THE AGENDA FOR 1998

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, my colleagues and I intend to come here to the floor today to discuss the agenda and what we see ahead of us in this congressional session, the second session of this Congress.

My expectation is that we will find ourselves this year, just as we have in previous years, debating a range of controversial, interesting, and in some cases very provocative issues. We will agree on some of these issues on a bipartisan basis. There may well be aggressive debates about other issues. That is the way the democratic system works. That is the way it should work.

Where we can reach across the aisle and achieve agreement and do the right thing for this country in a harmonious way, good for us. That's what the American people expect us to do. However, when there are policy issues that are very, very controversial, the people expect us to have a vigorous debate, and we will do that.

Most of us head home on weekends or during time when the Senate is not in session. I expect other Senators had the same experience I did during this most recent recess. Constituents say to you, ''Well, what are you doing down there in Washington? What's going on in Washington? What's happening in the Senate?'' It's a question that everyone asks, no matter where you meet them.

What is happening in the U.S. Senate, and what is happening down here in Washington with respect to legislative duties, is whatever we decide to have happen here on the floor. By virtue of what we schedule for the business of the Senate, we decide what parts of the people's business we will address this year.

I want to talk just for a moment about what I think the business of the Senate ought to be in the coming months.

First and foremost, we ought to take up the legislation that reauthorizes the highway program. That bill was supposed to have been passed last year. It wasn't passed; it was extended for 6 months. And the majority leader, quite appropriately, told us that it will be near the first order of business when Congress returns.

We must take that legislation up and pass it so that the folks around this country who have to plan to maintain our roads and bridges can make those plans. It is our responsibility to pass that bill—not later, but sooner, and I urge that the majority leader bring that legislation to the floor and do it soon.

Some in the Chamber counsel, ''Well, let's wait until the budget is passed.'' No, this is the legislation that was supposed to be passed last year. Let's not wait any longer. Let's bring it to the floor as the first order of business and pass a highway bill. It is also a bill that deals with jobs and opportunity and economic growth in every State in this country. We have a responsibility, in my judgment, to bring it to the floor and to move it.

Second, I hope in the next days we will pass a piece of legislation that the House of Representatives approved last year by an overwhelming vote. This bill deals with the Internal Revenue Service. It would change how the IRS does its business. It would make significant, important changes in the relationship between the Internal Revenue Service and the American taxpayer. The Senate should pass that bill quickly. It ought to be this week or next week. That ought to be at the front end of the business of this Senate.

Last night President Clinton came to Capitol Hill and in his State of the Union Address talked about the agenda that he thinks Congress ought to consider. At least one of the items of that agenda, which I expect will be controversial but really should not be, is the issue of managed care. I want to describe why this is so important.

President Clinton last night talked about the number of Americans who are now in managed care plans. Well over 100 million Americans are now in these plans. All of us have heard the stories about what managed care means to our families.

Peter Van Etten of Stanford Health Services, in Time magazine, said this on April 14: ''In the insanity of economics in health care, the patient always loses.''

President Clinton last night said there ought to be a patient's bill of rights. Let me give some real-life examples that will demonstrate the importance of this issue.

In California, an employee who suffered from hemophilia was unable to find out whether the new insurance plan offered by his employer would cover his blood-clotting concentrates unless he first joined the plan. In other words, they said you either decide to join or not to join, and we won't tell you whether this covers you as a hemophiliac. What kind of health care plan is that?

A large California HMO denied a referral of an 8-year-old girl suffering from a rare cancer called Wilms' tumor. According to the National Cancer Institutes' protocol for this type of cancer, the girl should have been referred to a Wilms' tumor multi-disciplinary team. But the HMO covering this girl demanded the surgery she required be performed by a urologist who did not specialize in pediatrics and who never before performed this surgery. Even though that HMO had a relationship with a local teaching hospital, which, in fact, did have a Wilms' tumor team, the family was told they would have to go out of the plan and that even the girl's hospital stay would not be covered by the HMO. This, by the way, ended up in court. The HMO was fined a half a million dollars by the California Department of Corporations.

A Time magazine cover story titled ''What Your Doctor Can't Tell You'' featured a young mother of two, battling with her managed care insurer for coverage of expensive treatments for breast cancer that had already spread to other parts of her body. She died before the article was published, so the fight was over. But she made her point.

In New Jersey, a young woman took a terrible fall from a horse. According to a New York Times newspaper article, she was suffering from swelling of the brain, and was being taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital. In the ambulance, as her brain was swelling from this injury, she said she didn't want to go to the nearest hospital because it was a facility concerned with the bottom line. She didn't want to go to an emergency room where she felt her health care would be a function of profit and loss statements. She told the ambulance crew to take her to a hospital that was farther away, where she was not worried about the kind of care she would get, and where her health was not going to depend on someone's profits and losses.

A Missouri managed care plan sent all of its customers a letter that said a trip to the emergency room with a broken leg, or a baby running a high fever, should not generally be assumed to be covered by the managed care plan. The letter read like this: ''An emergency room visit for medical treatment is not automatically covered under your benefit plan.''

Mr. President, over 100 million Americans are in managed care plans. These plans can, in fact, save money. In some cases they can improve care. But they can also set up circumstances where decisions about health care are made not by a doctor, but by an accountant in an office 400 miles away, who decides what procedures are covered. I have had doctors tell me that this isn't serving patients' interests. And patients are very concerned about the quality of their health care in this circumstance.

The President said let's pass a piece of legislation to give the patient a right to know about health care options, to ensure the fundamental rights of patients under these plans.

Others will talk about other parts of the agenda. But in conclusion let me just talk for a moment about President Clinton's budget proposal last night. He said that if our budget no longer has a deficit, we should use any additional funds to put Social Security first, to save Social Security first.

I want to describe why that is important. This is a brand new document, January 1998, put out by the Congressional Budget Office. I will bet if you go to the Congressional Budget Office and you find out who wrote this, those people have some fancy degrees, probably three or four of them, from the best schools in the country. They probably wear tiny little glasses that make you look really smart. They probably work hard all day, have several titles. And everybody respects them immensely.

So they write a white book and the white book says that the budget is

going to be balanced in the year 2001. It's right here. These are smart people. They published it this month.

Then the same people, wearing the same glasses and gray suits and having the same pride in their work, say on page 43 that in the same year, 2001, when they say the budget will be balanced, the Federal debt will increase by over $100 billion.

I didn't take higher math. I probably didn't go to the best school in the world. But I ask the question, if you claim the budget is in balance, why would the Federal debt be increasing? I know the answer. Apparently these folks don't. It's because they are taking Social Security trust fund money and using it over in the operating side of the budget in order to say that the budget is in balance.

What the President said last night was ''Save Social Security first.'' We need to save the money in those trust funds. This accounting system ought to be honest. These people know better than to put out reports like this. The Congress ought to know better that to think we are running a surplus when the surplus is actually in Social Security and it's for future years. And I hope this Congress will express itself on that issue.

Do we decide as a Congress to save Social Security first? Or do we, as some suggest, spend more money quickly? Or, as others suggest, give money back, quickly, at a time when our Federal debt is still increasing? I hope this Congress will heed the advice of the President and make the right choices.

There is plenty more to talk about in the agenda. And my colleagues will do so.

Mr. President, we have an hour and a half. And I understand that the Senator from West Virginia wishes to take 15 minutes. So I yield to the Senator from West Virginia, Senator BYRD, for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from North Dakota. And I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, on several occasions during the last session of Congress, I took to the Senate floor to discuss the importance of reauthorizing the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, or ISTEA. I shared my observation that this effort to renew our Nation's highway, highway safety and transit programs would be one of the most important, if not the most important, legislative accomplishment of the first session of the 105th Congress. As all Senators are aware, the provisions of ISTEA expired on September 30 of last year 1997. This meant that, absent enactment of new authorization legislation, many important highway, bridge, and transit projects would grind to a halt. Unfortunately, the Senate did not turn to the critically important ISTEA reauthorization bill until October 8 of last year. Between that date and October 29, 1997, the Senate was unable to adopt even one substantive amendment due to the impasse over Senate consideration of campaign finance reform legislation.

