

likely to fall behind in school, more likely to become a future welfare or crime statistic.

I cannot understand why this Congress, like so many businesses, and I guess so many people, cannot look ahead beyond the next budget. We live in a country where the biggest growth industry is the construction of prisons. There are 19 cities in my home State of Illinois competing right now not for a new business but for the latest prison to be built by our State. We have more people under lock and key in America than in any country other than Russia. Why?

Is it because we are just more violent, more prone to criminal activity? I think it is a much deeper question. It goes to our children, whether or not some of these kids can be rescued, can be saved, can be put on the right path in their lives. It involves a commitment. Yes, I believe in three strikes you're out, but I also believe in taking the necessary action to avoid the first strike. Give a child a chance with prenatal nutrition, with appropriate infant nutrition, with Head Start, with education, with mentoring, the kind of community support that counts. And yet this body I am afraid considers that to be squandering of national assets. We have all the money in the world to build a prison. We do not have all the money in the world to improve our schools. When my colleague, Senator CAROL MOSELEY-BRAUN, comes forward with the crumbling schools proposal that says let us make sure the schools our kids attend are safe, that they have appropriate care for the children there, we find out that there are many people particularly on the Republican side of the aisle who say that is something that our Government should not worry about. I disagree. The shiniest new building in many cities across America is a prison; the one that is crumbling down is a school. What message does that send to children, to families and to our Nation?

When this Senate decided today to defeat my amendment not to send food stamps to these children, I am afraid it is a decision we will pay for for years to come. These kids are likely to become citizens of the United States. They are likely to be our neighbors, kids seeking jobs in the future. We are penny-wise and pound-foolish when we do not provide the basic necessities of life like food and health care and education for children.

So, yes, I supported welfare reform. I think the economy has sustained the kind of growth which has given welfare reform an opportunity to flourish but, for goodness sakes, why aren't we investing in our children? Why has this become so partisan and so strident that when we stand up with the Levin amendment and talk about more time for vocational education so that kids can get off welfare and go to work, it becomes a partisan vote? The Republicans say no; the Democrats say yes. Nothing happens. For the kid, the

young man, the young woman who needs a chance at education, that was an important vote. And this Senate said no. That does not make sense. End welfare but end it responsibly. Make an investment in America's kids, an investment that will pay off for many generations to come.

Mr. SANTORUM. Will the Senator yield for a question?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator from Illinois has expired. Who seeks time?

Mr. BROWNBACK addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

Mr. BROWNBACK. I would like to quickly respond, if I could, to just a couple of comments. I hope we will not stand here and say that the welfare program, the changes that we made in the last Congress have been a failure. They have been a great success. Look in my home State of Kansas where welfare rolls have gone down 30 percent. And, yes, we have had a strong economy, but in the past we have had a strong economy when the welfare rolls have gone up. You have to change the incentives in the program. That is what we did in the last Congress. It was a positive step to move forward. So I hope that we do not make something a failure when it has been a strong success and people are working now rather than receiving payments from the Government and they are having more self-confidence themselves.

I think this is good for people, too, because with the past system the people on welfare, along with the people that paid for welfare, thought it was a horrible failure and a horrible system. We have changed the dynamics, and we have changed the incentives in this program to where the people are incentivized to work. And they feel good about it. They feel better about it. And this is a program that is going to work.

I think there are a lot of things we could spend money on that might well be good, but we have tended to do a lot of that in the past, to the point we are over \$5 trillion in the hole. So that we just cannot keep voting for everything to be able to do it or else we are not going to get in balance.

MOST-FAVORED-NATION STATUS FOR CHINA

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I would like to comment on the comments of the Senator from Michigan where he was addressing a foreign policy concern, and that is China.

Yesterday, the House voted on most-favored-nation status and extended that status toward China even though we are having a great deal of difficulty in that country, and I do think we need to take additional steps in addressing this issue of China and our relationships back and forth.

We have had problems with that nation expanding weapons of mass de-

struction, selling them to some of our enemies that we have around the world, particularly Iran. We have had problems with religious persecution, with forced abortion in that nation, and I think we need to step up and pass the issue of MFN.

The Senator from Michigan has a start in his bill when he is talking about some different areas where we can put pressure on that nation in our relationship there to encourage more religious freedom taking place and to discourage things like weapons proliferation.

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

On Monday of this week, Senators JOE LIEBERMAN and ROBERT BENNETT, along with myself, hosted a forum on religious persecution around the world. We found this was not just a problem in China. It is in the Middle East. It is in Africa. And we are talking about an issue that goes beyond just certain levels of discrimination, all the way to the point of slavery, to murder that is taking place in those countries.

A number of us came forward with solutions. Let's create a register of those people who are being persecuted around the world, and let's start to highlight it. Let's start a commission in areas of the Middle East, in Africa, focusing on this issue of the need for religious freedom. It is a founding principle of this country. People came here seeking freedom, seeking religious freedom. We are and we always will be best as a nation when we talk about principles. This is a guiding principle that we need to continue to move forward beyond this debate of MFN and focus nationally on this issue of what is taking place there. Create the register, create the commissions, focusing on this area. And I look forward to working with my colleagues, Senator LIEBERMAN and many others. I hope it will begin in us talking about something that is so basic to America, religious freedom. We need to implement that and move those around the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks time?

Mr. KERRY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. KERRY pertaining to the introduction of S. 956 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

BALANCED BUDGET ACT OF 1997

Mr. DOMENICI. Parliamentary inquiry. Is it not time to return to consideration of the bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous agreement, the Senate resumes consideration of S. 947. The Senator is correct.

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.