Horn
Hostettler
Hulshof
Hunter
Hutchinson
Hyde
Inglis
Istook
Jenkins
Johnson (CT)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Kasich
Kelly
Kim
King (NY)
Kingston
Klug
Knollenberg
Kolbe
LaHood
Largent
Latham
LaTourette
Lazio
Leach
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Livingston
LoBiondo
Lucas
Manzullo
McCarthy (NY)
McCrery
McDade
McHugh
McInnis
McKeon
Metcalf
Mica
Miller (FL)
Molinari
Moran (KS)
Morella
Myrick
Nethercutt
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Ney
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Nussle
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Pappas
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Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Pombo
Porter
Portman
Pryce (OH)
Quinn
Radanovich
Ramstad
Redmond
Regula
Riggs
Riley
Rogan
Rogers
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roukema
Royce
Ryun
Salmon
Sanford
Saxton
Scarborough
Schaefer, Dan
Schaffer, Bob
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Skeen
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (OR)
Smith (TX)
Smith, Linda
Snowbarger
Solomon
Souder
Spence
Stearns
Stump
Sununu
Talent
Tauscher
Tauzin
Taylor (NC)
Thomas
Thornberry
Thune
Tiahrt
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Walsh
Wamp
Watkins
Watts (OK)
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
White
Whitfield
Wicker
Wolf
Young (FL)

NAYS—197

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Baesler
Baldacci
Barcia
Barrett (WI)
Becerra
Bentsen
Berman
Berry
Bishop
Blumenauer
Bonior
Borski
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Brown (CA)
Brown (FL)
Brown (OH)
Capps
Cardin
Carson
Clay
Clayton
Clement
Clyburn
Condit
Conyers
Costello
Coyne
Cramer
Cummings
Danner
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dellums
Deutsch
Dicks
Dingell
Dixon
Doggett
Dooley
Doyle
Edwards
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
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Fazio
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Frank (MA)
Frost
Furse
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Gutierrez
Hall (OH)
Hall (TX)
Hamilton
Hastings (FL)
Hefner
Hilliard
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Holden
Hooley
Hoyer
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
John
Johnson (WI)
Johnson, E.B.
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy (MA)
Kennedy (RI)
Kennelly
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind (WI)
Kleczka
Klink
Kucinich
LaFalce
Lampson
Lantos
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Lofgren
Lowey
Luther
Maloney (CT)
Maloney (NY)
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Matsui
McCarthy (MO)
McDermott
McGovern
McHale
McIntyre
McKinney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek
Menendez
Millender-McDonald
Miller (CA)
Minge
Mink
Moakley
Mollohan
Moran (VA)
Murtha
Nadler
Neal
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pelosi
Pickett
Pomeroy
Poshard
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rivers
Rodriguez
Roemer
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Rush
Sabo
Sanchez
Sanders
Sandlin
Sawyer
Schumer
Scott
Serrano
Sherman
Sisisky
Skaggs
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith, Adam
Snyder
Spratt
Stabenow
Stark
Stenholm
Stokes
Strickland
Stupak
Tanner
Taylor (MS)
Thompson
Thurman
Tierney
Torres
Towns
Turner
Velazquez
Vento
Visclosky
Waters
Watt (NC)
Waxman
Wexler
Weygand
Wise
Woolsey
Wynn
Yates

NOT VOTING—11

Blagojevich
Bryant
Fattah
Foglietta
Forbes
Gonzalez
Houghton
McCollum
McIntosh
Schiff
Young (AK)

☐ 1339

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut changed her vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

So the previous question was ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOEHNER). The question is on the resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF JOINT RESOLUTION WAIVING CERTAIN ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS WITH RESPECT TO TWO SPECIFIED BILLS OF 105TH CONGRESS

Mr. GOSS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105–219) on the resolution (H. Res. 203) providing for consideration of a joint resolution waiving certain enrollment requirements with respect to two specified bills of the 105th Congress, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered printed.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further 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 bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 408. An act to amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to support the International Dolphin Conservation Program in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, and for other purposes.

☐ 1345

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2015, BALANCED BUDGET ACT OF 1997

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 202, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2015) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 104(a) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 1998.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SOLOMON). Pursuant to House Resolution 202, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of July 29, 1997, Volume II.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH] and the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPRATT] each will control 45 minutes.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 minutes to the gentleman from Washington [Mr. MCDERMOTT] and ask unanimous consent that he be permitted to yield that time to Members on my side in opposition.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Carolina?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH].

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute. This obviously is the beginning of a very important debate and the beginning of a very exciting 2 days. We bring before the House today and tomorrow the first real budget in real terms with real savings starting immediately, for the first time adding up to a balanced budget for the first time since Neil Armstrong, a great American and fellow Ohioan, walked on the Moon. It will also be the first tax cuts to provide jobs and to help families for the first time in 16 years.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are a lot of people out there that still think that this is all being done with disappearing ink, but at the end of these 2 days and upon the signing of the President of the United States, we should have a deal that commences the era that recognizes the limits of Government and begins to transfer power, money, and influence from this city.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my young protege the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. NEUMANN], a member of the Committee on the Budget.

Mr. NEUMANN. I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, this truly is a great day for America. What an exciting thing to be a part of out here. The first time since 1969. I was a sophomore in high school, the first time since I was a sophomore in high school, 1969, that we are actually going to balance the Federal budget. It is about more than words. It is about the hopes and dreams of the children in America today and the restoration of their opportunity to live the American dream. That is what this is all about today.

In 1995 the American people. And they should get credit for this, too, the American people had a mandate. The mandate was get us a balanced budget, get the tax burden off our back and restore Medicare for our senior citizens. Between today and tomorrow, we are going to make good on all three of those points.

To the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH], the chairman of the committee on the budget, to the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. GINGRICH], the Speaker, to the folks on the other side of the aisle that were so actively involved and

the rest of the Republican leadership team, and all the Members and my colleagues here, this truly is a tribute to what can be done if we work in a bipartisan way for the good of the future of this great Nation that we live in.

I think we need to look at why this is happening. It is equally important as the fact that it is happening. When we came here in 1995, we had a vision for a different America. We had just gone through the tax increases of 1993, and the American people rejected those tax increases. In 1995, we came here with a new mission. The mission was to curtail the growth of Washington spending. Spending had been growing by 5.2 percent a year before we got here. It has been curtailed to 3.2, a 40 percent lowering of the growth of Washington spending. That means Washington spends less, so they borrow less. When they borrow less, there is more money in the private sector, so the interest rates stay down and this is where it gets out of Washington and back to America. When the interest rates stayed down, people could afford to buy houses and cars, and when they bought houses and cars, somebody had to build them. So that meant job opportunities. And all of a sudden, the opportunity to work hard and live the American dream is back available to the American people. It is the right way to go about doing this.

What a great opportunity we have here today. For our senior citizens, they can go to bed tonight resting assured that Medicare has been restored for them for at least a decade. That job is done. For the people in the work force, tomorrow we will pass the first tax reduction in 16 years, 16 long years, and for the first time that tax burden on American families, on American workers, it is about to come down. What a great 2 days this is going to be.

Most important of all, for the children in America today, for our children and for our grandchildren, for the first time since 1969, the people in this Congress are going to do the right thing for the future of this country. We are no longer going to continue the practice of spending more money than we have. We are going to fulfill the mandate of 1995 and balance the budget. For seniors, Medicare has been restored. For workers, taxes are coming down, and for their children the future is once again secure in this great Nation that we live in.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] controls the time on the majority side.

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is the last station on the track. The train leaving here will take us to a balanced budget. But I would never let the occasion to open up pass without recalling exactly why we are here, what brings us to this point where we can say credibly that we are within reach of a balanced budget.

I have to take us back to 1993. George Bush was about to leave office. January 13. He filed his Economic Report of the President, and in it he predicted that the deficit for that fiscal year would be $332 billion. That was the deficit that President Clinton found on the doorstep awaiting him when he arrived at the White House 1 week later. On February 17, he laid on the doorstep of the Congress a plan for dealing with that deficit.

I would take exception with the gentleman from Wisconsin who said this is the first time we will begin to stand up to this problem. We stood up to it in 1993. We passed that deficit reduction bill by the skin of its teeth, and the deficit went down in 1994 to $203 billion, in 1995 to $164 billion, last September 30 when we closed the books on fiscal year 1996, the deficit was $107.8 billion. Five fiscal years in a row, because of that legislation, the deficit has come down.

This year, according to today's predictions, this year when the books are closed on fiscal year 1997, the deficit should be less than $50 billion; almost certainly it will be. It will probably be less than $40 billion. We have come from a projected deficit of $332 billion in 1993 to an actual deficit in 1997 of about $40 billion. That is phenomenal progress. It is the reason we are here, the reason we are about to claim victory, because of the foundation that has been laid since 1993. The deficit has been brought down by 80 percent.

Nevertheless, when we started this session of Congress with a divided government, the House and the Senate held by Republicans, the White House held by a Democrat, it was not clear at all that in a divided government we could mount this effort to finish the job, balance the budget and say we had finally achieved victory. We did it. We are here today because the President leaned into the problem, he called the Republicans to negotiate, and they responded earnestly, in good faith. We sat down to talk, then to negotiate, and finally to hammer out the elements of an agreement which took months and months to accomplish.

That agreement, when it came to the floor in the form of our budget resolution, drew big support on this side of the aisle. One hundred thirty-three Democrats, if I recall correctly, voted for it. That is a margin of nearly 2 to 1.

But when the budget resolution was put out to the committees of jurisdiction, it picked up all kinds of unwanted baggage, controversial, contentious things from medical malpractice to multiple employer welfare arrangements, things that we not only did not support, we had resisted and fought for years. As a consequence, we lost traction on this side. A number of Members simply said they would not vote for the bill with those things in it.

I stood here in the well of the House and said I am going to bet on the come. I am going to bet we can go back to conference and recapture that bipartisan agreement that built the agreement in the first place and bring both parties back together behind an agreement, a genuine budget agreement that deserves the moniker, deserves to be called a bipartisan budget agreement. I can say to my colleagues on this side of the aisle today, I think we have succeeded to an extent that I was not sure at all when I cast that vote we would succeed.

There are more successes by far than setbacks as a result of this conference. We call this a deficit reduction act but we need to remind ourselves that what we have here is more than just a deficit reduction bill. What we have hammered out in this bill is a plan to balance the budget over 5 years, yes, but it is really more than that. We have not been so caught up, so fixated on balancing the budget that we forgot that the country has got other problems, too. We are wiping out the deficit but we are also doing more than has been done in years to see that all Americans have the opportunity to obtain higher education. We are taking down the deficit but we are also taking steps to see that children in working families have medical insurance. We hope to reach at least 5 million of them as a result of this bill. We can all be proud of that.

We are lowering the cost of Medicare and Medicaid because Medicare is the biggest spike in the budget, the fastest rise. Yet not only are we protecting beneficiaries, we are actually making the program solvent so that they do not have to worry about its solvency for 10 years; but we are adding $4 billion in preventive care benefits for things like annual mammograms, and in time I think they will more than pay for themselves.

There are still provisions in this conference agreement that I do not like. I wish they were not there. They will be hard to swallow. No doubt there are many on my side who will find many other things in this agreement to which to object. But on the whole, I think what we have achieved here accomplishes far more than we on our side as Democrats could ever have achieved without a bipartisan compromise. I am satisfied with the outcome, and I plan to vote for the conference agreement today, and I encourage my colleagues, particularly those on this side of the aisle, to do the same.

□ 1400

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California [Mr. THOMAS], the chairman of the Committee on House Oversight, a senior member of the Committee on Ways and Means and chairman of its Subcommittee on Health.

(Mr. THOMAS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by complimenting everyone.

We have a portion of the balanced budget bill in front of us, and it is amazing what has occurred in a relatively short period of time in terms of everyone's reaction to making changes in the Medicare portion of the package.

One of my favorite old songs is a song by Dinah Washington: What a Difference a Day Makes. What a difference a year makes, what a difference a willingness to sit down and fundamentally address the problem makes as well.

