

times have passed. The times when you gain skills in high school or college, and sought and obtained and retained employment all of your life with those skills, those times have passed. Even in good economic times, the length of employment with a single employer is shrinking. The consistency of employment with any employer is being reduced.

What I offer is a response, a chance to make this tax bill relevant to those 20 million Americans who may in the next decade find themselves in similar circumstances. There is not a Member of this Senate who faces this amendment tomorrow who does not have a chance to address the people of their own State in a critical way, not just the 40,000 people of AT&T in my native State of New Jersey, but the 2,000 employees of IBM in New York State who are suing at this moment, trying to establish by law that their severance package is not income.

In the State of Alaska, 1,200 people in the fourth quarter of 1996 were laid off; 88,000 people in the State of California; 22,000 people in the State of Illinois; 5,700 people in the State of Minnesota; 2,800 people in the State of Montana; 27,000 in Pennsylvania; 11,000 in West Virginia. In every State, in thousands of communities across this Nation, these dislocations have become a part of American life.

I am very proud that tomorrow this Senate will adopt a tax bill, one that I am proud to vote for, that addresses so many different economic concerns of this country. It has a reduction in capital gains taxes for middle- and high-income people that is needed to encourage investment. I am for it. I am going to vote for it. It has a change in the inheritance tax to allow families to retain family businesses in higher incomes, upper-middle-class families; IRA's to encourage families to save for education for their children's welfare. Each and every one a legitimate response to a real problem.

Mr. President, this is a problem, too. What is it we say to these people who want only to keep the money given them to reorganize their lives but are forced to share it with the Federal Government?

Tomorrow I will offer this amendment and ask for the support of my colleagues. Thank you for the time, Mr. President, and I yield the floor.

Mr. FRIST addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

BALANCED BUDGET ENFORCEMENT AMENDMENT

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I rise to discuss an important balanced budget enforcement amendment that I will offer on behalf of myself, Senators CONRAD, ABRAHAM, and SESSIONS, tomorrow morning.

This amendment evolves from a very simple principle, and that is, once we get a balanced budget, that it stays balanced well into the future.

This amendment, based on existing enforcement mechanisms, has two key provisions:

First, it establishes a 60-vote point of order in the Senate against any bill that provides or would cause a deficit in the year 2002 or in any year thereafter.

Second, it requires that the President submit a balanced budget in the year 2002 and every year thereafter. To retain appropriate flexibility, this amendment suspends this point of order in times of war or in times of recession. This exact same exception is provided for in the existing enforcement mechanisms under the current law.

This amendment is also—I should add, because I think this is important as we bring forth amendments tomorrow—consistent with the bipartisan budget agreement.

The text of the bipartisan budget agreement specifically states that "agreed upon budget levels are shown on the tables included in this agreement." Under the long-range summary table in the agreement, the agreement shows a budget surplus of \$1 billion in the year 2002 and \$34 billion in the year 2007. This means that we are projecting a balanced budget in 5 years and in 10 years. My amendment will strengthen our ability to abide by this agreement and keep spending under control in the future.

In the bipartisan budget agreement, the Congress, the President, Republicans and Democrats, joined together to balance the budget in the year 2002. But I believe that everyone would agree that we don't just want to balance the budget in just that 1 year, 2002, but we want to maintain balance every year thereafter. That includes the years 2003, 2005, 2010, 2020.

We must keep focusing on our long-term budget picture for one very important reason: to prepare for the baby boomers' retirement which is just over a decade away. We know that the budget agreement does not go far enough in addressing this long-term challenge.

In fairness, the authors of the agreement never claimed that it does. But as we approach this new demographic era that all of us know is sitting out there just about a decade away, we must be acutely aware of the situation. In fact, we know that right now, 200,000 Americans will turn 65 this year. But in 15 years, in 14 years, in fact, by the year 2011, 1.5 million Americans will turn 65 just that year and that trend will continue over the next two decades.

Simultaneously, as the elderly population is increasing, the number of younger workers who are working to support that elderly population is decreasing. In fact, today, there are 4.9 workers supporting every single retiree's benefits, that is today, that includes Social Security and Medicare. But in the year 2030, there will only be 2.8 workers supporting the benefits of a single retiree.