The parliamentary amendment tree was filled. And it was impossible to get an amendment in which I and other cosponsors of the amendment wanted to have brought before the Senate.

The Senate failed to invoke cloture four times on the ISTEA bill. In the end, notwithstanding the fact that a unanimous consent agreement was reached on the campaign finance issue, the 6-year ISTEA bill was pulled from the floor. Finally, on November 10, the Senate debated and passed a short-term extension of our existing highway and transit programs, effectively putting off completion of Senate action on our Nation's surface transportation policy for the next 6 years until the second session of the 105th Congress.

Now, despite the stated intentions of the Senate leadership to take up the ISTEA reauthorization bill, S. 1173, during the first week of the second session of this Congress, I am very concerned that the Senate may not return to the ISTEA reauthorization bill until after completion of the fiscal year 1999 budget resolution in late spring.

Mr. President, the onus is now upon us to return to the full 6-year transportation authorization bill and complete our work as soon as possible. While I supported the enactment of the short-term extension bill back in November, I remind my colleagues that it was only a stopgap measure providing only about one-half year of funding for our existing highway, highway safety, and transit programs. As of this date, our State highway departments and our mass transit systems cannot establish a budget for the current fiscal year because they do not know the final level of Federal resources that they will receive for this year. Morever, they cannot develop or implement any long-term financing plans because they do not know the level of Federal resources that will be available to them over the next 5 years. This is an impossible situation for our State highway departments. Given the cost and duration of major highway projects and the complexities associated with short construction seasons in our cold weather States, planning and predictability are essential to the logical functioning of our Federal-Aid Highway program. But that kind of rational planning is precisely what our States cannot do at this time because of our inaction. This is not how our State and local transportation agencies should have to do business. Certainly, no corporation could long survive doing business in this fashion. It is, nonetheless, the circumstances that we have placed upon our transportation agencies, due to our failure to enact a multi-year ISTEA reauthorization bill in a timely manner.

Members will recall that, prior to S. 1173, the ISTEA bill's being pulled from the floor, I, along with Senator GRAMM of Texas, and the chairman and ranking member of the Surface Transportation Subcommittee, Senators WARNER and BAUCUS, filed an amendment numbered 1397. Our amendment embodies the simple premise that the 4.3 cents-per-gallon gas tax, which previously went to deficit reduction, but which is now being deposited in the Highway Trust Fund, should be authorized to better address our Nation's considerable highway needs. The amendment has two principal objectives. First, to put an authorization in place that allows for a substantial increase in highway spending in order to stem the continuing deterioration of our National Highway System. And second, to fulfill the trust of the American people, the people out there who pay these gas taxes every time they drive up to the gas pump believing that these funds will be used to maintain and improve our national transportation system. That was the position of Senators GRAMM, BAUCUS, WARNER, and myself back in October when we brought forth our amendment, and that is our position today.

Our amendment, which now has 49 co-sponsors, provides for the authorization of highway spending levels over the next 5 years consistent with the revenues derived from this 4.3 cents gas tax—roughly $31 billion over the 5 years 1999–2003.

By the way, we have 49 cosponsors on that amendment. But several other Senators have assured us that they will vote for the amendment even though they were not interested in cosponsoring it for one reason or another. They will vote for it. They will be supportive of it if it will be brought up for a vote.

Nothing has changed since October regarding the resolve of Senators GRAMM, WARNER, BAUCUS, and myself to see this amendment adopted. However, other things have changed since the amendment was introduced. We are now well into fiscal year 1998 and the 4.3-cents gas tax is being deposited—where?—into the highway trust fund. By the end of this fiscal year, more than $7 billion—with a big ''B''—$7 billion in additional new revenue will be deposited into the Highway Trust Fund, not one penny—not one penny—of which is authorized to be spent under the committee-reported ISTEA bill. Instead, these funds will be allowed to sit in the highway trust fund, earning interest, and being used as an offset to the Federal deficit for the next 6 years. In other words, if we adopt the levels authorized in the committee-reported bill, as Senators DOMENICI and CHAFEE—both of whom I have the greatest respect for—would have us do, we will have accomplished nothing—nothing at all—toward improving our National Highway System. Instead, we will have just enacted legislation to actually prevent using this 4.3 cents gas tax for highways. What the committee-reported bill does, then, without the Byrd-Gramm-Baucus-Warner amendment, is ignore the availability of this new trust fund revenue for

the entire upcoming 6 years. Not one red cent will be authorized for expenditure if we accept the committee bill, as reported. This means that by the end of 2003, the highway trust fund balances will have grown to roughly $72 billion! In other words, some $72 billion will be sitting there in the highway trust fund as government IOUs collecting interest and being used to lower the Federal deficit instead of for highways as we, the Members of Congress, have told the American people it would be. I cannot imagine a more perverse scam on the American people.

Well, one may say, we need to balance the Federal budget and we cannot do it if we let these highway monies be spent. Not true. Not true, Senators.

The resources were available back in October to finance the levels of highway spending embodied in the Byrd-Gramm-Baucus-Warner amendment. And today, it appears that there are even more resources available to provide for a healthy increase in infrastructure spending, without busting the budget. When one reviews the conditions of our Nation's highways and bridges and the current inadequate levels of investment—which would continue for the next 6 years under the committee-reported bill—one must come, as I do, to the conclusion that it would be irresponsible to do any less.

Mr. President, our national highway system is America's lifeline, not just for rural areas, but for all of our Nation's cities—even those that make extensive use of mass transit and rail systems. Our major highways carry nearly 80 percent of U.S. interstate commercial traffic, and nearly 80 percent of intercity passenger and tourist traffic. Even though our Nation has among the most extensive and efficient rail and aviation systems in the world, eight out of every ten tons of interstate cargo still travel over our highways. And eight out of every ten of our constituents travel between States over highways. In regard to intrastate traffic, Americans take 91 percent of all work trips and 87 percent of all trips in a car or truck. Like it or not, we are a Nation on wheels.

Yet, despite the indispensable role our highway system plays in modern American life, we have, as a Nation, been negligent—let us confess it—we have been negligent in its upkeep. We have allowed the system to fall into a woeful state of disrepair while the unspent balances of the Highway Trust Fund have continued to climb. According to the most recent report by the U.S. Department of Transportation regarding the conditions and performance of our National Highway System, only 39 percent of our National Highway System is rated in good condition. Fully 61 percent of our Nation's highways are rated in either fair or poor condition. For our interstate system, which is the crown jewel of our National Highway System, fully 50 percent of the mileage is rated in fair or poor condition. And these figures only worsen when we look at our other major Federal and State highways. In our urban areas, fully 65 percent of our non-interstate highway mileage is rated as being in fair or poor condition. There are literally over a quarter-of-a-billion miles of pavement in the United States that are in poor or mediocre condition, and there are almost 95,000 bridges in our country that have been deemed to be deficient. Within that total, roughly 44,000 bridges have been deemed to be structurally deficient, meaning that they need significant maintenance, rehabilitation or replacement. Many of these bridges require load posting, requiring heavier trucks to take longer, alternate routes. And an additional 51,000 bridges have been deemed to be functionally deficient, meaning that they do not have the lane widths, shoulder widths, or vertical clearances sufficient to serve the traffic demand.

Paradoxically, as our roads continue to deteriorate, our Nation's dependence on those roads continues to grow. Highway use is on the rise. The number of vehicle miles traveled grew by roughly 40 percent over the last decade to an astronomical rate of 2.3 trillion. Within that total, the rate of traffic growth on our rural interstates grew by an even higher rate. And these levels of growth show no sign of abating. Since 1969, the number of trips per person taken over our roadways increased by more than 72 percent and the number of miles traveled increased by more than 65 percent. This combination of traffic growth and deteriorating conditions has led to an unprecedented level of congestion, not just in our urban centers but also in our suburbs and rural areas. Congestion is literally choking our roadways as our constituents seek to travel to work, to the shopping center, to the child care center, to their houses of worship.