I am very pleased to say that my ranking member, friend, and colleague from California [Mr. STARK], and his chief of staff Bill Vaughan have been with us on this journey from the beginning, through subcommittee, full committee and during conference to make sure that although at times they may not have been in agreement with what we were talking about doing, they were at least informed. And I cannot help that the gentleman's President did not do what he believes he should have done during the conference.

I want to thank not only the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH], the chairman of the Committee on the Budget, and the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER], the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, but the members of the subcommittee on Health of the Ways and Means Committee who worked long hours to make sure on a bipartisan basis they understood not only what needed to be done, but just as importantly what could be done, and I think the package we have in front of us today, with the able help of the staff headed by Chip Kahn, is the most fundamental reform in the history of Medicare.

I know we have some friends on the other side of the Capitol who are disappointed that we did not go farther, but we have to appreciate how far we have gone. Oftentimes we judge ourselves by our failures rather than our successes.

Before we started this process we had a Medicare system which was a fee for service when someone who was sick. When this measure is signed by the President, we will have a Medicare which is a preventive and wellness structured Medicare. It will provide choices for seniors that are available in the general health area. It provides, as was indicated, a preventive package which will be expanded, when science tells us to expand it and not politics. It provides opportunities for choice over a broad spectrum so that people do not have just one other option, they have a number of options, and to help them in those choices we have a handsome educational package long overdue.

So I am here basically not to talk about what is in the bill, but to thank all those people who worked with us to put together a Medicare package in which no one will be afraid to run on in the next election. We will all embrace it and say this is a handsome first step, obviously we need to do more, we have a commission built in to do more, but before that commission even triggers we are going to sit down and continue to build a Medicare Program which is based upon prevention and wellness. The seniors deserve nothing less.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

The gentleman from South Carolina has said that the budget deficit has been reducing, begun by the Democrats in 1993, and it would be balanced within a year or so without this whole exercise. So make no mistake, what we are doing here is making cuts in this bill in entitlements in order to give tax breaks tomorrow. Today, if today did not happen, tomorrow would not and could not happen.

Now as I see it, this issue of Medicare is the reason I will vote against the bill because it is a sugar-coated poison pill, it will taste good going down, everybody will say, well, we are saving Medicare, but there is no question in my mind that the social insurance principles on which Medicare was created are being eroded in this bill. Rather than strengthen the program, which everyone says they are doing here today, the bill creates a multitiered Medicare Program, one for the super rich, one for the rich, and one for the rest of the folks.

Now in Germany when they did that in their health care program, if someone wants to opt out of the system, as this bill will now allow seniors to do, they can never come back. But our wisdom in this body did not say we will not let people back. We will let them go out, take advantage of the system, game it in every way possible, and then when the problem comes they can jump back into our system. It creates incentives for for-profit health care plans to siphon off America's healthy and wealthy seniors and leave the rest of the problem for the Federal Government. In my view, that is in the long term not good for the country.

Now also in the area of health care is the reduction in the DISH payments. For those listening who do not understand, DISH means disproportionate share. It is those hospitals that take care of a disproportionate share of people who do not have health care insurance. We have 44 million Americans. Not one single one of them is better off because of this bill, because they are not getting insurance in it. We are taking away the money that the hospitals use to cover those people when they show up at the emergency room in a crisis. And my view is that the city hospitals and the rural hospitals of this country within 2 years will all be in serious problems because of the reductions we have made in the disproportionate share payments.

For that reason I think we should not be passing this bill, we do not need to make tax breaks tomorrow, the American public is not clamoring for tax breaks, especially tax breaks where 50 percent of them go to people making $109,000 or more, and yet we rush forward here today to make these cuts in Medicare and the service that we provide through the disproportionate share payments.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. GRANGER], the former mayor of Fort Worth and a member of the Committee on the Budget.

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in strong support of this historic bipartisan agreement to balance the budget.

This proposal we consider today is more than a blueprint to balancing the budget. It is a blueprint to building the future. This budget is not about numbers or theories. It is about people, real people with real dreams for themselves and for their children, for their parents. We owe them, we owe our constituents a budget that balances just like they have to balance themselves. We owe our children a nation that is debt free, and this balanced budget cuts off the flow of red ink for the first time since 1969; that will be 30 years ago.

We owe our working young parents access to the American dream of more jobs and home ownership. This balanced budget will create more than 4 million new jobs and reduce the cost of a typical new home by more than $30,000. We owe our parents and our grandparents a Medicare system that takes care of them if they become ill, and this balanced budget will protect Medicare and let us keep our commitment to our seniors. And finally, we owe the American people something more important and much more profound. We owe them our word.

The balanced budget agreement ends 28 years of promised balanced budgets and broken promises. Twenty-seven years, 5 Presidents and 14 Congresses have not balanced our budget. If we pass this budget today, the 105th Congress will be different. Today we can say to the American people, promises made, promises kept.

I urge my colleagues to support this historic agreement to balance the budget for our children, our working parents and our seniors. We now have a blueprint, so let the building begin.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. CARDIN].

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, first I want to concur in the comments that the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPRATT] made a little earlier, and that is we need to look first to 1993, to the Deficit Reduction Act that was passed under the leadership of President Clinton and the Democrats in Congress, for why we are able to reach this point today. I am very pleased that the final chapter we are doing in a bipartisan manner, the passage of these two bills.

There are many reasons to support it. We are at last going to have a balanced budget, and we are going to protect the priorities that are important for the future growth of this Nation.

Let me just mention some of the specifics that are in this bill for why the Members should support it:

First, the Medicare, we are providing for 10-year solvency, additional solvency of the Medicare system, improving benefits to our seniors in preventive health care and access to emergency care. Our academic centers will be getting some badly needed relief to make sure that we have excellence in health care in this country. Twenty-four billion dollars to expand health care for our children.

This bill acknowledges the special needs of Amtrak and capital involvement, and the welfare bill from last year has changed to provide more resources for welfare to work and to remove some of the punitive aspects against legal immigrants.

It is a good bill. I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Washington [Ms. DUNN], an elected member of the Republican leadership and a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Ms. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, today we take a historic step in reducing the size of Federal Government and providing for a balanced budget in 5 years. We are building a path to the future that restores both hope and opportunity for all Americans. Today and for the future we are dramatically changing the fiscal direction of our country from a path of out of control growth of Government to a path of sustained expansion of the economy and job creation.

Achieving a balanced budget will provide lower interest rates, higher productivity, improved purchasing power for all Americans, more exports and accelerated long term-growth. It will also, we believe, revive the possibility once again for the American dream. Americans can once again look toward their children having the chance to do better than they.

Our balanced budget is about more than just accounting and tidy bookkeeping. Budget deficits sap private investment, they drive up interest rates and they provide that the service on the national debt is a cost to the average taxpayer of $800 in 1 year in taxes.

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

Mr. Speaker, with this bill we can embark on a new and responsible course by balancing our Nation's budget by restoring hope, confidence and opportunity. This balanced budget agreement is the first in a generation. It represents GOP ideals, and it shows that a Republican majority at the helm in Congress can and will deliver on its promises.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. BENTSEN].

(Mr. BENTSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a good blueprint to get us into balance by 2002. We have to remember of course this is a blueprint, there are no guarantees, but we certainly all hope that that is the case if it does become law. It is also far better than what we saw in the 104th Congress.

Just for instance, if we look at Medicare and Medicaid, we are looking at reductions of $130 billion versus $450 billion that we saw in 1995 and 1996 that led to Government shutdowns. So we have come a long way; the largest increase in education since the Eisenhower administration and starting to address children's health care.

Now, let me address just a couple of issues very quickly in specifics. With respect to disproportionate share for Medicaid, I want to thank the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPRATT] the chairman, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH], my colleague from Texas [Mr. ARCHER], and the administration for fixing that program, ensuring that States like mine of Texas and 12 other so-called high DISH States are treated more fairly under this bill than they were when the bill left the House of the other body.

In addition, as the other gentleman from Maryland just spoke, we are finally addressing the needs of the academic medical centers, such as those in my district, by carving out and requiring the managed care companies to pay into medical education through medical education. This is a good compromise. I hope my colleagues will support it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation to balance the Federal budget for the first time since 1969. What a difference 2 years makes. In 1995 and 1996, Congress was in stalemate over budgets that would gut Medicare, education, and environmental protection. Now after the American people rejected that approach, we have before us a bipartisan compromise that not only balances the budget, but improves and strengthens Medicare and makes necessary investments in the health and education of our children. This is the commonsense approach we should have been taking all along.

I especially want to thank the conferees and the administration for addressing one issue of special significance to my State of Texas, and that issue is fairness in the way cuts are made to the Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital [DSH] program. When I voted for this legislation on June 25, I did so with the commitment of Budget Committee Chairman KASICH, Budget Ranking Member SPRATT, and the administration that they would address this issue in conference. They have made good on their word, and I want to thank Mr. KASICH, Mr. SPRATT, the administration, Ways and Means Chairman ARCHER, my colleagues in the Texas Delegation, and the many others who have worked to return some equity to the way Medicaid cuts are carried out.

Under this agreement, no State will have its total Medicaid funding cut by more than 3.5 percent in any 1 year. I want to emphasize that no State will lose more money than it would have lost under the original House bill. This agreement is much more fair to Texas and the other 12 so-called high-DSH States that would have had their Medicaid disproportionate share funding cut by twice as much as other States, while some States had no cuts at all. High-DSH States would have had their Medicaid DSH funding cut by 40 percent in the year 2002, and Texas would have lost $920 million under the House bill and $1.15 billion in the even worse Senate bill.

While not perfect, this agreement is much more equitable. It restores Medicaid funds that Texas hospitals desperately need to provide basic health care to the poorest patients. This funding is especially critical to our public and children's hospitals, which have high Medicaid and indigent caseloads.

I also want to call attention to two provisions in the Medicare reform section of this legislation that I and other Members have advocated and that would greatly benefit our Nation's health care system. These provisions, which are similar to legislation I have introduced, will help ensure that senior citizens have real choice under Medicare and our Nation continues to invest properly in medical education at teaching hospitals.

The first provision would give senior citizens who choose a managed care plan the right to buy supplemental insurance, or Medigap, to pay for prescriptions, copayments, and other uncovered services if they return to traditional fee-for-service Medicare. Many seniors now fear that if they choose managed care they may be locked in forever. That is because, if they choose later to return to traditional Medicare, they may not be able to purchase Medigap. Current law requires insurers to sell Medigap policies to seniors only when they first enroll in Medicare. The agreement requires insurers to also sell Medigap to seniors who, within the first year of enrolling in Medicare managed care, decide to switch back to traditional Medicare, ensuring real choice in health care for seniors.

This agreement will also ensure that Medicare managed care plans help fund medical education in the same way as fee-for-service Medicare. Under current law, the Medicare Program provides extra payments to teaching hospitals based on the number of fee-for-service Medicare patients served at these hospitals. However, Medicare managed care plans are not required to make such a contribution, causing a funding shortfall as more senior citizens join managed care plans. This agreement includes a provision to carve out graduate medical education [GME] amounts from the Average Adjusted Per Capita Cost [AAPCC] payment to Medicare managed care plans and direct this funding, approximately $5 billion over the next 5 years, to teaching hospitals. This plan does not increase Federal spending; rather, it recaptures funds from the current Medicare managed care reimbursement formula so that all Medicare plans help pay for the cost of graduate medical education.

This agreement is an important step toward ensuring that our Nation continues to support its teaching hospitals in this era of managed health care. It will ensure stable, guaranteed funding to train future doctors and other health care professionals and conduct vital clinical research. This is an essential step toward ensuring that the United States continues to have the best health care system in the world.

Altogether, the Medicare provisions of this legislation will extend the solvency of the Medicare Hospital Insurance Trust Fund for 10 years, while providing more health care

choices, consumer protections, and preventive benefits for our Nation's senior citizens. This agreement includes $4 billion to provide a package of preventive benefits for Medicare beneficiaries, including new or expanded coverage for mammography, pap smears, screening for prostate and colorectal cancer, diabetes self-management, and the diagnosis of osteoporosis. It increases the health insurance options available to Medicare beneficiaries beyond the traditional fee-for-service program to include the various managed care options generally available from private plans. And it includes important consumer protections for Medicare beneficiaries, including the Medigap protection I have already discussed. Other protections include provisions banning gag rules that restrict what Medicare managed care doctors can tell their patients; requiring managed care plans to have a grievance and appeal process to protect patient rights; and establishing a ''prudent layperson'' definition of an emergency to ensure patients are covered by Medicare when they seek care from emergency rooms.

