

Well, all of that cost money in Medicare. It is remarkable. It is breathtaking. It is wonderful that people live longer and medical breakthroughs allow them the opportunity to walk when they couldn't have previously walked and see when they couldn't have seen—and to do other things that give them a better life. But it is also very costly. It has costs with expanded Medicare payments, and all of us must understand that.

This program has grown largely because of success. The life span increases with breakthroughs in medical care. All of that spells more money in Medicare. We understand that. I think the American people accept that as a success story, except no one will believe it is a success story to have a program that has up to \$20 billion a year of waste in the program. When the American people hear the stories that for a bottle of saline solution that you can go down to the drug store and buy for \$1.03 and Medicare pays \$7.90 for it, they have a right to say, "What on Earth is going on here?" Medicare will pay \$211 for a home diabetes monitor used by diabetics to test their blood sugar levels. You can buy the same one not for \$211 but for \$39 at the local store; or the gauze pad that Medicare paid \$2.33 for that you can buy for 23 cents. The American people have every right to say, "What on Earth is going on? If you can't run a program, get a crowd in here that can run a program." Or, "If the Congress can't pass the laws to make sure it is run the right way, then get somebody else to pass the laws to make sure it is run the right way."

We ought to aggressively pursue fraud. When we see people committing fraud in Medicare, we ought to send them to jail, arrest them and prosecute them, and say, "You commit fraud against the American people, your address is going to be your jail cell to the end of your term." When we see over-billing and overcharges, when we see administration that is not competent, we need to take action.

The inspector general report of a week and a half ago sends another warning to this Congress that we must take action to prevent this kind of Medicare waste, fraud, and abuse.

Mr. President, \$20 billion a year is outrageous. If we are going to continue the support that is necessary for a Medicare Program that is important for this country, this Congress has to take action and take action soon.

There are some remedies in the reconciliation bill that will come to the floor this week but not enough. We must do much, much more. I know there are Republicans and Democrats in this Congress anxious to work together on this problem to hopefully prevent there from ever again being another GAO report or inspector general report that provides this kind of awful news about a Federal program that is so important to so many Americans.

Madam President, with that I conclude my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold any suggestion of a quorum call for an announcement by the Presiding Officer?

Mr. DORGAN. Yes, of course.

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under a previous order, the Senate just having received H.R. 2203, the energy and water appropriations bill, all after the enacting clause of the House bill is stricken and the text of S. 1004, as passed by the Senate, is inserted in lieu thereof. The Senate insists on its amendment, requests a conference with the House, and the Chair is authorized to appoint conferees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS) appointed Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. GORTON, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. BURNS, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. REID of Nevada, Mr. BYRD, Mr. HOLLINGS, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. KOHL, and Mr. DORGAN conferees on the part of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under a previous order, the passage of S. 1004 is vitiated and the bill is indefinitely postponed.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I make a point of order that a quorum is not present.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLARD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, July 25, 1997, the Federal debt stood at \$5,369,530,452,476.10. (Five trillion, three hundred sixty-nine billion, five hundred thirty million, four hundred fifty-two thousand, four hundred seventy-six dollars and ten cents).

One year ago, July 25, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,181,309,000,000 (Five trillion, one hundred eighty-one billion, three hundred ninety million).

Twenty-five years ago, July 25, 1972, the Federal debt stood at \$434,583,000,000 (Four hundred thirty-four billion, five hundred eighty-three million) which reflects a debt increase of nearly \$5 trillion—\$4,934,967,452,476.10 (Four trillion, nine hundred thirty-four billion, nine hundred sixty-seven million, four hundred fifty-two thousand, four hundred seventy-six dollars and ten cents) during the past 25 years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 4 p.m. having arrived, there will now be 1 hour for morning business under the control of the Senator from Georgia, [Mr. COVERDELL].

A BALANCED BUDGET ACT AND TAX RELIEF

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I have just returned from my home State and I can certify that the issue of a balanced budget act and tax relief is on the minds of a lot of Americans. Everywhere I went, whether it was stepping out for lunch or meeting with various groups, somebody would come up and say: Get this done. Hold firm. Stay the course.

America wants this to happen. America wants a balanced budget act to pass and be signed by the President. It will be the first one in nearly 30 years. That is hard to believe, that we have so abused our financial health that this will be the first balanced budget we will be passing in 30 years. And they want the tax relief. I don't think I have met a citizen that didn't, in some way, start calculating, like the young county commissioner I met who is a farmer and a full-time county commissioner, and he has two children. He said, "If that measure passes, that's going to save my family \$1,000, \$500 per child." Or the elderly couple who are concerned about maybe selling their home and relocating, who are concerned about the capital gains tax that currently rests against that property. Or the family that talked about the onerous nature of death taxes in America, the kinds of decisions and pressures it puts on small businesses and family farms. They really do want this done. I hope, as I said last week, the President will set aside the partisan nature of this issue, and trying to one-up somebody else, and just get it done.

I was reading in today's Washington Post, it says:

Congressional Republican leaders said last night they were on the verge of a final budget and tax agreement with the White House after making a major concession on the proposed \$500-per-child family tax credit and dropping their insistence on "indexing" a reduction in the capital gains tax.

Or, in the New York Times, Monday, July 28:

Budget Deal Down To "Small Issues," Gingrich Declares. Spokesman for President Says Assessment Is Premature—Meetings Continue.

This is something that both the leaders of our House and Senate and President should really come forward on, get it done, and make a statement that we have, in a bipartisan way, produced major policy. I would revisit, once again, the fact that if the leadership of both parties in the Senate, the leadership of the Finance Committee, both parties, the leadership of the Budget Committee, both parties, if they all could find a balanced budget act and a tax relief act on which they could agree, it ought to send a pretty powerful message to the President and his administration. Remember that 73 Members of the Senate, a majority of both parties' conferences, voted for the Balanced Budget Act, and 80 of them voted for the Tax Relief Act.

I don't know what more proof you could have that these proposals are