Mr. President, the traveling public is waiting for us—for us—to take up and pass a comprehensive ISTEA bill that truly addresses the needs of our surface transportation system. We should take up that legislation at the earliest possible time. And when we do, I hope all of my colleagues will join Senator GRAMM, Senator BAUCUS, Senator WARNER and me, in supporting our amendment to re-invest in America's lifeline—our amendment to restore the trust of the American people in the Highway Trust Fund—our amendment to authorize the spending of our Highway Trust Fund resources where they are so desperately needed: On our Nation's highways.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Let me thank the Senator from West Virginia, Senator BYRD, for a very important statement.

Mr. BYRD. Let me thank my friend for his courtesy and kindness in yielding this time to me, but more than that for his leadership that he is demonstrating on this floor. This is quite characteristic of him.

Let me also say that my colleague, Senator ROCKEFELLER, likewise, is ready to speak. I shall wait, I shall sit, and I shall listen.

Mr. DORGAN. I yield 10 minutes to the Senator from West Virginia, Senator ROCKEFELLER.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. I thank my colleague from North Dakota. I secondly thank my colleague from West Virginia. I wish the Presiding Officer a happy new year as we start off on what I think, based upon what we heard last night, ought to be a very optimistic and productive year. I thought it was really quite an extraordinary speech.

Even at the time there seemed to be so much in it that we could do that I worried, was it too much? And I came to the conclusion, no, it was all perfectly sensible—not all of it huge, some of it incremental, some of it large and challenging—all of it doable, and I think that is our challenge.

I think our country ought to be very happy about the fact that we have a balanced budget. It really was extraordinary, $357 billion down to $10 billion. We will present a balanced budget to the President for the first time in 30 years. That is an extraordinary accomplishment. We all share in that. The Democrats probably get the lion's share of the credit for the 1993 part, but the Republicans and Democrats did it together last year and, therefore, sealed what is a remarkable accomplishment in being fiscally prudent—and I think surprising, in a good way, the American people. I think that is probably a good thing because the markets rallied by our action. The markets are now troubled because of what is happening in Asia, and our President last night held out challenges to us on that matter, too, very boldly and I thought very correctly.

The point is we really have to go forward. We have, according to whoever you listen to, somewhere between 70 days and 100 days in which to enact legislative affairs. I haven't counted it up. I don't know exactly how that works, but I will take their word for it. In any event, there is really not much time, which means we have to reach across the aisle. The Presiding Officer and I often don't agree on subjects. On the other hand, we agreed on something of monumental importance when it came to the adoption bill at the end of the last session, and that is the way things get done around here, and that is the way things ought to get done around here. Republicans can't succeed without Democrats. Democrats, obviously in the minority, cannot succeed without Republicans. Yet we often succeed and do ourselves proud here, and I feel very comfortable in saying that.

I think the President made very clear that parents want their children to have the best kind of education. He put a program on the line. It is not an extravagant program. It is a sensible program. On our side, we have been grumbling about crumbling schools for quite a long time, and now I think we have a

chance to do something about that. The President put forward some money for that.

I think workers have reason to feel—workers of all ages—have good reason to feel good about last night because I think the President is very concerned particularly about those between 55 and 65 years old who don't have health insurance. We have all watched the phenomenon as American companies, reacting to principles that I'm not prepared to argue with, which I regret I am not prepared to argue with, as they decrease coverage, as coverage becomes more expensive or they decrease coverage, perhaps, of the dependents of the worker, even if they hold on to the coverage for their worker, and often it is the coverage of the worker's children that is really the matter most at stake. I think he wants that to be solved. He wants people to be able to buy into the Medicare Program between 55 and 65.

Interestingly enough, that is a group which has an enormous amount of dependency on health care because right now 15 percent of those older Americans are completely uninsured. So that is the time in life when things begin to get more difficult in terms of health, and the President understands that and reacted to that.

I really did like, Mr. President, what he talked about in health care. I liked the idea of pushing us further than we have been on children's health care. We did a very good job last year on a bipartisan basis, and that is exactly what it was. I remember the Finance Committee meetings. They were an absolute model, Senator BYRD, of bipartisan cooperation. All staff, everybody left the room, and then there were just the 20 Senators—11 Republicans, 9 Democrats—facing each other. And rather rapidly, perhaps because there was no glare, an enormous amount of cooperation just exploded in that cooperation, and all of a sudden we had the children's health care bill which is being put to good use. Fifteen States have already asked Donna Shalala for a waiver to be able to proceed. West Virginia has not at this point concluded what it will do. Governor Underwood presented a good program to the State legislature. The State legislature is going to come back with a good program. There will be a compromise reached. The legislature is Democratic. The Governor is Republican. They both want the same thing. They both want to see children insured. So does the President, and he wanted to see more of that.

I will express a concern to the Presiding Officer that a large number of those 5 million children that we included in our bill last year are children who are already eligible for Medicaid but simply don't know it because their families are detached from the system, because somehow through the school lunch program they just have not found out they are eligible, they don't want to fill out the paper forms, or they are afraid. That is a phenomenon that one finds in the hills and hollows of various parts of this country. I worry a great deal about being able to get out to those children. In the case of West Virginia there are some 30,000 children who are already eligible for Medicaid. But the President was challenging us to do that and to do more, and well he should because there are 10 million uninsured children in this country. No other industrial nation on Earth has to go through the pain of saying that. He pushes us forward.

I think he cares very much, as I indicated, about the workers in the 55- to 65-year-old range. They worry about their future. The baby boomers, the younger generation, wonder whether there will be Social Security and Medicare for them, and they have reason to worry. I think the President, therefore, said, look, let's take the money which is going into a surplus, should there be one, and put that into Social Security. He said, ''Social Security first.'' That is strong stuff. I think the American people really identify with that. That means that, no, there cannot be some of the tax cuts which some on both sides of the aisle may want to see, some of which may be very useful. But in a sense he was saying we can't have it all. We have to make priorities. Social Security comes first.

There is also, as the Presiding Officer knows, a commission on Medicare which I am very proud to serve on. That is a huge problem that we will have to solve. Last year we bought ourselves about 10 years, but let's face it, in the buying of those 10 years we took some of the pressure off, the decision that we will have to make in the next 2 years, and we cannot allow that to happen.

The Social Security Commission of 1983 succeeded because Social Security was in the act of collapsing and the commission knew it and therefore they acted. The commission on Medicare, which affects so many in our country, is not going to be faced with that kind of immediate pressure so we will have to bring it on through our own energies, our own intellectual and moral commitments, and I believe we will be able to do that.

The other thing that the President said among many that I liked very much was the whole concept of people dealing for the first time with managed care. He pointed out the enormous number of Americans that are in managed care now and he wants to see basic rights for people that have that available to them. I think he is quite right. We will see, as we have before, insurance companies and their lobbyists talking about mandates and big Government and all kind of things like that, but I don't sign on to that. I think the President is right, that confidentiality ought to be a right, and managed care patients ought to be able to see a specialist. Just because it is the cheapest doesn't mean it is the best. Patients should not be herded into something because it is cheap. It ought to be as cheap as possible, but it has to be very, very good.

All in all, I thought the President had a lot to say. I thought he said it with eloquence. I thought he said it with strength. I thought he said it with a very, very strong vision. Health care is hard. No. 1, it is hard just as a subject, but it tends to automatically send people scurrying one direction or another direction. People either say too big Government or people say that is not enough. Somehow we have to find in this Chamber a way of understanding that the world's greatest economy can afford, even if it is on an incremental basis, that all of our citizens be insured. We really can do that and we can work together to do that.

There has been marvelous cooperation—Senator CHAFEE and myself, Senator KENNEDY, Senator HATCH—on children's health last year. There have been so many examples of that over the recent years. I think part of the lesson that he preached last night was, ''Let's do this together.'' It wasn't just ''I, a Democratic President of the United States.'' It is ''we,'' representing all of us, representing Republicans and Democrats all across this country.

I am ready to fight for a good solution for Medicare. I want to see parents satisfied that their children are getting the best education. I want to see baby boomers have a sense of security about Social Security in the future because we dedicate surpluses to that area, and I also want to see retired workers who are either kicked out of jobs or retired from jobs during the vulnerable period of their older lives, 55 to 65, to have a basic sense of being able to buy into Medicare. I think that is sound health care policy and I congratulate the President on doing that.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I thank Senator ROCKEFELLER for a wonderful presentation.