Mr. Speaker, I also strongly support the important investments included in this agreement, especially in the areas of children's health and education.

This agreement makes a $24 billion investment in children's health, which will help end the national shame that 10 million children lack health insurance and access to basic health services such as immunizations and regular checkups. My State of Texas leads the Nation in the number of uninsured children—2.6 million Texas children lacked health insurance for at least a month over the past 2 years. This agreement will go a long way toward helping these children and their families. It will help more children get cost-effective preventive health care rather than more expensive care when they get sick.

I also applaud this agreement's investment in education, which is absolutely the right priority in our global, information-age economy. We must expand access to college because more and better education is needed to get ahead and earn a good wage in this economy. Together with the tuition tax credits in the tax reconciliation bill, this legislation makes the largest investment in higher education since the G.I. Bill in 1945. It includes the largest Pell grant increase in two decades; boosting the maximum Pell grant from $2,700 to $3,000 and expanding the program to more poor independent students.

This legislation is a bipartisan compromise that, like all compromises, requires each of us to accept provisions we may not support. But on balance, it is a good bill, a fair and fiscally responsible bill that makes necessary investments in our future. I urge my colleagues to support the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. WATTS].

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to stand today in support of H.R. 2015, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, because my wife and I have five wonderful, healthy, vibrant children, and this bill is all about them and all about their future.

□ 1415

After almost three decades of deficit spending, finally we see an end to this generation spending the resources that belong to future generations, to our children and to our grandchildren. Finally, we have taken the first step toward reducing our Nation's terrible debt.

Am I 100 percent in agreement with every provision in this bill? Of course not. No, not one Member of this body, Democrat or Republican, is in 100 percent agreement with every provision of this bill. But I am in 100 percent agreement with the fact that we have scored a major victory for our kids and for our grandkids.

We have gone from increasing taxes in 1993 $265 billion to reducing taxes by over $90 billion in this legislation. We have scored a major victory for the next generation of Americans. We have taken the first step toward passing on to them an America that is not crippled by debt or deficits, but liberated by a responsible government that lives within its means.

Vote today for America's kids. Vote today for America's future. Vote ''yes.'' I encourage a yes vote, in favor of the Balanced Budget Act.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORAN].

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. President, nice going; White House staff, nice going; the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPRATT], well done; the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH], we have a good balanced budget agreement here.

The most important thing is that it is balanced not just in terms of dollars and cents, but in terms of priorities: A $900 billion reduction in deficit spending over the next 10 years, but the highest increase in higher education since the GI bill of 1945, the largest increase in children's health protection since Medicaid in 1965, more than 30 years ago.

We have got a $500-per-child tax credit for 27 million families. We have got entitlement reform. We have got a lot of the brownfields and empowerment zones tax initiatives, $3 billion for welfare to work initiatives. The fact is that speaking as a Democrat, the White House got what it wanted, which is our priorities—better education and health care for our children, tax fairness for middle class families, and an end to the legacy of debt we have been deferring to our children.

This bill deserves to be supported. It is a fiscally responsible bill, it is a bill that emphasizes our priorities. It is a bill that on both sides of the aisle we should vote for.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California [Mr. STARK].

(Mr. STARK asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I am having a little trouble. I guess I am the only person here who does not have both arms broken from patting myself on the back. I am having a little trouble understanding this bill.

Before I explain it, I want to take this opportunity to thank the chairman of the Subcommittee on Health of the Committee on Ways and Means, the gentleman from California [Mr. BILL THOMAS] for his open and fair manner in handling the Medicare portion of this bill, which, as the House originally wrote it, was quite good; but the Senate gooped it up and the White House caved to the Senate, so we do not have a very good Medicare bill.

But the fact is we have a lousy bill. We would have been better if we had stayed home. Look, the budget is going to balance next year without a bill. In this bill, it takes 5 years to balance. After it balances, we get deficits again. If we had no budget bill, we would balance and get surpluses. So I say to the Members, great job. They just stretch out the time and then give us more deficits.

Medicare, it is going to go to 2007. Hot dog. If we did not have a tax bill, we would have the money to take Medicare to 2022. So these geniuses have just cut 15 years off the salvation of Medicare. Good job again.

What about children's insurance? Super job. They are going to spend $2,500 bucks a kid to insure 2 million more kids, and if Members had let it alone and used that same money to put them into Medicaid, they would have had 5 million kids insured, so I thank the geniuses for the 3 million kids who are going to walk around without any health insurance due to this budget.

Here is the perfect example of government run amok. They have fixed everything. The Senate bill adds the Kyl amendment and others, which will, for the first time, allow doctors to charge Medicare beneficiaries an unlimited amount of money and basically kick them out of Medicare.

My heavens, how awful, to suddenly find that we are going to have Medicare live up to the Speaker's intention of withering on the vine because it is going to be a two-class system. Medicare beneficiaries will be able to be charged unlimited amounts for the rich. This is the country club health care relief act to end them all. Medicare costs are going to go up $1.5 billion to try out a medical savings account, which will only, again, help the wealthy and the healthy.

So as we go along, we have the right-to-life group who wanted to have this Medicare amendment that Senator KYL put in there, and it is useless. We were going to cut $100 million out of poor inner-city hospitals; save it, as we like to say. Where are we now? We are going to save $600 million out of inner-city hospitals, $500 million bucks more out of the poorest hospitals in every one of the Members' districts, those hospitals that help the needy and the indigent.

Mr. Speaker, this is a lousy bill. Vote ''no.'' Go home and know you are going to be better off for not having a bill.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Kentucky [Mrs. NORTHUP], a new Member

to Congress and a very important member to the Committee on Appropriations.

Mrs. NORTHUP. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be here today. Before I comment on this balanced budget, I want to thank all of the people who have come before me that have kept the hope alive and the belief alive that it was possible to balance the budget, to cut taxes, to save Medicare, and to meet the emerging needs of our communities.

They were often ridiculed. They sat through years of where we raised taxes, where we spent more money, and they kept the hope alive for Americans that it was possible to change that course. They inspired me, and they inspired my community that this was a possibility. So for them, I thank them for the leadership and the lonely days they spent in this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, this bill says I love you to our children. For me, it is my six children: David, Katie, Joshua, Kevin, Erin, and Mark. For all the other parents who have children that believe that we should restrain our spending and pass on better opportunities to our children, that is what we are doing today when we vote for this bill.

It is a pleasure to be here. It is an honor to be a part of this. I think more than the numbers, more than what it does to interest rates, more than what it does to stop the bleed of red ink, it also helps to reestablish the faith and the trust that the American people have that this system of Government can address its needs, can come to an agreement, and can reflect what they have believed in so long. That is that we should balance our budget.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN].

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, the basic principle of the Democratic Party has been economic growth with equity. The 1993 Deficit Reduction Act was instrumental in promoting economic growth. Despite the overall growth, there were pressures on middle-income families, so this bill includes a child credit and also an educational tax credit and deduction. I support both bills.

Let me say a word about the piece that I worked most on, the human resource piece. I supported the Welfare Reform Act. People on welfare should move from welfare to work. But when the President signed the bill he pointed out several inequities. One related to legal immigrants. He promised to work to provide benefits to elderly and disabled legal immigrants who should not have been penalized in the first place. I joined in that promise. Today we are keeping that promise. It is a much better bill in that respect than when it left the House.

The President also promised to work for a welfare to work provision. We have kept that promise. There was an effort, though, in this House to penalize people who move from welfare to work, to treat them as second-class citizens, to withdraw them from the protections of Federal law in terms of wages, in terms of safety on the job.

We have today, in this bill, repelled that effort. People who work are to be treated as first-class citizens, without discrimination. We have also repelled the effort to withdraw from mostly elderly women the protections of maintenance of effort under SSI in terms of payments from the State. This is a bill that is a step in the right direction. I urge broad support for it.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Washington [Mr. NETHERCUTT]), a new member of the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Science.

Mr. NETHERCUTT. I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me, Mr. Speaker.

One of the many good reasons to vote for this bill, this legislation, is its impact on diabetes. This particular bill has a component, a prevention component relative to diabetes that will improve the health of all Americans with diabetes. There is also a special section entitled ''Special diabetes programs for children with Type 1 diabetes.'' There is a funding for special diabetes program for Indians.

Diabetes is a very serious disease. The gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. Furse) and I are chairmen of the Diabetes Caucus. We have had great support in this body for the cause of diabetes and curing it. I am delighted to be involved in supporting this bill along with my colleague, the gentlewoman from Oregon.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, in order to complete the colloquy, I yield 30 seconds to the gentlewoman from Oregon [Ms. FURSE]).

Ms. FURSE. Mr. Speaker, like my cochair, the gentleman from Washington [Mr. NETHERCUTT], I want to see that this budget contains good news for 16 million Americans, 16 million Americans who suffer from diabetes, including my own beloved daughter, Amanda. Thanks to my good friends, the gentleman from Florida, [Mr. BILIRAKIS], Mr. BROWN, and the 87 members of the Diabetes Caucus, we have put together a strong, bipartisan effort that will truly make a difference to the lives of people with diabetes.

I want to thank the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS], who is the chairman of our committee, and all the diabetes organizations who worked so hard on this.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS], a senior Member of Congress and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Health and Environment of the Committee on Commerce.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, it has been an honor for me to work with the gentleman, members of the budget conference and Committee on Commerce and Committee on Ways and Means members on historic legislation which will balance our Nation's budget for the first time, the first time since Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon, and at the same time reduce taxes, save Medicare and Medicaid, provide education and other family incentives and opportunities, and guarantees $24 billion to provide better health care for children.

In recent years many have said that we could not balance the budget and also reduce taxes. We have done that and more.

Regarding Medicare, we have saved the program for the next 10 years without hurting beneficiaries in any way. In fact, this legislation contains many worthwhile changes which greatly benefit the elderly. Our legislation gives seniors a choice of coverage through the new Medicare Plus Program, provides consumer protections, addresses fraud and abuse, and adds additional preventive health benefits. It also creates a commission to make recommendations on how Medicare could be preserved for future generations.

Regarding Medicaid, this legislation allows States to provide better and more cost-effective medical coverage for low-income people by giving States more flexibility. Under the children's grants, States will receive funds to initiate and expand health coverage and services to uninsured low-income children.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, must be judged on its merits, must be judged on its benefits to our constituents today, and to their future, and to the Nation and its future.

This legislation would not have been possible, Mr. Speaker, without the great work of staffers Howard Cohen, Eric Berger, Patti DeLoache, Ed Grossman, and others, many others, that put in many hours over the past several months, and I want them to know how much I and all Americans appreciate their efforts.

☐ 1430

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Chicago, IL [Mr. GUTIERREZ].

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, we are hearing the word ''balance'' a lot today. We applaud ourselves as we balance the budget. It is an important accomplishment, a difficult accomplishment to balance our budget. But I am afraid our Nation is losing its balance in a lot of other areas, like keeping our promises to our veterans who are facing cuts in this budget, like protecting our seniors who face an uncertain future because of this budget, like acknowledging the contribution of immigrants who are still targets for blame and discrimination in this budget, and like the simple idea of tax fairness that the wealthiest in our Nation should contribute a little more to our Treasury.

Our budget might be balanced, at least until the tax cuts explode again

in the future. But we are creating a lot of new deficits. Deficits of keeping our promises. Deficits of fairness. Deficits of equity. Deficits of caring. These are the deficits I cannot support today, and that is why I will cast my vote against this budget.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON].

(Mrs. CLAYTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I intend to vote for this bill, not because it is a perfect bill. Not because I agree with all that is in it. There is much that I do not agree with, but there is much more I do agree with. I think balancing our budget is important for our country. Some of the things I do agree is that we have made more provisions for education. We have made scholarships for those families who are going to college. We have made provisions to give tax relief for families with children. Also importantly, we have made provisions not to take away the working rights for mothers and those who are on welfare to make sure that they have the same opportunities as others in there.