This dramatic demographic shift will bring significant economic, political,

social and cultural changes that will transform our society. If we continued on our current spending course, entitlements—that is our automatic spending programs—coupled with interest on the debt would consume all revenues in just 15 years, leaving not a single dollar left over for roads, for infrastructure, for medical science, for the national parks, for medical research and for defense of the country. I believe our balanced budget agreement will help ease this demographic pressure, but much more work lies ahead. We must begin sooner, rather than later, to deal with these problems fairly and effectively. This amendment addresses that problem.

It will keep pressure on Congress and the President to confront these inevitable challenges, this inevitable demographic shift. To those not familiar with the Federal budget process, this amendment will create a procedural hurdle, called a point of order, to prevent the Senate from considering bills that will increase the deficit. If a Senator raises this point of order, it will take a three-fifths vote of the Senate, that is 60 votes, to waive the point of order and pass the legislation, rather than the normal 51-vote majority.

After we have all worked so hard and so long to rein in spending, we should not allow the deficit to balloon out of control once again after that year, 2002. It is imperative that we preserve this achievement and restrict Congress' ability to overspend taxpayer dollars. We will offer this amendment tomorrow morning and, at that time, I will urge all of my colleagues to support this important amendment which addresses the inevitable demographic changes. I yield the floor.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I am pleased to be a cosponsor of Senator FRIST's budget process amendment.

The Frist amendment seeks to establish a more stringent enforcement mechanism for the bipartisan budget agreement. I think it's important for Congress and the President to continue working after enactment of this year's two reconciliation bills to ensure that at least the unified budget is balanced in 2002 and years thereafter. The amendment would also require the President to submit budgets each year which do not cause a unified deficit in fiscal year 2002 or any year thereafter.

Specifically, the Frist amendment would establish a 60-vote point of order against any resolution or bill—including the budget resolution—that provides or would cause a deficit in fiscal year 2002 or any year thereafter. I think such a point of order will help Congress and the President remain vigilant about the deficit, particularly in years after 2002.

Frankly, I would have supported much more ambitious deficit reduction efforts this year. I would like to see the federal budget moving towards true balance—that is without counting the Social Security surpluses. I believe that is the real way to balance the

budget. But I also must acknowledge that the President and the bipartisan congressional leadership did not seek to balance the budget without counting Social Security. The bipartisan budget agreement balances only the unified budget. I don't believe we've truly balanced the budget with enactment of this year's reconciliation bills. But perhaps at least we have taken a modest step in the right direction.

One of the reasons I support the Frist amendment is that I am concerned about whether this bipartisan budget deal will accomplish its intended goal—balance of the unified deficit within five years. When I first became aware of the details of the 1997 budget agreement, I viewed it largely as a missed opportunity.

In my view, the budget was not truly balanced. It only claimed balance by using Social Security trust fund surpluses. In fact, in the year 2002 the real deficit will probably still be over \$100 billion.

In addition, under this bipartisan budget deal the deficit is larger for the next three years than it is this year. This year's deficit is currently projected to be about \$67 billion. The deficits for 1998–2000 will range from \$80 billion to \$100 billion.

Of most concern to me, budget negotiators failed to correct the upward bias that currently exists in the Consumer Price Index. There is overwhelming evidence that the Consumer Price Index, currently used to adjust tax brackets and various spending programs for inflation, overstates the actual change in the cost-of-living in the United States. The budget deal should have corrected this mistake which will add nearly \$1 trillion to our national debt over the next 12 years.

Some of the economic assumptions underlying the budget deal are highly suspect. CBO's last minute revenue adjustment of \$45 billion per year may be credible for the years 1997 and 1998. Its credibility for the period 1999–2007 is unclear. In addition, the balanced budget fiscal dividend assumed in the budget agreement is based on the theory that lower interest rates will result from balancing the budget with a credible deficit reduction plan and path. The real debate with regard to the Federal Reserve's interest rate policy right now is whether the Fed will raise, not lower, interest rates in the next few months, particularly since this proposal contains dramatically less savings—only \$200 billion—than other proposals offered this year.

Finally, I am concerned that enactment of the tax package before the Senate will blow the progress we have made on reducing the deficit. Over the longer term, I am concerned that since many of the tax cuts are back-end loaded, they will explode in the out-years. The individual alternative minimum tax relief provisions are a perfect example. These provisions don't take effect until 2001. The cost over 1998–2002 is \$350 million. The cost over

10 years is \$15 billion, a 4000-percent increase. By 2007, the AMT provisions will cost the Treasury \$6 billion per year.