I yield 10 minutes to the Senator from New Mexico, Senator BINGAMAN, following which I yield 10 minutes to the Senator from Connecticut, Senator DODD.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from North Dakota. I may not take a full 10 minutes, I advise the Senator from Connecticut.

Let me start and make the points that I came here to make because I do believe that some important issues were raised by the President last night in the State of the Union Address, and they are points that are worthwhile to go back and look at for just a minute.

One change that has occurred here in Washington in the time I have been here—and it was very clear last night when I listened to the President—is that we now have a consensus; at least a majority agree that education is a national responsibility as well as a State and local responsibility. I can remember very recently—and you still hear people say this, but not many anymore—but I can remember when a

substantial number of people used to say education is not an appropriate issue for the Federal Government to concern itself with.

Clearly, it is a great concern for the people I represent in New Mexico, and it is a great concern for working families all over this country; but ''it should not be a concern for people who come to Washington to make the laws or to appropriate funds or to allocate tax dollars because this is not a national responsibility.'' That was the argument that we always heard. I think one of the great legacies that this President will leave and this Congress will leave is that there is a change in that attitude. There is a recognition here in Washington, finally, that just as every other industrial nation in the world considers education a national concern as well as a State and local concern, here in America we need to consider it a national concern as well as a State and local concern as well. So I think that is a major change and a change for the better.

Last year, Congress and the President agreed on some very significant initiatives in the area of education—a new HOPE scholarship for 2 years of college, a $3 billion overall increase in education funding was included last year, and funding for a new $210 million reading initiative. There were various other initiatives in the education area that were agreed upon by Democrats and Republicans alike. So we have made progress so far in the 105th Congress, and in the second session we can make more progress. I have heard some speeches today and some comments today by my colleagues, particularly on the other side of the aisle, and they go along two lines. Number one is the old argument that this is not a national concern, education is not a national concern, we should not be doing more in this area. We ought to leave it up to local school districts if they want to do it. Second, there is no money. We may have the largest economy in the world, and we may be in a period where the Union is strong and where the economy is strong and where we are finally getting to a balanced budget, or very near to it, but there is no money. ''We now spend less than 2 percent of our Federal budget on education and that is too much. We can't afford to spend any more.'' That is the argument I hear.

I don't think the American people agree with that. When I go to my State and have town hall meetings and visits with people around New Mexico, I hear them say they are shocked to find that the Federal Government commits so little in resources relative to what the Federal Government spends in other areas. So I think we are expected by the people who sent us here to do better by education. The President is showing us the way to do that.

There are three areas in particular I want to highlight today where I think he is showing some leadership, and we need to follow that leadership and try to make a difference. One is in the very important area of lowering the dropout rate in our schools, reaching those at-risk students who historically have left high school before they graduate. We have oversized schools in this country. We have low expectations of many of our students. We have inadequate involvement of parents in the education of their children. As a result of all of these factors, over 500,000 students each year in this country drop out of school before they complete high school. Thirty percent of the young Hispanic adults in this country lack a high school degree because of that very problem. This is a national tragedy, in my opinion, and we at the Federal level can do some things to try to assist with this problem.

I hope very much we will take the lead of the President in doing that. He has proposed key programs such as title I, the TRIO program, bilingual education, and several new initiatives to make schools more conducive to learning, to raise expectations and lower dropout rates. He has proposed $12 billion for class size reduction and teacher training and a mentoring program for at-risk middle school students. He has proposed $150 million for comprehensive reform. Now, that funding would go to schools with a serious dropout problem that want to focus on restructuring those schools and coming up with ways to give attention to the at-risk student, to keep them in that school, prevent them from dropping out. That is an initiative that is worth our effort and support.

A second area, in addition to the dropout problem that the President is providing leadership on and that we here in Congress have done a substantial amount on in recent years, is providing computers and access to the Internet for the students in our schools today. Technological literacy is an essential part of being educated today. We need to ensure that the schools throughout this Nation are equipped so that students who come through those schools have access to that technology. The President is proposing significant fiscal year 1999 increases for key technology programs. For the formula grants to States there is $425 million in fiscal 1997. For competitive grants, $76 million for technology training for teachers. And all of us understand that you have to train the teachers to use the technology in order that it can be used effectively by the students as well in the classroom. The President is proposing increases in each of these areas. I believe it is in the best interest of this country for us to follow his lead in that area.

The President's $10 billion school construction initiative will also help to provide access to fully-wired, technology-ready facilities for computers, and the Internet can be readily integrated into classrooms. Schools are the last area of our society where technology is really having an impact. It is more prevalent in our homes and in our offices than it is in our schools, and it is time that we fix that problem.

The final area I want to mention is where I believe the President has made some progress and this Congress has made some progress and we need to keep moving forward in, which is the area of world-class academic standards. Too many schools still offer watered-down academic programs, general education tracks, and low expectations that will not meet the demands of local competition. The President has proposed $200 million in incentives to help districts to set high academic standards, to eliminate the problem of social promotion which he spoke about very eloquently last night, and to take other measures to upgrade the quality of education in our schools. He requested roughly $13 million to pilot and field test a new voluntary national test in reading at the fourth grade level and math at the eighth grade level. This test would be developed by the National Assessment Governing Board, which is not part of the Department of Education.

Mr. President, these three initiatives—the effort to reduce dropout rates, the effort to provide technology for our schools, and the effort to assist our local schools to achieve world-class academic standards—are all worthy goals for us in this second session of the 105th Congress. I hope very much that we will follow the lead of the President and support these efforts with real resources. We will recognize that our constituents do not want to have us debate and debate and debate about whose responsibility it is to improve the schools. They want to see progress, they want to see improvement, they want to see their children receive a better education. We have the power to do that by continuing what we started in the last session of this Congress—that is, putting more resources into education, giving the priority to education that the President talked about last night. I hope very much we will do that. I believe the President has shown a direction that the American people want to see us follow. And I hope very much we will have the good sense to follow that direction.

Mr. President, I know there are others who intend to speak. So at this point I yield the floor.

Mr. DODD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGEL). The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, let me, first of all, commend my colleague from New Mexico for the very thoughtful statement on education, on the importance of it. I did not hear all of the statements made earlier. I know my colleague from West Virginia, the senior Senator from West Virginia, Senator BYRD, discussed the issue of transportation and the importance of the ISTEA bill, the intermodal transportation system bill, which has to be brought up very quickly here. I heard our junior Senator from West Virginia

discuss the issue of Medicare and health care. So a number of these items the President discussed last evening in his State of the Union Message have been the subject of some discussion here today.

I think all of us were very impressed with the agenda the President has laid out for this session of this Congress, the remaining 70 to 120 days. The distinguished majority leader of the U.S. Senate, Senator LOTT, has indicated this will not be a long session. So we have a relatively short amount of time for an agenda that I think is important for the country. I hope many of these items will be considered in a strong bipartisan sense. Some will obviously provoke some disagreements. Minimum wage and family and medical leave are two items that come to mind immediately. But I hope on things like Medicare and Social Security and building our public schools and campaign finance reform, we can find some common ground here and get the business of the country done.

Mr. President, I would like to focus some remarks, if I could, on a subject that is I think critically important. The President spent some time discussing it last evening. It is one that I had worked on for about a month and a half here, during the month of December and a good part of the month of January, with a bipartisan group of Republicans and Democrats, and that subject is child care.

Unfortunately, in the last week, I received some correspondence from our colleagues on the Republican side who decided to pull out of the effort basically to come up with another bill. I understand Senator CHAFEE of Rhode Island has introduced a bill that, in many ways, reflects the work product of those 6 weeks, where I had tried to see in that quiet time if we could come out with a proposal that we could rally around here. Unfortunately—and this happens—these things break apart. I hope at some point we will come back together again. This is important. We have introduced a bill on our side, so there are two bills out there. The President laid out some thoughts and ideas on it. Let me say to you, Mr. President, how important this issue is. We are talking about millions of families in this country that are either single parents raising children, or two-income parents that need both incomes. They may have children and have to pay the tremendous cost of child care because, obviously, you can't leave them home alone. Maybe they don't necessarily have grandparents or aunts and uncles around to take care of them on a daily basis. It poses a serious problem for parents. When schools close down for snow days during the winter. What do you do with your children when you have to go off to work? You have the job you need and the children you love. How do you reconcile these issues?