Yes, there are things in this bill you wish were not in there. But there is also tax relief for farmers and small businesses which they critically need in my area and also tax relief for education. On balance it may not be perfect, but I think it is good for America. I intend to vote for it and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER], chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means and the chief architect of this historic budget agreement between the White House and Congress.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

The conference agreement that we vote on today is a bridge, a bridge that reaches across to unite generations today and tomorrow. It saves Medicare for this generation of seniors, and it balances the budget so that we can save the next generation from the crushing burden of debt. It says that Washington has to change its ways so the American people will not have to change theirs. It tells the American people that Congress does not live by special rules. We will no longer spend more than we take in. The American people understand this.

They know they have to balance their family budgets each month. And so should we. Last year my 12th grandchild was born. When I went to visit him as a little premature baby, and I am happy to say he survived and he is home with his parents and doing well, I could not help but think that his pro rata share of the interest on the national debt during his lifetime would be $189,000, if he was an average income earner. That is unconscionable for our generation to leave to the coming generations. Today we do something about it. I say to Archer Hadley, my little grandson, this is for you.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. DAVIS].

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight two portions of this conference report that lead me to support it today. The first is getting us to a balanced budget. The amount of interest that we are paying annually right now on the Federal deficit more than exceeds the total amount of income tax payments paid by every individual west of the Mississippi.

We need to get the budget balanced and then attack the deficit. This spending plan is accompanied by tax cuts that are paid for while we will still balance the budget. The White House succeeded in keeping those tax cuts affordable. That is terribly important.

Second, this budget agreement constitutes a massive reallocation of our resources into education. To encourage more of our high school seniors, more community college students, more university students to be the best they can be in school and to succeed in obtaining well-paying jobs for themselves and their families. Most importantly it will send another strong message to adults throughout our country to engage in a lifetime of learning, to go back to school supported by their employers or supporting themselves, to further their jobs skills, to broaden their job skills, to sharpen their job skills to prepare for the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2015, the Balanced Budget Act, which will balance the budget within 5 years while at the same time protecting our Nation's commitment to our seniors, investing in health care coverage for children, expanding educational opportunities for students, and restoring fairness for thousands of legal immigrants.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Budget Committee I want to first commend my ranking member, the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPRATT] for his hard work and dedication throughout these long negotiations. Without his leadership and his commitment to working with both the administration and the Republican negotiators, this agreement would not have been possible. Our Nation owes a debt of gratitude for all that he has done over the past 6 months.

H.R. 2015, the spending portion of the reconciliation package, is truly a historic bill—historic not only for what it does, but also for what it represents. This bill demonstrates a commitment by both parties to the principle that we should not be spending beyond our means; that we must not saddle our children and grandchildren with debt; and that we should balance the budget while protecting our Nation's spending priorities. Furthermore, this bill is an example of what bipartisan cooperation can accomplish. If we set aside the rhetoric and work together toward a common goal, we can find areas of agreement and compromises on those areas of disagreement. The result is truly a win for the American people. I hope the spirit of cooperation, embodied in this Balanced Budget Act, will continue when we return from our August recess and as we sit down to tackle other critical issues such as campaign finance reform.

Specifically, H.R. 2015 includes much needed entitlement reforms which would balance the budget in the near term and lay the groundwork for long-term reforms as the baby-boomers approach retirement.

The majority of the savings in this package are designed to preserve and strengthen the Medicare Program by extending the solvency of the trust fund for at least 10 years. The bill will expand choices for Medicare beneficiaries and protect low-income beneficiaries from premium increases. The Balanced Budget Act also invests $4 billion in preventive benefits to fight breast cancer, diabetes, and colon cancer through annual tests and screenings.

Additionally, the bill implements tough new antifraud provisions, many of which are identical to those I introduced earlier this year in the Medicare Anti-Fraud Act, H.R. 1761. With recent revelations over the amount of fraud and abuse in the current system, I believe these initiatives, such as requiring certain providers to post a surety bond, are essential to restoring the integrity of the program.

Furthermore, with respect to Medicare, this bill will establish a bipartisan commission to make recommendations on a comprehensive approach to preserve Medicare as the baby-boomers approach retirement. Clearly, we must take steps to address the pending demographic changes in the program and I hope Congress will approach the recommendations of the commission, due in March 1999, with the same bipartisan cooperation that has prevailed throughout these budget negotiations.

In addition to protecting Medicare for our Nation's seniors, this agreement will expand health coverage to as many as 5 million of our Nation's uninsured children. This unprecedented investment in children's health care, the largest expansion of coverage since the enactment of Medicaid in 1965, will give States flexibility in determining how best to accomplish this important goal while guaranteeing that these moneys will be spent solely for this purpose.

On many issues, this conference agreement represents a great improvement over the House-passed version, which I supported but with numerous reservations. For example, I believe this final agreement offers adequate protections to workfare participants, guaranteeing that they will be treated fairly as workers. This conference agreement also restores protections for both disability and health benefits to 350,000 legal immigrants who would be denied these benefits as result of the welfare reform law of last year. All of these provisions ensure that as we move forward with our plan to balance the budget we are guaranteeing an element of basic fairness for all Americans.

Finally, amid all of the celebrations over what this bill will do, I would raise one word of caution. Just last week, this House rejected an attempt to include tough budget enforcement provisions which I supported that would ensure that we meet our deficit targets and reach the goal of balancing the budget by the year 2002. If we are not willing to enact such enforcement provisions, then we must be even more diligent in future years to ensure that the projections in this bill translate into reality. Only when the budget is certifiably balanced will we truly be able to celebrate.

Mr. Speaker, I again commend my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their

hard work throughout this process and urge all of my colleagues to support this historic legislation.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. PORTMAN], a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I think we need to step back a moment and think about what a victory this is for the American people. For the first time in more than a generation we are actually going to balance the budget. We are going to stop spending more than we take in every year, an immoral practice that leaves the bill for the next generation.

There has been a lot of discussion about how we got here. I think it really is a tribute to the persistence, to the energy of a lot of Members. One is the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH]. He brought his first balanced budget bill to the floor in 1989, before I got here. He got about 30 votes. The next year he got about 64 votes. The next year he got about 80 votes, then about 100 votes and so on. Today, this afternoon on this floor, I think we will have a bipartisan majority of about 250 votes.

I want to commend him and commend all the Members who have worked long and hard to get us to where we are today. It is not legislation that every Member here supports, and all of us would like to see it a little different. But it is a significant step because we are, in fact, doing what we have just talked about for the past couple of decades and that is actually balancing the budget for the next generation. I want to pay tribute to them and to this House this afternoon.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. ROEMER].

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, Justice Brandeis once said that the best disinfectant was sunshine. I guess my litmus test is how does this several-hundred-page bill treat children. Is it fair to children? As I go through the bill and read through how it treats children, I come out with a resounding yes, it shines on children.

We have moved from a $15 billion children's health initiative to now, finally, a $24 billion health initiative for 5 million children that were not previously covered. We have education spending at the highest level in 30 years since the Great Society. We now have disability SSI payments for children that were not eligible before, the most vulnerable children in our society. And we have the largest increase in the history of the Pell grant program to get parents who cannot afford to send their children to college into college and come out without a huge debt.

This is positive for small children, positive for small businesses and small farmers and positive for smaller, smarter government.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY].

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to vote for this bill, as I indicated earlier. There is much in it that I would like to support. I was one of the original sponsors of the child tax credit, for instance, with Vice President Gore some 5 years ago. I certainly supported the education tax credits. I support what we are trying to do for health care for kids. But there are a number of fundamental tests which this bill fails.

The most important test to me is whether or not it provides most of the tax relief to middle-income families. The fact is it does not. As this chart will show, the wealthiest 5 percent of people in this country, those who make over $112,000 a year, will get six times as much tax relief as the 60 percent of all Americans who make less than $36,000 a year. I do not describe that as being fair.

In fact, the wealthiest 1 percent, who make more than $250,000 a year, will get more in tax relief than the 80 percent of American people who make less than $60,000. That is simply not fair.

Secondly, if we take a look at what happens with the wealthiest 1 percent, the wealthiest 1 percent will get $16,000 on average for a tax cut. The poorest 20 percent who make on average $8,000 will actually have a tax increase of $39. That does not shrink the gap between the wealthy and the poor in this country. It makes it worse. I do not think this Congress should do that. I think it can do better.

Third, I do not think that we ought to fail the test of whether or not this package provides the needed investments that we need to make the economy grow over the next 10 or 15 years. The fact is, when Members of this House say that this is going to balance the budget, that promise is built upon the promise that we are going to cut Social Security Administration by some 25 percent. Does anybody really believe that we are going to extend the waiting time for getting the Social Security check from 3 months to a year? Is this Congress really going to do that?

This chart will demonstrate that it is built on the promise that we are going to cut health appropriations by 16 percent over the next 5 years. The bill which is scheduled to come to the floor next will raise the spending for the National Institutes of Health by 6 percent. Yet this Congress is going to pretend that we are going to cut that spending by 16 percent over the next 5 years. I do not think this Congress will and I do not think the American people would want us to.

Are we really going to cut veterans? Are we really going to cut veterans health care by 20 percent over the next 5 years? Just last week this House voted to restore money to the veterans health care budget. Are we really going to tell people we are going to balance the budget by cutting veterans health care 20 percent? Come on. We ought to know better than that. Are we really going to see a Congress cut agriculture programs by another 23 percent? Agriculture programs have already been cut more than any other part of the budget. I would like to see the Members from rural districts who vote for this budget today, who are going to vote to cut agriculture budgets by 23 percent over the next 5 years. It simply is not going to happen.

Last week on the House floor this House refused to cut the science budget by 3 percent, and yet it is promising in the budget before us today that we are going to cut science by 18 percent over the next 5 years. Who is kidding whom? Do Members really believe these are anything but false promises? I do not. I have seen this Congress since 1982 break its promises on deficit reduction. I do not want to see them break more. That is what we will be doing if we vote for this bill. I urge Members to vote ''no.''

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1¾ minutes to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOBSON], a member of the Committee on the Budget and Committee on Appropriations and also a major participant in this historic agreement between the White House and Congress.

Mr. HOBSON. Mr. Speaker, today the House takes another step toward making budget history. As we consider the conference report on the Balanced Budget Act, we are closing in on the most significant legislative accomplishment this body has enacted in a generation and its benefits are going to be felt for many generations to come.

The Balanced Budget Act is an expression of the responsibility of this Congress feels to the American people, not only to those who are living today but to those Americans who will inherit our country tomorrow such as my grandchildren. This budget slows all the growth of Federal Government spending to just 3 percent for the next 5 years. That is a savings of $289 billion. In doing this, we are controlling the runaway growth that threatens to put our country further in debt.

The Balanced Budget Act also saves Medicare from bankruptcy and expands health care options for seniors. Millions of seniors have been spared crushing poverty with Medicare and I want this program to be there for my children and grandchildren as well. Out-of-control entitlement programs are being reined in and States are being given more freedom from Federal bureaucrats so they can generate their own innovative solutions to solving their citizens' problems.

□ 1445

In a separate bill that is part of the overall budget agreement, we are providing the first tax relief American families have seen since the mid 1980's. Families will get tax relief to help with the cost of raising kids and sending them to college; and small business owners, especially farmers like those in Ohio's 7th District, will get estate tax and capital gains relief.

This budget has been assembled by working together across the aisles.

This spirit of cooperation demonstrates that Congress and the administration can work together, as they should, to solve the problems. That same spirit of agreement, of putting the American people first, will be seen again in this conference committee and I am proud to be a part of it.

I urge all Members to join me in balancing the budget, saving Medicare and continuing the extraordinary spirit of cooperation. Support the conference report, and congratulations to the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] and all the members of the committee, and especially our chairman, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH].

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Maine [Mr. BALDACCI].

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member from South Carolina for yielding me this time.

