appropriations which, presumably, we will be dealing with next week.

So I would like to add my strong support to the efforts of Senator MCCAIN and Senator HUTCHISON and commend them for their work on this important issue and suggest that the Senate, hopefully, will pass this unanimously at the appropriate time.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I would like to speak on several matters that are at least somewhat related.

CHILDREN OF ST. ANN

Mr. WELLSTONE. First of all, Mr. President, I would like to welcome, so that this would be part of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the really beautiful children of St. Ann Episcopal Church in the South Bronx who came here yesterday for a visit. These are wonderful children. They were written about in Jonathan Kozol's book "Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children in the Conscience of a Nation." I wish to let

those children know that it was really wonderful to have them here in the Nation's Capitol and I am sure that someday some of them will serve in the Senate.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. WELLSTONE. On a second topic that is clearly related to this topic, Mr. President, I had an opportunity to talk to Senator BUMPERS and Senator COCHRAN, who are going to be very key in the appropriations bill, who are working on this supplemental appropriations bill, and I would like to thank them for their effort to really restore adequate funding for the Women, Infants, and Children Program. I think Senator COCHRAN and Senator BUMPERS are very committed to doing it. Both the Washington Post and New York Times had editorials yesterday.

The problem is what we get coming over from the House as opposed to an additional \$76 million that the White House now realizes it needs to make sure that 180,000 women and infant children are not falling between the cracks with inadequate care. This has to do with avoiding low birthweight, childhood anemia, this has to do, frankly, with the whole issue of infant mortality. I cannot think of anything more cruel than for us not to fully fund this program. It works. There has not been one study by anybody, anywhere that has made the case that we must not invest in nutrition for our children.

I am really hopeful that when we mark this bill up next week on the Senate side we will get it right and we will not turn our gaze away from the conditions of children. Too many children are malnourished. Too many women who are expecting children are malnourished.

CONFIRMATION OF ALEXIS HERMAN

Mr. WELLSTONE. The third point, Mr. President—and I just have four to make in a short period of time—I come to the floor today to also urge my colleagues to move forward with final confirmation of Alexis Herman as Secretary of Labor. Really, I think it is time to let her go free.

Mr. President, you and I are both on the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. By unanimous vote, we passed her out of the committee. She is eminently qualified. We have a lot of work to do. We have a controversial TEAM Act that is going to be before us. We have the bill which we spent a lot of time on, the comp-time, flex-time bill that has passed out of committee and that is going to come before us. I have been the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Employment and Training. I think Senator DEWINE is doing an excellent job. We are very serious about moving forward with this job training, work force development bill, but we do not have a Secretary of Labor.