In the past, many of us grew up in a situation where you had neighbors and friends and you would accommodate an occasion when a crisis like that emerged. Today, it is a daily effort, if a family is to make ends meet and fulfill these obligations. The average cost of a child care setting is between $4,000 and $9,000 per child per year. If you are making, as the average family does, $30,000, $35,000, $40,000 a year, with two children that need some care because they are minors or infants, you immediately get a sense of how difficult a situation people can be placed in financially.

What we have proposed is to expand the block grants, to come up with some tax credits—by the way, tax credits not just to families who have children they want to place in care, but to families who decide they are going to try and get along with one income. Some parents are going to stay home. We provide the credits for them as well. We make it refundable, too, Mr. President, because people who make that $30,000 and below don't pay taxes. Yet, many of them are out there just barely getting along. If they don't have a refundable tax credit, they don't get any benefit at all. So we refund the tax credits for those families that either want to stay home with their child or place that child in a child care setting, because they need that extra help to get along. On the stay-at-home parent idea—and I am delighted to see more and more coming to this issue—I authored something called the Family and Medical Leave Act, which was a source of some controversy back in the 1980's. It took me 7 years. It went through 2 vetoes, and as the President said, it was the first bill he signed into law in 1993. That was basically a stay-at-home parent idea. The idea was that if your child is facing a medical crisis or serious problem that could be documented, that a parent could make the choice to take 12 weeks away from their job, up to 12 weeks, without pay, without losing their job. We were the only country that I could find among industrialized nations that didn't permit a family and medical leave policy, giving parents the ability to stay at home and care for their children without losing the job that they need.

So the idea of providing some assistance for parents who want to stay at home and care for their children, I think, is a very sound idea. I hope we don't get into the situation where we cause stay-at-home parents and those who must work to be pitted against each other, to cause a quarrel, if you will, between parents who don't have that choice. If you are raising 2 or 3 kids on your own, the idea that you have a choice to stay home and watch them is nonexistent. You don't have that choice. Or if you are a two-income family barely getting by or you want to invest money that you are earning for their education, or to buy a better home, or to plan a vacation, you should not be branded somehow as an uncaring parent because you made that choice. I don't want to see us get into a debate here and suggest somehow that parents who need that second income are less caring about their children because they make that choice, any more than I want to see us deprive parents who make that choice to be at home by not providing them with help so that they can do that.

So I am hopeful that we can come to some common ground here. We have begun Welfare to Work. We have a lot more people in the work force. We don't have the child care vacancies, and we don't have the high-paying child care workers, as the average income is $12,000 a year. I don't know anyone who can now get along on that income. How do you attract good people to care for our children in this society?

There have been studies done recently about the quality of child care programs around the country. Some 17 States now have certification processes. Yet the Ziegler Child Study Center at Yale University would tell you that even in the States that have certification and accreditation processes the quality of child care is embarrassing. It is mortifying.

So for States that do not have that certification process you can imagine what it is like. In fact, if you pick up almost any daily newspaper in any city or any State in the country, you will find a case almost on a daily basis of parents who placed their child in what they thought was a safe, quality child care setting only to discover, of course, that child is not safe, and lost its life as we have seen in numerous cases. So we need to be far more conscientious.

We don't deal with quality here in Washington. We don't set standards. I realize that is too high a hurdle to probably overcome. So we let the States set the standards. There is nothing in our Federal bill that mandates what standards are. But we do think there ought to be at least health and safety standards. We require that for our pets. If you leave them at a vet or in one of these weekend kennels, you get a State requirement of safety and health standards for your puppies. It seems to me, if we are going to require that minimum standard for animals that we might try it for our own children in this country.

So our bill provides assistance to employers and providers of child care, and to parents who want to have the security of knowing their children are in safe places.

To give you an idea of how serious this problem is, in the State of Florida today, there is a need of 40,000 spaces for child care that are nonexistent in the State. We are told with Welfare to Work that number will increase by 440,000 in the coming year. So you are going to have an explosion, I guess, of child care providers. What will be the quality? How much will the cost be? Is it accessible to people? The State of Florida may be an example where the vacancy rate is particularly high. But it is not unique. Other States across

the country are facing similar problems.

I was disappointed when I saw the list of the 19 priority items that the majority leader has placed before us in this brief session that child care is not on that list of 19. Child care is not on that list. We went through the debate on welfare reform a year or so ago. One of the promises made in this Chamber was that as we moved people from welfare to work, we would do something about caring for the children of these people who have been on welfare. What we are being told now, with this priority list of 19, is that child care is not on that list; that working families who are trying to make ends meet in caring for their children are not going to be a part of this agenda in the next 70 or 120 days of a legislative process. I am hopeful that agenda can change, that it is not written in concrete, that there will be an opportunity to make the case that we ought to be able to come up with a compromise bill if need be between Republicans and Democrats that takes out the partisanship on this issue and says that we ought to be able to come up with some idea here that can assist these working families.

I know my colleague from Utah, Senator HATCH, with whom I wrote the child care block grant program 13 years ago, and my colleague from Kansas, Senator PAT ROBERTS, care very much about this issue. Senator JEFFORDS cares about this issue, and had his own bill up earlier. Obviously, Senator CHAFEE does. He has a bill in. I know my colleagues from Maine, Senator COLLINS and Senator SNOWE, and Senator SPECTER have an interest in this. I am just disappointed. I can't hide it—that having invested 6 weeks of staff time and effort to try to come up with a compromise bill that it all falls apart literally in the last few days after we pretty much had a work product.

So I am going to continue to raise this issue. I am glad the President did last night. I am glad he highlighted it. I think a lot of people in this country understand in very graphic ways how important this issue is to them for their neighbors and their coworkers. They understand it. They see every day what goes on, how difficult this is, how costly it is, and how worried people are. After-school care is a big issue in this context. We put over $3 billion over 5 years in after school care. 5 million children every day are home alone between 3 o'clock and 6 o'clock and 7 o'clock. Any police chief in any town will tell you the problems that kids get into is not after 11 p.m. at night when people want to put in curfews. Where kids get in trouble is in the afternoon between 3 o'clock and 8 o'clock. That is when trouble occurs. Seventy percent of our schools in this country have no after-school care programs at all. It seems to me that we ought to do something about that. I am not just talking about infants but young children in elementary schools. Try and dial a phone in a relatively small community between 3 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. in the afternoon. There is a delay between the last digit you dial and when the phone actually clicks in. That is because the phone system is overloaded with parents calling their homes to make sure their kids have gotten home safely.

So after-school care is a part of our effort and a part of this proposal that we will put before this body.

So with those thoughts I am urging our colleagues to see if we can't find some common ground. Hopefully the majority leader will change that agenda to include child care on it with the recommendation of the administration. We are not arguing now with an executive branch over whether or not we ought to do this.

There are two bills here that it seems to me we should move on. I am going to raise this issue at every opportunity I can in the coming weeks to see to it that before this session of this Congress adjourns that this U.S. Senate will address child care, after-school care, and care for parents who want to stay at home, and that these parents are going to get some relief before we call it quits. I think it is a critical issue and one that ought to be one of our top priorities rather than not a priority at all.

With that I yield the remainder of my time, if any of my colleagues want to take a few minutes before the time expires. I see my colleague from New Jersey.

Mr. TORRICELLI. I thank the Senator from Connecticut for the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, the State of the Union Address last evening reminds me of the words of President KENNEDY who in 1962 came before the Nation and he said, ''It is my responsibility to report on the state of the Nation but it is all of our responsibility to improve it.''

Increasingly that is a responsibility that is being met. It is incredible now to remember that when President Clinton assumed office 5 years ago there was projected to be in 1998 a Federal budget deficit of $357 billion. Indeed, in the budget that the President is about to submit there is a $10 billion deficit. And the reality is within a year the U.S. Government for the first time in 30 years will be conducting its affairs in a fiscal surplus.