This balanced budget agreement is an historic opportunity and the first time since 1969 that we will have an opportunity to do this. I would like to commend the administration, President Clinton and Vice President GORE, and those in Congress that supported the agreement that enabled us to be at this particular point, that voted for a document in 1993 which took a deficit at $290 billion and brought it down to less than $10 billion today.

It was the work that was done by the Members of Congress and the administration that got us to this point. And the point that we are at today is an opportunity to make an investment. The document we are voting on today allows us to make an investment in education. Young people, 36,000 families in Maine, do not have the opportunity to go on to higher education because of the cost, the financial burden. That education presents the future to them. That is that bridge to the 21st century.

The 100,000 families that are on the earned income tax credits will get a tax break because we will reward work. We will not reward not working. And with small businesses, family businesses and agriculture, they are going to get a break, and this is what this represents today.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT], who is a very important member of the Committee on the Budget and also on the Committee on Science.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

We talk about the balanced budget and this agreement and what it means in terms of dollars and cents and percentages and so forth, but in many respects this agreement is about generational fairness.

I represent an awful lot of farmers, and some of the greatest wisdom I have ever heard has come from some of my farm families. Back in farm country they know one of the great parts of the American dream is to pay off the mortgage and leave our kids the farm. But what we have been doing here in this government for the past 40 years is, in effect, we have been selling off the farm and leaving our kids the mortgage. We all know deep down in our bones that there is something morally wrong with that.

An old farmer told me a couple of years ago, and perhaps the best way I have ever heard it put, he said the problem is not that we are not sending enough money into Washington. He said the problem is that Congress spends it faster than we can send it in, and that has really been true. And every time we have raised taxes the deficit has actually gone up.

Balancing the budget, saving Medicare and allowing families to keep more of what they earn is not just some accounting exercise. Balancing the budget is about preserving the American dream for our kids. Saving Medicare is about keeping our commitment to our parents. And tax relief for families is about making it easier for those families to pay for their kids' education and save for their future.

This is a glorious day for America. It is an historic day, and I am glad to be a part of this Congress and this Committee on the Budget.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to myself to point out to the last gentleman that every time we raise taxes the deficit does not go up. In 1993 we raised taxes and the deficit came down.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California, [Mr. WAXMAN].

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, there are some very good things in this bill. The restoration of benefits for immigrants and the child health provisions are two of the most important.

But let us not forget we essentially are talking about a flawed bill that the administration tried to make better. Making a bad bill better doesn't make it good.

In the area of Medicare, and I want to talk about some points that I find most troubling. We have raised the premium as a result of this legislation. But we have not guaranteed help for low-income people. We have made some changes in the Medicare Programs, such as MSAs and a fee-for-service option and private contracts with doctors, which I think may undermine the Medicare program, which has a broad-based risk pool. We may well see healthier and wealthier seniors leave that risk pool and opt for private insurance coverage.

In Medicaid, we repeal the requirement to pay nursing homes and hospitals an amount adequate to meet their costs for decent quality care. Let me underscore that. We do not have to pay them what is adequate to provide decent quality care. And we have made cuts in the support for hospitals and health care centers which serve as the safety net for the poor.

Now, why are we making all of these cuts in areas where it really does not make sense from a policy point of view? We cannot divorce this bill from the tax bill. We are doing it so we can give tax breaks to many people in the upper income bracket. What I am afraid we will see, and I expect we will see as a result of these tax cuts, will be greater pressure on domestic social spending. Particularly greater pressure on the Medicare Program as the baby boom generation ages. I think that we are going to run the risk of going right back into the huge deficits we have seen in the past.

I congratulate the administration on doing as good a job as they could under the circumstances. For me, it is just not good enough.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW], a senior member of the Committee on Ways and Means, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Resources, and the architect of the most important legislation to pass this Congress, the welfare reform bill.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to engage the gentleman from Missouri in a colloquy. Members may be aware of the ongoing debate in this budget legislation over whether workfare participants are employees, but they might benefit by some background on this issue, including a clarification of the intent of last year's welfare reform law.

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SHAW. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Chairman, last year's welfare reform bill was about, in part, getting welfare recipients into work. One of the most effective ways to do that is through community service and community work experience programs which we generally know as workfare.

Since the 1960's Federal welfare laws have allowed States to place recipients in workfare which requires recipients to work in exchange for their welfare benefits. The workfare program created under the 1988 Family Support Act specified public and private sector workfare recipients' hours and compensation, and included specific health and safety, nondiscrimination and other protections for workfare participants, but did not treat the workfare participants as employees.

I would ask the chairman if that is his understanding, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Resources with jurisdiction over welfare reform.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, the gentleman is absolutely correct. That is my understanding.

The 1996 welfare reform law specified that States can continue to operate effective workfare programs, and community service and work experience workfare are among the work activities States may count as work. Unlike prior law, that act did not spell out the compensation or other rules for workfare positions, because it was assumed that previous distinction in

statutes and case law between workfare and employment would continue to be recognized.

However, in May of this year the Department of Labor issued an outrageous guide to ''How Workplace Laws Affect Welfare Recipients'' in which it indirectly claimed that most if not all participants in workfare programs under the welfare law would be considered employees under the law.

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, I would ask the gentleman if it was the intention of the authors of the 1996 welfare reform law that workfare participants be considered employees, and thus covered under at least 25 labor laws, including prevailing wages, unemployment compensation, and social security taxes and benefits, none of which previously applied to workfare?

Mr. SHAW. I say to the gentleman, absolutely not. In fact, section 417 of the 1996 welfare reform law specifically provides that, and I quote, ''No officer or employee of the Federal Government may regulate the conduct of States under this part or enforce any provision of this part, except to the extent expressly provided in this part.'' So the Department of Labor is usurping congressional authority.

Further, when proposals were put forth in Congress which attempted to treat workfare participants as employees, they were defeated. For example, an amendment offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. BECERRA] requiring that workfare participants be covered by labor laws was defeated right here in this Chamber.

The bottom line is that the legislative history is very clear. Congress did not intend for the Department of Labor to ruin the welfare reform law by outlawing work. The Clinton Administration has thrown down the gauntlet, first by issuing an outrageous ruling and then by refusing to go along with our efforts to correct this unwarranted attack on welfare reform. Congress will react in an appropriate fashion before this session is over to make sure that families can receive the training and experience they need to leave welfare for work and to support themselves.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO].

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, the same Republicans who said the only way this Congress could balance the budget was by amending the Constitution stand here today to take credit for something that they said could never be done without that.

The same Republicans who spent 5 years attacking our President as a taxer and spender have embraced his plan to balance the budget. That is the truth of the matter.

Democrats took this balanced budget bill and made it ours; and now, as the long-distance race to a balanced budget plan passes the grandstand, the Republicans want to join us for the last victory lap.

The President and congressional Democrats said their top priority was to put college within the grasp of working families, and here is what we got: A $1,500-a-year grant for the first 2 years of college, a lifelong learning tax credit, an increase in scholarships for low-income and middle-class families.

The President and congressional Democrats said that every kid in America deserves health care when they need it, not just when they can afford it. This bill does that.

The President and congressional Democrats said that Medicare should cover preventive health services, such as screening for prostate cancer and mammography. This bill does that.

The President and congressional Democrats said that a balanced budget and tax legislation should help those who need it most, not the richest of the rich. This bill does that.

We have scored a major victory for a balanced budget, for fair tax cuts, for our kids, for our future. The winners? Not Republicans and not Democrats. This time, the American people.

I urge my colleagues to put aside their concerns, both sides have many, and to follow through on the work we began in 1993, to honor our colleagues whose courage made it possible for the rest of us to be here today to take credit for finishing the job.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BLILEY], one of the senior Members of Congress, the chairman of the very powerful Committee on Commerce.

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Thirty years ago the Federal Government's budget was in balance. Thirty years ago families kept more of their hard-earned money. Thirty years ago Government programs were by and large helpful, not hopeless. How far we have fallen in three decades.

We now face nearly $6 trillion in debt, crushing tax burdens and uncontrolled spending. The programs we throw taxpayer dollars at often do not help the people they were supposed to help, and every day there are more rules and regulations to limit our freedom as Americans.

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But today is different, because today we are saying enough is enough. Although we may not like certain parts of this package, it is the whole that counts. And the whole is the first balanced Federal budget in nearly three decades.

But this budget does more than achieve balance in 2002. Among the budget's many provisions are a number of notable achievements crafted by the Committee on Commerce. We preserve Medicare for the next generation of beneficiaries and give seniors more choices than ever before. We make long overdue reforms to the Medicaid program, making it more flexible for States and more effective for recipients.

We chart a new course in American health care away from Washington-knows-best control and toward greater innovation by establishing a block grant to provide coverage and services for poor, uninsured children. And we strengthen America's prohibition on the use of Federal funds for abortions, making clear that our efforts today are on behalf of all children, born and unborn. Most of all, this budget is an important step in our quest to make the Federal Government serve the American people and not the other way around.

After this budget is passed and signed into law, our work will not be finished. We have a duty to remain vigilant against wasteful Government spending. We need to reallocate existing resources to make sure the taxpayers get a dollar's worth of value for every dollar spent. And we need to prepare now for the budgetary needs of the baby-boom generation.

I am proud of the first steps we have taken in this balanced budget plan, and I look forward to building on this achievement in the months and years to come.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STENHOLM].

(Mr. STENHOLM asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in support of this budget agreement. The very first year I ran for Congress, I talked about the need to abolish our Federal deficits. Putting our Nation's fiscal house in order has been my highest priority throughout my career. At long last, it appears we are going to accomplish that goal.

The efforts of President Clinton and Congress have resulted in 5 consecutive years of declining deficits and the lowest deficit this year since the Carter administration. The agreement builds on this tremendous achievement and continues this glidepath to a balanced budget. While I will personally wait until the budget is balanced, in fact, instead of projections before I pop the champagne cork, this is a tremendous step for the future of our country.

Two years ago, those of us in the coalition set out to prove it is possible to balance the budget while protecting education, health care and other important priorities. This agreement is a vindication of that effort. This reconciliation bill reflects the influence of Blue Dog budgets in many areas. The savings levels and the policies for Medicare and Medicaid and other programs are quite close to the savings levels and policies proposed in our budget that have bipartisan support.

There are many important features of this reconciliation bill in addition to the promise of a balanced budget. The changes to payments to health care plans in underserved areas and the provisions allowing health care providers

to form provider sponsored organizations will expand access to health care for seniors, particularly in rural areas. The formula for DSH payments to States is improved substantially over the bill originally passed by the House.

The education and children's health initiatives are important investments in our future. The funding for local programs to move welfare recipients to work will help make welfare reform a success. Although the budget enforcement provisions fall far short of what I believe is necessary, there are some important improvements in the area of budget enforcement that closes some of the loopholes in the current budget process.

Mr. Speaker, I urge everyone to support this agreement.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, at this time, it is our pleasure to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY], the House majority whip and a senior member of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation that finally balances our Federal budget. It is about time. I have waited my entire adult life for it. Some Members of the Democrat minority just still do not get it. Indeed, if they were in charge, we would not be cutting taxes or cutting spending at all. If the Democrats still ran Congress, this deal would have contained more Government spending and tax increases instead of tax cuts.

We need to look at the big picture, and the big picture shows how we are moving toward smaller, smarter government and greater freedom for our citizens. We have to give President Clinton some credit. He has rejected the left wing of his own party and publicly embraced conservative commonsense values of lower taxes and smaller government.

But this budget is only a first step. We still have a lot of work to do. We need to come up with a long-term plan to fix entitlements. If we do not, our children's future might be miserable.

We still need to reform spending. The Federal Government today is not as small or as smart as it could be. We still have too many stupid, harmful, and counterproductive Federal regulations. The Federal bureaucracy is still too big and still spends too much money.

But this legislation is a very, very good start. It will balance the budget by the year 2002 or even sooner. It will slow the growth of spending for some entitlements and for some discretionary programs. But this is a compromise with the President, who wants to spend more money. He has consistently and persistently fought for more Federal spending programs.