Another example involves the Individual Retirement Account provisions in the Senate's tax bill. I know there is strong support for providing incentives for people to save. But the various IRA provisions in the Senate tax bill, particularly the new back loaded IRAs, have serious deficit implications. The IRA proposals lose about \$9 billion over 1998 to 2002. Over the second five years the revenue loss is \$36 billion. These types of back-end loaded tax cuts may prevent our nation from achieving long-term fiscal balance.

For all these reasons, I support careful monitoring of the federal budget deficit in 2002 and years thereafter. I believe a 60-vote point of order will force Congress and the President to immediately get back on track if our fiscal situation changes dramatically and the unified budget deficit begins to rise in 2002 and years thereafter.

If we can at least maintain unified balance of the budget, then perhaps Congress and the President will have the courage to move toward truly balancing the budget. We can perhaps then achieve the kinds of structural changes in entitlements that will put our nation on a sustainable fiscal course over the long term, as we prepare our nation and our economy for the retirement of the baby boom generation around the year 2012.

Mr. LEVIN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I thank the Chair and I thank my good friend from Rhode Island for his understanding at this late hour.

STOCK OPTIONS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, a few minutes ago, we passed by voice vote amendment No. 556. It was an amendment which Senator MCCAIN and I authored, and I want to spend a moment describing what that amendment does.

The amendment provides that it is the sense of the Senate, based on findings that, "(1) currently businesses can deduct the value of stock options as business expense on their income tax returns, even though the stock options are not treated as an expense on the books of those same businesses; and (2) stock options are the only form of compensation that is treated that way. It is the sense of the Senate that the Committee on Finance of the Senate should hold hearings on the tax treatment of stock options."

Mr. President, for the past several years, the Wall Street Journal has published a special pull-out section of the newspaper with an annual analysis of the compensation of top corporate executives. Last year's section had this headline: "The Great Divide: CEO Pay Keeps Soaring—Leaving Everybody Else Further and Further Behind."

Business Week featured this cover story on its 47th annual pay survey: "Executive Pay: It's Out of Control."

Both publications analyze the pay of top executives at approximately 350 major American corporations, and their analysis shows that the pay of chief executive officers continues to outpace inflation, others workers' pay and the pay of CEO's in other countries, as well as company profits. According to Business Week, CEO's total average compensation rose 54 percent last year to over \$5.5 million, which came on top of 1995 CEO pay increases averaging 30 percent.

Meanwhile, the average 1996 raise for the average worker, both blue collar and white collar, was about 3 percent. In 1996 the average pay of the top executive was 209 times the pay of a factory worker. Little known corporate tax loopholes are fueling these increases in executive pay with taxpayer dollars. This loophole allows companies to deduct from their taxes multimillion-dollar pay expenses that never show up on the company books as an expense. Every other form of compensation is shown as an expense on company books. There is only one exception, and that is stock options.

There is a link of all this to taxpayer dollars. Suppose a corporate executive exercises stock options to purchase company stocks and makes a profit of \$10 million. Right now, the company employing the executive can claim the full \$10 million as a compensation expense and deduct it on the company's income tax return.

Someone might say, so what? All companies deduct pay expenses from their taxes. That's true. But there is an important difference here. Every other type of employee pay shows up on the company books as an expense and reduces company earnings. Stock option pay is the only kind of compensation that companies can claim as an expense for tax purposes without ever showing it as an expense on their books. That's because current accounting rules encourage, but do not require, companies to treat stock option pay as a company expense, so companies can continue to game the system.

A single corporate executive exercising stock options can provide a company with a \$10 million, \$50 million, or even a \$100 million expense which the company can deduct when reporting company earnings to Uncle Sam, but omit it when reporting company earnings to stockholders and the public. That is not right. Either stock option pay is a company expense or it isn't. Either this expense lowers a company's earnings or it doesn't. Something is clearly out of whack in a tax law when a company can say one thing at tax time and something else to investors and the public, and it is a double standard which should end.

Senator MCCAIN and I introduced legislation in April to put an end to the double standard. It simply says that a company can claim stock option pay as