For 3 decades, six Presidents of both political parties in their State of the Union Addresses have had it incumbent upon them to distribute pain—not to challenge the Nation to meet problems but to distribute sacrifice because of mounting deficits that left the U.S. Government with no choice.

There have indeed been many victims of the deficit. It is common to talk about them in terms of taxpayers having to pay an ever larger share of their income in Federal tax with an ever-larger share of their taxes going to interest on the national deficit. The taxpayers were not the only victims. The Federal deficit made victims out of children who never got the education they required. Students were never able to continue with assistance into higher education because of programs we could not pass; young families that could not get day care, and people, mothers and fathers, who could not follow opportunities because of it. There were many victims of the Federal deficit, and we each now need to be reminded that the country's budget evolved into a surplus.

Alan Greenspan may have said it best when he said we cannot just balance the Federal budget and think that our work is complete for if there is no investment in the Nation's future then we have still failed. That, Mr. President, is where we find ourselves tonight. Part of our national mission is accomplished. There will be a Federal budget surplus. Now the question is are we wise enough to recognize where the sacrifices have been? Are we smart enough to plan for the future to assure that the economic growth that we are now experiencing can continue?

Last night in the State of the Union Address the President outlined several specific investments that go to the core of this question, each in a way addressing an aspect of the national infrastructure. The first was Social Security.

There are in our Nation 80 million members of my generation born in the years after the last world war. They have worked hard. They are saving diligently. They have participated in building this high-growth economy. Soon they begin to face retirement. The Social Security trust fund through their savings and participation will continue to run a surplus through the year 2014. The current projections are that the same trust fund will expire by the year 2031.

Last night the President left us with a simple challenge. In facing the Federal budget surplus let's deal with Social Security first. Let this generation of Americans now retire. My generation who will be facing it in all too few years know the trust funds will be secure, permanent. Let's begin that planning now.

Second, the President recognized that in the 21st century the foundation of our Nation's economy and perhaps its principal national infrastructure will be our educational institutions. As certainly as in the 17th century it may have been the construction of canals, as certainly as in the 18th and 19th century it may have evolved into railroads to most certainly what now are institutions of higher learning in our schools.

As part of the program to deal with this reality, the President challenged us to create a Federal program to hire 100,000 new teachers to enable the Nation to reduce the class size for first, second, and third graders to 18 students, an extraordinary challenge with everything that it could mean for expanding the quality of American schools. But it did more.

Recognizing that smaller school classes is going to mean the need for more classrooms and facing the reality that fully two-thirds of all American schools are now substandard, two-thirds have at least one serious construction problem that must be addressed, potentially $100 billion worth of necessary construction to bring America's schools up to standards, the President recommended a program whereby the Federal Government would not build the schools; that responsibility would remain local. But we could reduce the cost of the construction by the Federal Government paying the interest on the loans of local governments and State governments to build those schools.

Third, the President challenged this Congress to continue progress on access to quality health care in America. Two years ago, this Congress assured that Americans could change their jobs without losing their health care. This Congress assured that if a member of a family was taken ill, they would not lose their health care because they made use of it. Two years ago, we did right by the American people in expanding our health care opportunities. And a year ago we did so again, adding 5 million American children, previously uninsured, without access to the system. We brought them into health care insurance through the Government.

Now the question is even larger. The President challenged us in the State of the Union Address to deal with the reality of 160 million Americans who now have their health care delivered through managed care systems. I know something of this issue because only a week ago in New Jersey, meeting with 100 individuals, many of whom had had difficulties with their managed care systems, I heard the stories that Americans are experiencing every day—members of managed care systems who could not get the truth of their own files, people who needed to see specialists but were denied, people whose privacy had been violated, people who traveled needing access to emergency rooms and could not get it because care would not be received through their managed care program.

The President's challenge last evening was we can make managed care work, and, indeed, in reducing costs it has worked. We have gone from 12 and 13 and 14 percent annual increases in the cost of health care to 2.5 percent last year. But saving money is only half the equation. The remainder is assuring that what has been the finest quality care system in the world in the United States is maintained and that managed care complements that system and does not frustrate it.

Fourth, the President recognized the reality that fully 60 percent of American women today with children, with homes to maintain, are also in the work force—not always by choice, certainly not usually by luxury. But with the cost of raising children and maintaining a home today, two family incomes are often a necessity, and yet in modern America the ambitions of these women, the needs of these families are frustrated because they cannot get affordable child care. It is hard to imagine any higher priority today for young working families in America than assuring quality, safe, affordable child care. Indeed, America remains almost alone in the world in not helping our families meet this urgent need and responsibility.

Through tax credits for businesses, through a larger child care tax credit for working families, the challenge has been laid before the Congress. More directly, the President said, ''Not a single American family should ever have to choose between the job they need and the child they love.'' Exactly, Mr. President, and that is the challenge before this Congress.

And yet, finally, I recognize that having fought all of these years to balance the Federal budget, to reach the point where an American President could honestly predict a surplus in our finances, we achieve nothing if we meet these responsibilities but require higher taxes on American families that cannot afford the increased burden. It is notable that this balanced budget has been achieved and some of these social objectives already met while the country has the lowest tax burden on middle-income families in 20 years. But it is important still to recognize that that burden can still be eased more through targeted, responsible tax cuts that do not add to the deficit but help meet some of these social objectives—tax cuts to encourage and expand child care, targeted tax cuts to help with the cost of financing education, tax cuts that encourage savings and investment to maintain this rapid economic growth that is producing these extraordinary revenues.

Mr. President, this is an extraordinary time in the life of our country. We can do good and great things but not by resting on what we have achieved. This economy has not grown, our people are not productive, our industries are not competitive, we are not leading the world in finance and industry, no less in diplomacy, statesmanship and military power because we have learned to rest but, rather, because we have learned to challenge—not because we live off the growth of previous years, the investments of other generations but because we invest and save ourselves. That challenge remains with us tonight, not to accept things as they are but to invest, to educate, to build,

There is a quote that I have through the years always admired from an architect in Chicago, Daniel Burnham, who said in 1909 to his colleagues, ''Make no little plans, for they have no magic to stir men's blood and will probably never be realized. Make big plans.'' Last night, in his State of the Union Address, President Clinton made before the Nation an ambitious agenda. It is a big plan worthy of a big and a great nation.

I hope and trust in this final year of the 105th Congress our vision will be as big, our action will be as bold as the State of the Union Address this Congress heard last night from President Clinton.

Madam President, with that, if I could, I should like to yield to the Senator from Oregon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. WYDEN. I thank the Chair.

Madam President, by focusing on Social Security reform, educational quality, and strengthening the rights of health care patients, last night's speech zeroed in on the issues that I have been hearing Oregonians talk about during the course of 12 town meetings this month. Certainly a budget surplus, no matter how you count to create that surplus, is not going to bring us into some sort of budget nirvana if it is followed by more years of deficits. And I thought what was especially constructive about last night's speech was it zeroed in on the critical questions of retirement and health care that clearly drive the budget and the deficit for the long-term. The fact is you cannot have long-term budget discipline unless you deal with Social Security and health care, and I think last night we heard a call to arms, to dig in on a bipartisan basis on those key issues.

Now, with respect to Social Security—and I am sure it is the case for all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle—I can report that in my State more young people think that they are going to have a date with an extraterrestrial than think they are going to get a Social Security check. They look at these whopper payroll taxes that they are paying today, more than 6 percent for the worker, more than 6 percent for the employer, millions of Americans paying more in payroll taxes than they pay in income taxes, and they see that essentially their retirement contribution in the past has gone to a great extent to operate the budget.

I think it is fair to say—and there has been a considerable amount of discussion of this in the last few weeks—that the budget surplus in America is to a great extent the Social Security surplus in America. I think last night we learned that the real challenge ahead—the President essentially called for what amounts to a year-long national teach-in on retirement finance in America—is to be straight with people. We are going to have to talk about the tough choices and in particular how we protect the millions of Americans for whom Social Security is a lifeline, vulnerable folks who every month are balancing their food costs against their medical bills and medical bills against their pharmaceutical bills, and the question is, how do we take care of those vulnerable folks and still get

ready for this demographic tsunami—75, 80 million baby boomers that are going to retire early in the next century.