This legislation reflects the President's desire to spend more money. We have tried our best, and for the moment our best is only good enough. But this budget is not the end of the line. It is simply another landmark on the road to fiscal responsibility. Next year is another budget and more tax cuts.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this legislation.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. SISISKY].

(Mr. SISISKY asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SISISKY. Mr. Speaker, this legislation is an important step toward improving the health of our Nation's senior citizens by providing Medicare coverage for colorectal cancer screening. For the first time, America's seniors will have access through Medicare to preventive screening for colorectal cancer, the second most deadly cancer disease next to lung cancer. Preventive screening has been proven to reduce mortality from colorectal cancer, yet, a large majority of America's senior population has never been screened.

I am very glad to see that this legislation establishes an expedited process to assure Medicare coverage for all colorectal cancer screening procedures that are currently available and can help reduce the incidence and mortality rate of this disease. The fecal occult blood test, sigmoidoscopy, and colonoscopy are covered by Medicare upon enactment of the legislation, and the barium examination will undergo an expedited review by the Department of Health and Human Services [HHS]. A determination regarding Medicare coverage for the barium examination will be made within 90 days.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge the HHS in conducting this review and determination to adopt the same approach to evaluating colorectal cancer screening procedures as the American Cancer Society [ACS]. The objective of the ACS was to maximize the number of people who get screened for colorectal cancer. In explaining its colorectal cancer screening guidelines, the ACS emphasized that four currently used colorectal cancer screening procedures are cost-effective alternatives for colorectal cancer screening, whose widespread use will result in fewer deaths from colorectal cancer. The barium examination was among the screening options recommended by the ACS.

The approach taken by the ACS clearly reflects the ultimate goal of colorectal cancer screening legislation—to provide a basis for as many Medicare patients as possible to be screened. It is appropriate, therefore, for HHS to adopt the same approach in evaluating Medicare coverage of the barium examination. I am confident that, on the basis of this review, HHS will determine that the barium examination is a highly effective colorectal cancer screening procedure, and that the addition of the barium examination to colorectal cancer screening under Medicare would increase screening, save lives, and save money.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SOLOMON). The Chair will make note of the time remaining. The gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] has 16 minutes remaining, the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPRATT] has 11 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Washington (MCDERMOTT) has 1¾ minutes remaining.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from New Jersey [Mrs. ROUKEMA], a 9-year member of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services and chairman of the Subcommittee on Financial Institutions.

(Mrs. ROUKEMA asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, when I first heard of this Balanced Budget Act, I kind of drew a breath and said, this sounds too good to be true. But, in fact, it was true. Apparently, we can work together here in the Congress for the good of the people, without a lot of partisan bickering. And I am very grateful for that. I support it.

We must understand that, on the whole, this is a very good package. Not to say that we agree with everything, but we must understand that the Balanced Budget Act and the Tax Relief Act are joint efforts to put our fiscal house in order, and they must be linked together. We must remain mindful not to cut spending to the extent that we may endanger programs that are vital to our elderly and to children in order to provide for tax cuts. I do not believe we have done that here.

For years, I have been advocating a save-and-invest-in-America program, and I will vote on this bill today and the taxpayers bill tomorrow. However, we cannot ask American people to save and invest unless we force the Government to live within its own means.

However, I must say that this is a good bill, but some of the savings do concern me. The impact of these decisions on New Jersey and the outyears is particularly worrisome in connection with the Medicare payments. But I have been assured by the responsible members of the committee that we will continue to monitor the changes in the disproportionate share hospital payments on transfer payments to hospitals.

New Jersey is in a unique position, and I have been assured that we will be treated equitably in making those transfer payment arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support in H.R. 2015, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. In fact, this sounds too good to be true. Apparently, we can work together for the good of the people without all the partisan sniping and bickering.

For the first time in a generation, we are on the verge of crafting a balanced budget. The Congress and the President have come together to agree on this long held goal to put our children's future on a strong fiscal footing.

On the whole, it is a good package. That is not to say that I agree with everything. We must understand that both the Balanced Budget Act and the Taxpayers Relief Act are joint efforts to put our fiscal house in order. Both must be linked together. We must remain mindful not to cut spending to the extent that we may endanger programs that are vital to our elderly and children in order to provide tax cuts.

For years, I have been advocating a save and invest in America program and the Taxpayers Relief Act, which I will vote for tomorrow, includes many key provisions. However, we cannot ask the American people to save and invest until we force this government to live within its own means.

We have a responsibility to our children and the future. Perpetual deficits threaten to straddle our children with crushing debt that could lead to low paying jobs, economic stagnation, and possibly a lower standard of living.

The need for a balanced budget has never been greater. The national debt is increasing by close to $9,500 per second. In 1996, Americans paid $900 in taxes per person to service interest on the debt. In fiscal year 1997 we will have spent $248 billion on interest on the debt, that is 15 percent of all Federal spending. That is money not spent on our children, on education, or health care. It is money that goes into the fiscal black hole created by our continued indebtedness.

Our Nation is on the verge of tremendous generational change. The baby-boom generation will, in the next decades, begin to retire. With this great influx, the next generation will be asked to carry on the responsibility of ensuring that their parents are cared for by a system that is fair and equitable. It is our responsibility, in this Congress, to ensure the viability of worthy Federal programs and to create a strong and vibrant economy in which our children and grandchildren can thrive, succeed, and enjoy the promise of what America has to offer. The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 is the first step in this process.

In order to avoid this calamity, the Balanced Budget Act will require everyone in the United States to share some of the sacrifice associated with reducing the size of the Federal Government and reforming spending. This act attempts to reduce spending in the most equitable manner possible.

Significant savings will come from Medicare and Medicaid. The Federal health care programs for the elderly and low-income respectively will be asked to spend over $128 billion less than current CBO projections.

Without question, this area of savings raises the most concern, and I must state my healthy skepticism about how much can, or should, be accomplished in the near-term.

Some of the aspects of this act will receive criticism for concerned groups. Clearly, strong action must be taken to ensure that our elderly will be able to receive necessary medical treatment through the Medicare Program, and that Medicare will be there for many hard-working families who will become eligible in the next 10 or 20 years.

The Balanced Budget Act will keep the Medicare trust fund solvent for at least the next 6 years. Most of these savings come from reducing payments to hospitals and health care providers. I applaud the establishment of a special commission to study how to make Medicare solvent well into the future and secure for when the baby-boom generation begins to retire. I have long supported a commission and believe that it will offer Congress intelligent and balanced information.

The provision in this act that greatly concerns me is the issue of medical savings accounts. The bill allows for a pilot program of 390,000 accounts to be set up. Mr. Chairman, medical savings accounts are a bad idea for America.

We must not let our drive to make Medicare solvent lead to us to destroy the best elements of that program by moving elderly Americans into dubious health plans like MSA's. We can not lose sight of the quality of care that Medicare provides. MSA's are riddled with problems. There exists the danger of fraud and abuse of poorly informed seniors. MSA's could result in a lowering of the quality of care of our elderly, an increase in Medicare premiums for the elderly, and an undermining of the system as a whole, because the healthy seniors will be removed from the system along with the more financially secure thereby eroding Medicare as an universal system.

I would like to highlight some of my concerns in this budget dealing with the hospitals of New Jersey. I have been concerned about the changes in the disproportionate share hospital [DSH] payments to hospitals in New Jersey.

I have been assured that no one State will take a much greater hit than any other State—that a formula has been worked out that takes an even approach in this formula calculation. We must work to ensure that New Jersey and other States do not shoulder an unfair amount of burden.

Also, I have been concerned over changes in the different hospital payments for a transfer versus a discharge. While I understand that a compromise has been reached where the new definition change will only apply in a limited capacity, I am further heartened that this will not be implemented until after October 1998, and that the Commerce Committee is open to holding hearings and looking further into this definition change. I pledge to work with the Commerce Committee to deal equitably with New Jersey's unique status.

One last issue of concern I had affecting our hospitals is over Medicare. I am glad we were able to work out a compromise which would phase in adjustments to the prospective payment system for the first 2 years. By allowing a phase in, the various hospitals affected would be able to adjust accordingly. We must continue to work with this Nation's hospitals so that all people receive the care they need.

In reforming the health care system, we must make sure that we maintain the quality of care to those who need it, maintain access to care, and that all changes are fair and equitable. We must ensure that those who have the least do not give up the most. As I have said, ''let's not be a penny wise and a pound foolish.''

The Balanced Budget Act should be applauded for other important reasons. This act expands health care coverage to millions of children across the Nation. This is possibly the best investment we have made in a generation.

I am very pleased about the increase in the cigarette tax and the use of that money to provide for the expansion of children's health care. This was one of my top legislative priorities this year and demonstrates the best in public policy.

I must compliment the conferees for including parity treatment of mental health coverage. Mental and physical health care for our children are inseparable. Healthy bodies means healthy minds and vice versa. Parity treatment of mental health coverage demonstrates our wisdom and compassion. Our children are the most important resource we have.

Indeed, if the truest judgment of a society is the way they treat their children, then we have taken a major step to secure that our generation believes that our children should be cared for in the most comprehensive and compassionate manner.

The Balanced Budget Act is the strongest statement this Congress can make on the direction we intend to take in the future. We must remember that this is the first time we will have balanced the budget in over a generation. It is important for us to stay focused on maintaining a balance and running surpluses.

We must avoid the temptation of declaring victory and leaving. We must continue to balance budgets in the future. We must reform the entitlement programs to prepare them for the retirement of the baby boom generation. We must be prepared to enforce our agreement in the future. There is much hard work and many tough decisions to make in the future.

The Balanced Budget Act sets forth our priorities. We still protect the programs that provide care for the elderly, the poor, and the young. We will create a new program to protect our children who currently have no health coverage. And we will balance the Federal budget and put our fiscal house in order for the future. It also demonstrates what this body can do when it agrees on a goal and is determined to reach an agreement. This Act shows us the result of bipartisan action. Let us use this as a lesson for future action.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. PRICE].

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, this bill before us today is a truly bipartisan achievement, a vast improvement on the budget bill approved in this Chamber a month ago, one that we can vote for with great confidence. I want to applaud colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have brought us to this day.

This agreement includes $24 billion for our Nation's children. Five million American children who are not now covered will have health insurance protection because of this agreement.

The agreement also protects our veterans, ensuring that any shortfalls in medical care collections do not translate into less health care for those who have fought for our country.

Finally, this agreement protects the elderly of this country. It expands Medicare coverage for diagnostic and preventive health care services. It extends the life of the Medicare trust fund for another 10 years. And it establishes a commission to ensure the long-term solvency of the trust fund so our Nation's senior citizens are not continually put at the mercy of budget negotiators.

I want to thank my colleagues, whose tenacity enabled us to reach a solid bipartisan budget agreement, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. HAYWORTH], a new Member in the class of 1994, a sophomore now, and a member of the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Connecticut,

Mr. SHAYS, for yielding to me and thank my colleague from North Carolina, Mr. PRICE, for his thoughts on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult at times for a career politician to go do this, but I would ask all of us to leave the spin cycle in the laundry room. The fact is historians and the American people will judge us on how we arrived at this important date with this important piece of legislation.

What we can truly say today, Mr. Speaker, is that this is not a victory of party. Quite the contrary, it is a victory for our country. Because we put aside some partisan differences, we tried to reach accommodation on some deeply held beliefs, and such is the essence of our Democratic lifestyle and the principles we embrace.

It is interesting for me personally, Mr. Speaker, as I reflect back to the summer of 1969, to the year of the miracle Mets and man on the Moon, the summer before the sixth grade for me, and the last time the American people had a balanced budget. How important it is that, in waiting a quarter century or more, an entire generation, in effect, we now have the chance to embrace a balanced budget. How important it is, too, that we have taken a new look at how we administer the different rules in Washington, DC, how we are now willing to transfer money, power, and influence out of the hands of Washington bureaucrats and back closer to home so that people on the front lines can make decisions, so that parents are free to save, spend, and invest for their children as they see fit.

And how pleased I am, Mr. Speaker, that we join in a bipartisan fashion to preserve and strengthen Medicare through the next decade. For my parents, who, so youthful in 1969, turned 65 this year; we owe it to my parents and other parents to make sure that Medicare is preserved. This budget agreement does just that. We can do no less and also establishing a framework for the future as the baby boomers begin to retire.

