A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, due to a delay in the flight from my congressional district, I was unavoidably detained and thus was unable to vote on rollcall vote 156. Had I been present, I would have voted ''aye.''

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. SANFORD. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately my plane was delayed and I missed the vote on H.R. 1420, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. Had I been here to vote, I would have supported the bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to return to Washington, DC, today due to a death in my family and missed the following vote:

Rollcall vote No. 156, passage of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (H.R. 1420). Had I been present, I would have voted ''aye.''

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1438

Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of the bill, H.R. 1438.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands?

There was no objection.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 84. Concurrent Resolution establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 1998 and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the resolution (H. Con. Res. 84) ''A concurrent resolution establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 1998 and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002.'' and requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon and appoints Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. LAUTENBERG to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 84, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 1998

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1 of rule XX and at the direction of the Committee on the Budget, I move to take from the Speaker's table the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 84) establishing the congressional budget for the U.S. Government for fiscal year 1998 and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002, with a Senate amendment thereto, disagree to the Senate amendment, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In an effort to try to move this along, Mr. Speaker, there really is not a reason, I do not believe, to get into any kind of protracted debate or discussion here. This is just no more than an effort to go to a conference, a conference that I have labeled the fait accompli conference.

There is not a whole lot that has to be done. We have an agreement between the administration and the Congress of the United States, and frankly we ought to get about it. We ought to get it done this week, which we will get done this week.

Just in a nutshell, I think we do need to know that this will provide for us the first balanced budget since 1969, since Neal Armstrong walked on the Moon. It will be the largest amount of entitlement savings. It will be the first balanced budget since 1969. It would also contain over the next decade about $700 billion in savings in mandatory spending, including very significant reforms of Medicare. The Medicare savings will be approximately the same amount of savings that the Republicans proposed in 1995.

It will also have some structural changes. It is not just about dollars. There will be some adjustment between the rural and urban reimbursements as part of the ability to give our senior citizens more choice.

Furthermore, it will now begin to pay the skilled nursing facilities and home health care providers a prospective amount, similar to how the hospitals work, in an effort to try to contain the costs of Medicare. We think these are obviously significant, combined with the fact that the shift of home health care from part A to part B will be kept in the premium, which will mean that beneficiaries in fact will bear a part of the burden, with the poorest beneficiaries continuing to have some relief.

It is a structural change of Medicare with far more yet to come, and we will be unrelenting in the idea of developing ultimately a voucher program for Medicare that will keep it sound during the period of time when the baby boomers start to retire.

But what is also contained in this budget resolution is an agreement to fundamentally have growth in the nondefense discretionary programs, the programs that operate the agencies and departments of the Federal Government. They will grow at a rate of about half a percent a year, as compared to a 6-percent growth over the last 10 years.

Frankly, I am still checking the numbers, but I believe this will be the smallest level of growth in nondefense discretionary spending that we have seen at least over the last 10 years, and we are going back to find out if it may be the smallest level of growth that we have ever seen; significant progress.

Let me also suggest the economic foundation of this program. It is interesting to note that during the Reagan years, the Reagan economic plan was underlaid by a growth in the economy that forecast somewhere in the vicinity of 4.3 to 4.4 percent. That is a growth rate we dream about today and we would hope to achieve, but not one that has been achieved for a long time.

Mr. Speaker, contained in this agreement is not a 4.4-percent projection of economic growth that would make it somewhat unrealistic. What is contained in this agreement is a 2.1-percent economic growth pattern. As we all know, the economy in this last quarter has grown at about 5.6 percent. Certainly we will not achieve those levels of growth in this agreement, but what is important to note is that 2.1-percent presumes that at some times the economy will grow faster and at other times it will not grow as fast. We believe this is a conservative foundation, a conservative economic forecast, much more conservative than the blue chip estimators across this country.

So what we have, Mr. Speaker, is we have the largest amount of mandatory savings in history, a significant slowdown of the nondefense discretionary, the programs that run the Government to a half a percent a year, conservative economics underlying this program, the first balanced budget since 1969, and, Mr. Speaker, the much desired and fought for tax cuts that we believe will help the American family and will also help to grow this economy.

Let me just make a point. The capital gains tax cut in our judgment is one of the things that can help build an infrastructure for America that will allow this economy to grow faster in the absence of inflation. We think that is very, very significant.

We also believe that a child tax credit is very important because it begins to send the right signals to that institution most under attack in the United States, the American family. We believe it will also restore a little justice in the area of estate relief, so as people work a lifetime to grow a business, they should not have these high levels of taxation.

Mr. Speaker, let me also make it clear that this is not the end of the