But it seems to me that if we spend the next year working on a bipartisan basis to dig into these issues, look at a variety of different approaches—I am particularly attracted to the idea of trying to stimulate more private saving; I think there are a variety of ways in which that can be done—we will have said on our watch, on our watch, Madam President—and I have enjoyed serving with you on the Senate Committee on Aging—we will be able to say that on our watch we did not duck the tough and difficult questions. And certainly they are just as difficult with respect to health care as they are to retirement finance.

I come from a part of the United States where we have perhaps the highest concentration of managed care in the country. In fact, in my hometown of Portland, more than half of the older people are in HMOs, are in managed care, and the challenge always is, even in a hometown like mine where we have a lot of good managed care, how do you hold the cost down while still protecting the rights of patients in those health plans.

I am of the view that a lot of those folks feel powerless today. Frankly, they feel powerless throughout the health system, whether they are in an HMO or a fee-for-service plan or one of these hybrids that is a little bit of each. And I think that we as a body differ on lots of aspects about health care. Certainly you can differ on the role of the Federal Government, State government, tax policy, and a variety of issues, but I, for the life of me, cannot understand why any of us would not support what we heard last night with respect to patients being told about all their options in the health care system. Disagree all you want about the kind of services that ought to be part of a health plan but let us not disagree on the fundamental right to know what treatment might be available to you and what your options are. The same with the right of appeal, the right to make sure that if you felt you did not get a fair shake from the health care system you would have an opportunity to be heard and you could have another chance to make sure that your claim for services was addressed in a fair way. This issue, the question of protecting the rights of patients in health plans while holding costs down, is the essence of our challenge in health care. Of course you can hold costs down if you don't give people any care. That is a walk in the park. Anybody can do that. That is not the kind of health care system we want. We want one that both holds costs down and protects the quality of health care in our country. We have been able to achieve some of that success in my home State. I am convinced we can do it in every community in Oregon and across the country, but it is going to mean, as we heard last night, stepping forward, stepping up to the key issues.

Madam President, what I was especially pleased about with respect to last night's speech was the call for bipartisanship. I think that is critical to taking on these key issues such as retirement and health care. Again, in our home State, that's the kind of government that we are trying to practice. I can tell you that my colleague in the U.S. Senate, Senator GORDON SMITH and I, after we ran against each other for the seat to replace Bob Packwood—of all people, we could probably have come here and quarreled about all kinds of issues. We have not wanted to make that part of our service. We wanted to make part of our service tackling these issues on a bipartisan basis, in a way that makes sense for Oregon and our country. That is why, as new members of the Budget Committee, we joined in the last session in terms of Medicare reimbursement reform.

As the Presiding Officer of this body knows, regarding much of the Medicare reimbursement system, since its inception the program has actually rewarded folks for being inefficient and penalized States for holding costs down. Senator SMITH and I thought that was particularly unfair to our constituents, who have done so much heavy lifting to get the health care system back on track. We worked with other Senators, leaders on both sides, and were able to make some very dramatic changes in that reimbursement system. It has an eye-glazing name called the AAPCC, the Average Adjusted Per Capita Costs, but it's the guts of reimbursement. And I am convinced that when, on a bipartisan basis, colleagues can work for those kinds of changes, and we were successful last session, we can certainly rise to the challenge that we were given last night and move ahead with respect to reform as it relates to health maintenance organizations—consumer rights, like the right to full information and the right to appeal.

So I am optimistic, as we go forward in the days ahead to tackle these issues, Madam President. I think we have an opportunity on our watch to say that we did not duck, that we understand that these issues, with respect to retirement and health care financing, are the biggest issues that in the past folks in politics ducked. We cannot afford to do that any longer. I look forward to working on a bipartisan basis with my colleagues on those questions in the days ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, I do want to say to my colleague from Wyoming that I shall stay within 10 minutes. He is here on the floor. We have had a chance to speak as Democrats for a while. So I will try and stay relatively brief. When I say 10 minutes I mean by clock time, not by Senate time. So I really will try to do this.

I thank my colleague from Oregon for his fine statement.

Mr. WYDEN. I thank my colleague.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, I want to talk about the President's speech last night. Let me start out with where I disagree with some of what he had to say, and then let me talk about what I think were some of the sharp differences between Democrats and Republicans. That is not to say I am not interested in bipartisanship, but I think, frankly, if there are differences between the parties that make a difference, and people see a real debate and it is important to their lives, that will be all to the good.

I think the President is dead wrong in what he had to say about welfare reform. I never called it reform because I think that takes for granted the very question in doubt, as to whether or not it is really reform. That there are a million or 2 million or 3 million fewer women and children—those are the welfare recipients on welfare today—than several years ago does not necessarily represent reform. A reduction of the caseload, reduction of people who are receiving assistance, has nothing to do with whether or not you have reduced poverty. It is reform when we have reduced poverty.

I will just say for the record that, as I have had a chance to travel around the community, and a lot of poor communities in our country, there are several things which I found which are very troubling. I do not believe I do any damage to the truth when I say this, and think all Senators need to take note of it. First of all, it is simply true that there are 3- and 4-year-olds at home alone. It is simply true that there were long waiting lists for affordable child care, long before welfare reform, and many of these children are not receiving nurturing, important developmental care at the most critical years of their lives.

This is wrong.

It is also true, as I said the other day, that there are first and second and third graders who, when they go home, there is no parent there. I think it is poignant. I think it is wrong that there are fewer children playing outdoors now because when many of these kids go home they go into a housing project and they are told to go inside, not take any phone calls, not answer the door. That is happening in the United States of America. We need to take note of that.

I think the President is also wrong because we don't know where these mothers are. We don't know what kind of jobs they have. And what is really astounding to me, Madam President, is at the State level we are not collecting the data. I think, as responsible policymakers, since 4 years, 3 years, 2 years from now, depending upon the State, all of these women and children are going to essentially be receiving no assistance, they are going to be cut off from all assistance, don't we need to know whether or not they have reached

economic self-sufficiency? These parents, mainly women—do they have jobs that pay a decent wage? Do they have health care coverage? Can they afford child care? Where are their children? We need to know that. That is where I disagree with the President's analysis. And I will have some amendments almost on the first piece of legislation that comes to the floor of the Senate where I will try to get the Senate to address these problems.

Second, I think we have to do much better in higher education. I was a college teacher for 20 years and I believe that we didn't expand assistance gaining the best bang for the buck. The way of targeting the assistance to those students in most need would have been to dramatically expand the Pell grant program. And if you are going to have tax credits, they have to be refundable. If you don't have tax credits that are refundable and you have a student from a family earning less than $27,000, $28,000 a year—which, by the way, is the income profile of many, many community college students—it doesn't do you any good. You have no tax liability. You can't cash flow paying your tuition because you get it too late to pay your tuition, and you are not eligible anyway. So if we are going to talk about making higher education more affordable let's, for gosh sakes, talk about these working families.

That is disagree.

Agreement: I think the President's focus on education, on early childhood development, affordable child care, on health care, was extremely important. Let me make but a couple of points for my Republican colleagues. As I listened to some of my Republican colleagues talk about the President's speech last night, I felt like what they were saying is: Oh, this is just Government all over again. Americans, when it comes to these pressing issues of your lives, there is nothing the Government can or should do.

Madam President, if you own your own large corporation and you are wealthy, then that's fine. But for most of the working families in this country, affordable child care is a huge issue. For most of the working families in this country, making sure that your children get a good education and a commitment to public education and lowering class sizes and having more teachers and having more teaching assistance is hugely important to you. If you are from a working family in our country, you want to make sure, vis-a-vis an increasingly corporatized and bureaucratized health care system—listen, managed care can be good or bad. It depends upon who manages the managed care. But the fact of the matter is, the nine largest insurance companies own and control well over 60 percent of the managed care plans, and for them the bottom line has become the only line.