I thank my colleagues for joining together. I urge passage of this important legislation.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT], a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] for yielding me the time. I also thank him for appointing me to the Committee on Ways and Means. I am actually on the Committee on the Budget and delighted to be so.

Let me talk just for a minute about some things because I know that, among the general public and amongst some of our colleagues, there is a certain amount of cynicism in terms of whether this budget agreement is real, whether we will actually balance the budget, whether we really will have the discipline to follow through to make the tough choices as we go forward.

I think those are legitimate questions. But I think Benjamin Franklin may have said it best when he said, ''I know no lamp by which to see the future than that of the past.''

I would like to remind Members of what we said just 2 years ago when we passed our budget resolution, the blueprint, our 7-year plan to balance the budget. We said in fiscal year 1997 we would spend no more than $1,624 billion in fiscal year 1997. That is the year we are in. Two years ago we said we would spend $1,624 billion. This year we actually are going to spend in fiscal year 1997 $1,621 billion.

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At a time revenues have increased by over $100 billion, we are spending less than we said we were going to spend just 2 years ago.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. BONIOR], the minority whip.

Mr. BONIOR. I thank the gentleman from South Carolina for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, this budget deal helps America's working families. It cuts their taxes, it gives health insurance to millions of children, it offers scholarships to students, and extends the life of the Medicare trust fund for another decade. So it is for these and other good provisions in this bill that I thank my colleagues, the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPRATT] and the gentleman from New York [Mr. RANGEL], and my colleagues on this side of the aisle who worked on this bill.

This deal also promises to keep the budget in balance. I say keep the budget in balance because we already balanced it with our 1993 deficit reduction package. That plan dropped the deficit from nearly $300 billion then to roughly $40 billion deficit this year, and it is still falling.

So we made tough choices in 1993. Some of my Republican colleagues have criticized that plan as a tax increase. What they do not say is that the people whose taxes went up in 1993 were the richest 1 percent in America. What they do not say is that we cut spending. And what they do not say is that we gave a tax cut to 20 million working families. I think what galls them the most is that our plan back in 1993 has worked. The economy has boomed, the deficit has disappeared.

Today's budget deal builds on the great success of that plan. The Children's Defense Fund told the Washington Post that $24 billion for children's health insurance is an initiative that will do extraordinary good for millions of children. Families USA called it the most significant advance in health care coverage since Medicaid and Medicare programs were enacted 32 years ago.

This budget deal does other good things, too. It provides a $500-per-child tax credit to working families. It provides thousands of dollars in tax credits for students to pursue their education after high school. It protects wages, pensions, health care, and it gives tax relief to millions of American homeowners.

But let me caution here. While I support these measures for working families, my Republican colleagues have exacted a heavy, heavy price for them. In addition to rewarding the richest Americans with a huge cut in the capital gains tax rate, they are rolling back the corporate minimum tax. That is a $19 billion giveaway to America's richest corporations. It is an outrage, it has no place in this deal, and I and others will be fighting it in the future. Because we will be watching to make sure that the tax breaks now going to the wealthy do not end up costing working families in the future.

But as I vote for this budget deal, I think of its immediate impact on the lives of those working families. I think of that young police officer's family not scrimping so much thanks to the new child tax credit. I think of all the children who are going to get health insurance for the first time, 5 million of them, with the $24 billion program. I think of all the young students who will now be able to afford community college, acquiring the skills to land them jobs where they can support their families. And I think of those people who have lost their jobs, who will be able to go back to their community colleges to learn the skills to support their families.

When I vote yes on this budget deal, I am going to vote for them and I am going to vote for America's working families.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN].

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I heard the colloquy between the gentleman from Florida and the gentleman from Missouri, and I just want the record to be clear. They are attempting to write a bill through a colloquy and you cannot do that. The reference to 1988 is very mistaken. It was a very different bill. It was not a broad welfare-to-work bill as we are now implementing.

I worked hard on the 1993 legislation, and no one can get up here and simply give their gloss on it and expect that to become law. But most importantly, the effort in this House by the majority to exclude people who would be classified as employees under FLSA and other Federal laws from those protections was specifically rejected in the conference committee. It is not in this bill. No colloquy can erase that. People who move from welfare to work have the dignity of the protection of Federal law if they are employees.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. HAYWORTH].

Mr. HAYWORTH. I thank the gentleman from Connecticut for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, again we see where there are genuine differences honestly held and where there may be other measures that have yet to be taken to address problems that people on both sides of the aisle have. But again I come down to speak on behalf of this legislation because of the many positive effects we will see, not only, although goodness knows it is important enough to balance the budget for the first time in a generation, not only because we preserve and protect Medicare for the next decade and set up the framework with a bipartisan commission to look at the very serious questions that confront us when the baby boomers start to retire, but also because of the second part of this agreement which we will come to tomorrow, the first meaningful tax cuts for working Americans in 16 long years.

Again, it is part of the difference in philosophy, where we honestly believe that working Americans deserve the chance to hold onto more of their hard earned money and send less of it here to Washington, and these two measures fit together like hand in glove. Today we deal with spending, tomorrow with tax cuts. The bottom line is a better future for the American Nation.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. MINGE].

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, as many of us have recognized, this agreement and this legislation have multifaceted advantages, and of course there is always a downside. I would like to emphasize one of what I think is the most positive attributes of the legislation, and that is its recognition of health care needs of Americans.

First and foremost, we are now attempting to assist States in providing coverage to children who do not have health care insurance. Second, we are addressing the imbalance that exists between rural health care financing and urban. Altogether too long, Mr. Speaker, the rural portions of our country have been denied the chance to participate in managed care because of highly discriminatory regional reimbursement rate structures.

Third, tomorrow we will take up legislation that addresses the tax deductibility of premiums for health insurance by self-employed individuals. These features together, I submit, are important reasons for supporting this legislation.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I include for the RECORD an editorial from the Washington Post yesterday entitled ''Budget Week,'' as follows:

BUDGET WEEK

As a country, we seem about to enter a week of self-congratulatory rhetoric in which the president and congressional Republicans will celebrate the balanced-budget agreement they appear to have reached and that Congress may finally pass as it leaves town for its summer vacation.

The president will say, not without cause, that he was successful in taking some of the rougher edges off the initial Republican proposal. He will argue that the final product balances the budget without doing violence to the values of the Democratic Party, finishes the job of deficit eradication that he began in drawing up in his first budget in 1993, provides a steady platform from which to head into the future and proves that, when there's a willingness to compromise, the political system can work.

The Republicans, for their part, will say that while they've had some tough times lately, and while they lost some battles to the president, they basically won the war. Glossing over the history of the 1980s, they will claim it is they who have always wanted a balanced budget. With greater cause, they will say it is they who have been the party of tax cuts and smaller government. If those are now both parties' goals, they win, even if the president, in coming their way on the issues, has partly shouldered them off center stage.

But in our view those are the wrong standards by which to judge this deal. They are mostly short-term and political, as is the deal itself. It will be no surprise to readers of this page that we apply a different lens.

(1) The balanced budget, assuming one is achieved, will owe as much to the continuing strength of the economy as to any policy changes Congress will vote this week. You could argue—we would—that the strong economy derives in part from some of the policy changes for which the president successfully fought in 1993. The fact is that this budget would actually undo some of the most important of those changes. In terms of fiscal discipline, it is less the advance its sponsors claim that a retreat from high ground that the president himself once occupied over Republican objections.

(2) The distinctive element in the deal remains the tax cut, for which the rest is mostly cover and a gloss. The long-term effect of the tax cut will be to add, regressively, to a deficit that the deal will at best only temporarily erase. The president played a double role in this, first agreeing to the cut, then working to make it a little more palatable around the edges. But the basic structure is still wrong. The children's credit, which will be the costliest provision in the early years, is mostly a political sop for which neither party has been able to think up a convincing economic justification. In the later years this will be overtaken by large, late-blooming tax cuts mainly for the highest-income households in the country. They will begin to drain the Treasury in earnest about the time the baby boomers retire. There is no economic or social justification for most of them either.

(3) Meanwhile, even though these are the most propitious of economic times and possibly political times as well in that the next president election is three years off, the plan, by mutual agreement, does next to nothing about the real fiscal problem—the one that will come with the boomers' retirement—that everyone acknowledges but wants to defer. Let the next folks do it. The tax cuts would compound this problem. The Senate proposed some first steps to cut longer-term Medicare costs, like asking higher-income beneficiaries to pay a slightly higher share of program costs. They dropped it from the final bill. This is a bill that, in the name of solving the nation's fiscal problem, systematically avoids and in some respects worsens that problem. The wrapping is great; the gift is dross.

The bill has some good features. Medicare will be a tidier program as a result of its passage. The number of children in the country lacking health insurance could be reduced (though that could end up an empty initiative, also). But most of the things that are good about the bill are good only in that the alternatives were worse. The legislation reverses some of the worst features of last year's welfare bill and of the original budget bill that the Republicans put forward this year. But the welfare bill should never have been signed, and likewise the first draft of this year's budget bill is a pretty poor standard on the strength of which to measure victories.

We assume that Congress will pass this package; the president and the Republican leadership are both invested in it. By now a lot of other people have larger or small investments in it as well. But this is a lost opportunity that, on balance and in the long run, will likely do a fairly large amount of harm—the tax cuts—for relatively little good.

Mr. Speaker, we hear people here talking about this whole issue as though it was a long-term fix, but in fact if my colleagues read this editorial, it says the strong economy derives in part from the policy changes which were made in 1993 by the Democrats, by the Budget Deficit Reduction Act that we passed.

But more important this editorial has a warning in it. It says the distinctive element in this deal remains the tax cut, for which the rest is mostly cover and a gloss. The long-term effect of the tax cut will be to add regressively to a deficit that the deal will at best only temporarily erase. The late-blooming tax cuts, mainly for the highest income households in the country, will begin to drain the Treasury in earnest about the time the baby boomers retire. There are no economic or social justifications for most of these cuts.

My concern is we are going to touch down with a balanced budget in 2002 like a 747 doing a touch-and-go landing in learning to fly the plane. The budget deficits will take off at precisely the time the budget will have to face the problems of baby boomers. People will be caught between their kids going to college and their parents in nursing homes, and there will be no money in the Treasury to deal with their problems because we are taking away the essence of the social safety net in this country.

That is why people ought to vote against this. It is making a long-term problem for ourselves for short-term political gains.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SOLOMON). The time of the gentleman from Washington [Mr. MCDERMOTT] has expired.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. NEUMANN].

Mr. NEUMANN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address some of the things that we have heard from our side of the aisle today and from both sides of the aisle, some of the concerns that somehow this is not real. I would like to just bring some of the facts to light here. I have heard, for example, that discretionary spending, the part of spending that we actually control out here, is going up under this plan. Let me give my colleagues the facts. Nondefense discretionary spending is going from

$281 billion a year to $288 billion a year 5 years later. That is less than a one-half of 1 percent increase each year. If we take inflation into account, that is a decrease in nondefense discretionary spending by about 1.5 percent per year. Yes, this is real, yes, it does what it is supposed to do, putting our financial house back in order, yes, it restores this Nation so our children can have hope of living the American dream.

I want to give another number. Total discretionary spending, again the part of the budget that we have the most control over. Total discretionary spending is going from $549 billion this year to $561 billion 5 years later, again less than one-half of 1 percent spending increase.

How about the overall spending increase? Overall spending increase is going from $1,621 billion to $1,889 billion. That is an increase of about 3 percent a year, roughly the rate of inflation. Yes, this is real, yes, it does what it is supposed to do. Our seniors can count on Medicare, our working families can count on additional tax reductions, and our children can count on us for a change, the first time since 1969, to do the right thing for this great Nation that we live in.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. LATHAM], a member of the Committee on Appropriations.

(Mr. LATHAM asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LATHAM. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to obviously stand here in support of the Balanced Budget Act and the provisions as far as the taxes. But one thing that is very, very important to the State of Iowa and all rural parts of this country is the reimbursement changes that are made in Medicare. In my congressional district, our reimbursement averages about $311 per person per month. In some of the urban parts of the country, it is $750 per person per month. In those areas, seniors have the option in their health care for eyeglasses, hearing aids, prescription drugs, even memberships at health clubs. We have none of that available. In this act we finally address the inequity between rural and urban parts of this country with the base now going to $367. It is extremely positive. I want to thank the committee and all the people who worked so very hard on this to address this real problem.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support the Balanced Budget Act as it comes before this body for a vote. Although this bill includes some items that I support and others that I would have preferred to have been left out, we should all recognize the bill as a product of bipartisan compromise and achievement. I am especially proud of the work this House and the Senate have done to increase Medicare choices for seniors.

Bring equity to seniors from rural areas, like northwest Iowa, has been a priority of mine since I've been in Congress. I want to ensure that seniors in rural northwest Iowa are going to enjoy Medicare benefits not just in the next couple of years, but for the next generation and beyond.

The majority party of this Congress has repeatedly vowed to bring choices to seniors as part of Medicare reform. One of those choices that has been denied up until now has been managed care for rural seniors. However, fulfilling a commitment made in the budget resolution earlier this spring, this Balanced Budget Act makes substantial reforms of the way the Medicare Program pays managed care plans.

Iowa seniors have paid into the Medicare System and have every right to expect efficient health care coverage. Unfortunately, the current Medicare System has always comparatively overcompensated urban areas in regard to the Medicare reimbursement rate at the expense of rural States like Iowa. By efficiently utilizing our health services in the past, the current Medicare law punishes Iowa seniors through low reimbursement rates. Some urban areas receive 2½ times the reimbursement rate per person than rural areas like northwest Iowa do.

The budget agreement will immediately establish a payment floor of $367 per month per beneficiary, which represents a tremendous increase for some Iowa seniors who are currently allowed $250 per month. The Balanced Budget Act also includes a 50/50 local/national blended payment rate for health plans beyond 1998. This blend will gradually bring the reimbursement rate for rural areas more in line with the rate of increase in urban areas, a goal of fundamental fairness.

Bringing fairness and equity to the Medicare System has always been my agenda, along with Members from both sides of the aisle from rural parts of the country. Iowa Medicare beneficiaries deserve the same options and benefits as any other seniors in the country. I am proud to say that the Balanced Budget Act increases choices for Iowa seniors, and brings equity to the Medicare Reimbursement System.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE].

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Balanced Budget Act because this bill does good things for children's health, welfare mothers, and for rebuilding our schools.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my wholehearted support for the bipartisan balanced budget agreement that the President and the Congress have agreed on implementing.

This historic agreement will result in the first balanced budget agreement in a generation, with a net savings of $900 billion over 10 years.

The President's economic plan has cut the deficit more than 75 percent from $290 billion in 1992 to $67 billion or lower by the close of this year. This agreement will finish the job by balancing the budget in 2002 and puts the budget in surplus at least through 2007.

This agreement will mean an unprecedented $24 billion for children's health care, a $500 per child tax credit for approximately 27 million families, a $1,500 HOPE Scholarship for the first 2 years of college and a 20 percent tuition tax credit for college juniors, seniors, graduate students, and working Americans pursuing lifelong learning.

As first balance budget since 1969, I know that the American public has waited long for a recognition that a budget that is not in balance hurts the economy, and robs our children of their future. More important than the agreement are the incentives to ensure that regardless of who has political control the agreement will be adhered to by both parties.

The important domestic priorities that we have agreed should be met are accomplished under this agreement. It allows people to move from welfare to work and treats legal immigrants fairly. There will be $3 billion to help States and local communities move people from welfare to work, along with $12 billion to restore both disability and health benefits for 350,000 legal immigrants in 2002 who are currently receiving assistance or become disabled.

This balanced budget agreement is a victory for middle-class parents trying to pay for their children's college and for working people trying to upgrade their skills.

We know the level of computer literacy and skills currently held by 20 percent of American workers, which is well below the 60 percent that will be required by the year 2000. Our Nation's workers will need opportunities to train for and acquire new skills to adapt to the new economic realities of the next century.

By crafting this agreement we will allow workers and their families to find greater freedom through job mobility and higher wages through acquisition of skills that are marketable.

Along with creating opportunity for current workers we must also maintain our support for youth summer jobs programs for future workers.

In 1997, Houston Works Summer Youth Program plans to serve 6,500 young people between the ages of 14 and 21, with a projected budget of $8.9 million. This funding would only allow 3 percent of those who would qualify to be included in the program. The potential number of applications for this important jobs program is 43,000 young people which reflects the total number of disadvantaged youth in the area served by Houston Works. Nationwide, there are 4 million youths who would qualify for this summer jobs program if funds were available.

Last year Houston Works provided 5,177 jobs to youth ages 14 through 21 years, with a budget of $6.5 million.

This program has made a significant difference in the lives and fortunes of Houston's young people who were fortunate enough to have their application accepted.

This balanced budget agreement will also aid the environment through a new tax cut plan to clean up and redevelop Brownfields. The 3-year Brownfield tax incentive will reduce the cost of cleaning up thousands of contaminated abandoned sites in economically distressed areas by permitting clean-up costs to be deducted immediately for tax purposes.

I along with many of my colleagues have worked hard to find solutions to this country's budget deficit and are pleased to see this type of bipartisan progress.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Mrs. KENNELLY].

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, may I take this opportunity

to thank the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPRATT], my leader, for his good work in the conference, the conference report that as a Democrat I am proud to stand here today and support, although I agree with many of my colleagues that we should have had more time to study the language as written. But this legislation really contains many Democratic priorities. To begin with, it balances the budget without a constitutional amendment and continues the direction made and begun in 1993 by that very, very difficult budget vote.

□ 1530

But that is only the beginning. The bill also includes the largest investment in our Nation's history since Medicaid, $24 billion. This funding will help States provide health coverage for millions of uninsured children, and I really hope I can believe what I heard, that this coverage will be as good as State and Federal workers have.

Furthermore, the legislation restores Federal aid for thousands of legal immigrants and provides $3 billion to help people make that transition so important from welfare to work.

These and other changes make good on the pledge that many of us made, led by the President, to fix the problems in the recent welfare bill, and I thank the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW] for his hard work in this area.

And, finally, the bill will enhance Medicare's coverage for preventive care including, annual mammograms. The legislation also does spend $1.5 billion to help more low income Medicare beneficiaries pay for that all important part B premium.

I also want to applaud the majority for agreeing with Democrats to drop earlier provisions on reducing employment protections for welfare workers and on reducing State supplemented SSI payments for 2.8 million elderly.

Mr. Speaker, the bill balances the budget while protecting democratic principles. This is a goal that many of us have been fighting for for a long time. I urge support for this conference report.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, a long battle began in 1989 when a fairly young Member of this House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH], offered an amendment to balance the Federal budget to get our country's financial house in order. There were 30 Members who supported him in that long march. In 1990, 106 Members supported him. In 1991, 114 Members supported him. He did not offer an amendment in 1992, but in 1993, 135 Members supported JOHN KASICH in his effort to get our country's financial house in order. In 1994, 165 Members supported him in his effort to get our country's financial house in order, and then with the election of 1994 we had the dynamic class of 73 Republican freshmen who came in and helped this man and helped this Congress get our country's financial house in order. In 1995, 235 Members voted to get our country's financial house in order, and the President vetoed that effort. In 1996, 216 voted for that, and the President vetoed it.

Today we are at a historic point. We are at a point where this Democrat President and this Republican Congress have come together to get our country's financial house in order and balance the Federal budget.

The President wanted more spending in certain areas, and this Republican Congress wanted tax cuts and changes to entitlements to slow the runaway costs of entitlements. This has been an effort of both sides, and this is an effort that needs to be supported.

CALL OF THE HOUSE

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I move a call of the House.

A call of the House was ordered.

The call was taken by electronic device, and the following Members responded to their names:

[Roll No. 344]

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Allen
Andrews
Armey
Bachus
Baesler
Baker
Baldacci
Ballenger
Barcia
Barr
Barrett (NE)
Barrett (WI)
Bartlett
Barton
Bass
Bateman
Becerra
Bentsen
Bereuter
Berman
Berry
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop
Blagojevich
Bliley
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Borski
Boswell
Boyd
Brady
Brown (CA)
Brown (FL)
Brown (OH)
Bryant
Bunning
Burr
Burton
Buyer
Callahan
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Canady
Cannon
Capps
Cardin
Carson
Castle
Chabot
Chambliss
Chenoweth
Christensen
Clay
Clement
Clyburn
Coble
Coburn
Collins
Combest
Condit
Conyers
Cook
Cooksey
Costello
Cox
Coyne
Cramer
Crane
Crapo
Cubin
Cummings
Cunningham
Danner
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
Davis (VA)
Deal
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
DeLay
Dellums
Deutsch
Dickey
Dicks
Dingell
Dixon
Doggett
Doolittle
Doyle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Edwards
Ehlers
Ehrlich
Emerson
Engel
English
Ensign
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Everett
Ewing
Farr
Fattah
Fazio
Filner
Flake
Foglietta
Foley
Ford
Fowler
Fox
Franks (NJ)
Frelinghuysen
Furse
Gallegly
Ganske
Gejdenson
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gilman
Goode
Goodlatte
Goodling
Gordon
Goss
Graham
Granger
Green
Greenwood
Gutierrez
Gutknecht
Hall (OH)
Hall (TX)
Hamilton
Hansen
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayworth
Hefley
Hefner
Herger
Hill
Hilleary
Hilliard
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holden
Hooley
Horn
Hostettler
Houghton
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Hutchinson
Hyde
Inglis
Istook
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
John
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (WI)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kasich
Kelly
Kennedy (MA)
Kennedy (RI)
Kennelly
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kim
Kind (WI)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kleczka
Klink
Klug
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kucinich
LaFalce
LaHood
Lampson
Lantos
Largent
Latham
LaTourette
Lazio
Leach
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
Livingston
LoBiondo
Lofgren
Lowey
Lucas
Luther
Maloney (CT)
Maloney (NY)
Manton
Markey
Martinez
Mascara
Matsui
McCarthy (MO)
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum
McCrery
McDade
McDermott
McGovern
McHale
McHugh
McInnis
McIntosh
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek
Menendez
Metcalf
Mica
Millender-McDonald
Miller (CA)
Miller (FL)
Minge
Mink
Moakley
Molinari
Mollohan
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Morella
Murtha
Myrick
Nadler
Neal
Nethercutt
Neumann
Ney
Northup
Norwood
Nussle
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Oxley
Packard
Pallone
Pappas
Parker
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Paxon
Payne
Pease
Pelosi
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pickett
Pitts
Pombo
Pomeroy
Porter
Portman
Poshard
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Quinn
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Redmond
Regula
Reyes
Riggs
Riley
Rivers
Rodriguez
Roemer
Rogan
Rogers
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Rothman
Roukema
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Rush
Ryun
Sabo
Salmon
Sanchez
Sanders
Sandlin
Sanford
Sawyer
Saxton
Scarborough
Schaefer, Dan
Schaffer, Bob
Schumer
Scott
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherman
Shimkus
Sisisky
Skaggs
Skeen
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (OR)
Smith (TX)
Smith, Adam
Smith, Linda
Snowbarger
Snyder
Solomon
Spence
Spratt
Stabenow
Stearns
Stenholm
Stokes
Strickland
Stump
Stupak
Sununu
Talent
Tanner
Tauscher
Tauzin
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Thomas
Thompson
Thornberry
Thune
Thurman
Tiahrt
Torres
Towns
Traficant
Turner
Upton
Velazquez
Vento
Visclosky
Walsh
Wamp
Waters
Watkins
Watt (NC)
Watts (OK)
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Wexler
Weygand
White
Whitfield
Wicker
Wise
Wolf
Woolsey
Wynn
Yates
Young (FL)

□ 1555

The SPEAKER. On this rollcall, 410 Members have recorded their presence by electronic device, a quorum.

Under the rule, further proceedings under the call are dispensed with.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2015, BALANCED BUDGET ACT OF 1997

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS].

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. STEARNS], a member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for the