So of course we want to make sure that people have access to the care they need. Of course we want to make sure that nurses and doctors can provide that care. Of course we want to make sure there are some independent appeals processes for ordinary people in our country. Of course we want to make sure that there are some basic consumer protections. And I think the President is right on the mark. What I am worried about, it is a challenge to colleagues on both sides of the aisle, is that the Congress will sure enough pass a bill. It will have a great acronym. It will sound great and it will have that made-for-Congress look, because there will not be any teeth in it, enforcement teeth.

By the way, one way in which I would love to amend some of what the President was talking about last night, and I think we could get bipartisan support for this, is we ought to think about —Families USA has talked about ombudsmen, you know, through nongovernment organizations, through nonprofits, where people would have somewhere to go so they can have basic information about what their rights are as consumers. We absolutely ought to do that. We absolutely ought to do that. It's a simple proposition. Either we are here to represent big insurance companies or we are here to represent doctors, nurses, nurse's assistants, other caregivers, and consumers.

The third point I want to make has to do with jobs. I said it the other day on the floor of the Senate. I will summarize. I will say it again. No matter where I go, whether it be low-income communities, poor communities, middle-income communities, it doesn't matter—and for that matter upper-income communities. People are focused on how to earn a decent living and how to give their children the care they know they need and deserve. I am going, for a moment, to talk about low-income, since we don't talk that much about low-income, poor people. I will tell you that there are two challenges here. One, the President talked about raising the minimum wage. Senator KENNEDY and I have been out on the floor. We talked about the legislation we have introduced, 50 cents a year for 3 years and then indexing it. I will tell you that is extremely important. Because it is wrong when people work full-time, all year round, and they are still poor in America. That should not be the case. When people work, play by the rules of the game, they ought not to be poor.

My second point, however, is different. It doesn't do any good to raise the minimum wage if people live in communities where there is no work at all. We have communities in our country, ghettos and barrios in rural areas, where there is no work. And we really do need to figure out ways of combining our initiatives while at the same time providing some job opportunities for people to build up some skills and then be able to transition to private sector employers. If we are going to rebuild crumbling schools—and we should, God knows, when students go into schools that are so uninviting, with ceilings falling in. Imagine, could we do our work if the heating didn't work? If the plumbing didn't work? If the air conditioning didn't work during the summer? If we didn't have access to Internet? If we didn't have access to the best books? Could we do our work? A lot of students are going to school in decrepit buildings, unsafe, that tell those students we don't value them.

If we are going to rebuild crumbling schools, invest some money in that infrastructure, I think we ought to also make sure that a certain percentage of the jobs go to the adults, the fathers and mothers of those children who live in these communities. Because these are communities that are ravaged by high levels of unemployment. Let's combine rebuilding the schools with some job training and jobs for some of the parents in the community.

If we are going to reduce class size we can talk about 100,000 more teachers, but there is also a role for teaching assistants that can help a teacher in a classroom. That could provide employment for people who live in these communities without any jobs at all. So I would like to see us have more of a focus in this area. To a certain extent I am talking about people who all too often are faceless and voiceless here, but I think it is extremely important, as a matter elementary justice, that we focus in this area.

Finally, Madam President—I hope I have stayed within 10 minutes—an issue that you care a great deal about, an issue that I wish all of us would care a great deal about, even if we disagree on the specifics. I do not know what other people find, but I tell you I think an awful lot of people in our country, I am sorry, I think it is well over 50 percent, are just disillusioned and disaffected with politics. It is terrible. I think people think that both parties are owned and controlled by the same investors.

I think that people think that when it comes to their concerns and their hopes about themselves, their families, their communities, their loved ones, these concerns are of little concern to those of us in the Congress. I hate that.

I have two Republican colleagues on the floor with me from Wyoming and from Colorado, both of whom I respect. It does not matter if we disagree on issues, this is one thing we do not want to have happen. I mean, we do not want people to just kind of become so disillusioned that participation becomes less and less. We lose our democracy.

So, Madam President, the final issue the President talked about—I hope we can move some campaign finance reform. We cannot get all the big money out of politics. I wish we could. But if we could at least pass some reforms that would give people some confidence we are serious about trying to get some of the money out of politics and make politics more responsive to the concerns and circumstances of their lives, we would be taking a big step forward.

I look forward to the debate. I hope we have a lot of debate. I do not want it to be acrimonious. But I think differences between the political parties are healthy. I think if the differences make a difference to the people we represent, it is even better. The sooner we get substantive, the sooner we have bills out here on the floor, the sooner we have the debate, and the sooner we get on with the work of governance, the better I will like it as a Senator from Minnesota.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time under the control of the Democratic leader has expired.

Mr. ENZI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. ENZI. Thank you, Madam President.

I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed 5 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENZI. Thank you.

## CONGRATULATING THE DENVER BRONCOS AND COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, in the last 3 hours there has been some pretty heavy lifting and some excellent debate by both sides about what is to come of this country. But I am going to take just a moment and let everyone relax and reflect a little bit and realize that everything in the world isn't happening right here in Washington. I want to bring some attention to some things that have happened over the last weekend.

One of those, of course, was the Super Bowl game. I want to congratulate those Broncos and people in Wyoming and Colorado who are avid supporters of that team. They did a wonderful job as fans, as players. It was a great game. But something that is not as well known out of this part of the country is that there is the Western Athletic Conference. There are a bunch of basketball players out there that are having a great year.

Some people may have heard about Utah because, frankly, they are No. 4 in the Nation right now. You may have heard about New Mexico because they are also in the top 20 in the Nation. But I want to talk just for a moment about another team that is going to be in that top 20 in the Nation, and that is Colorado State University, a small university in northern Colorado just south of Wyoming. This last weekend we had an event called the ''Border Wars.'' That is an event that has been going on for 101 games in Laramie, WY, alone. They play the other half of the games in Colorado. So the oldest traditional rivalry in basketball, probably, in the United States—101 games. This last weekend was the event of that 101st game.

I cannot convey to you enough the rivalry that we have between these two schools that have been playing for that long and that are only separated by 45 miles, which out in our part of the country is very little distance.

It is my pleasure to say that Colorado State University won that game. They beat an outstanding team. That is why you are going to hear more about Colorado State University. They won that game 53–46. They got out to a 9–0 lead in the game, then a 15–2 lead, which is almost what their record is this year, 15–3, a pretty outstanding record, particularly in that conference. They are 3–2 in the Western Athletic Conference. But they have won nine of their home games, only losing one. Their coach, Stew Morrill, has done an outstanding job with the team that came back from last year. As most people do not realize, they had that entire team back for another season. And they will have a great season.

So keep your eye on the Western Athletic Conference and particularly Colorado State University.

This is such a rivalry that this last weekend I had the pleasure of hosting Senator ALLARD and his wife Joan for the basketball game in Wyoming. As part of that competition, part of that rivalry, I agreed that if Wyoming lost that game, I would wear this Colorado State tie for a week. It was really fun having the folks from Colorado come up and to have that competition continue. I want to congratulate Senator ALLARD for the outstanding job that they did.

I yield the remainder of my time.

Mr. ALLARD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for 2 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. ALLARD. Madam President, I want to stand up and thank my colleague from Wyoming for having both Joan and I join him and his lovely wife for a great, great basketball game in Laramie, WY. We look forward to a continuation of this rivalry. He is a great sport. I am so pleased that he has agreed to go ahead and wear that tie now for the rest of the week. It makes all of us feel so proud at Colorado State University to see somebody who is such a strong supporter of the University of Wyoming willing to share that win with the rest of the people in Colorado.

So we are looking forward to many, many more rivalries in the Western Athletic Conference with the University of Wyoming in Laramie. I want to wish everybody the very best.

Madam President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. CONRAD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I will make one correction, if I can. North Dakota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair apologizes. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. No need to apologize. We often get mixed up with our sister State. They sometimes call us the four amigos, the four Senators from North and South Dakota. So we are always glad to be put in the class of our friends from South Dakota.

## THE FISCAL CONDITION OF OUR COUNTRY

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, last night we heard the President's State of the Union Address. It was an important review of where the country stands. I want a chance to discuss today what I think are some of the most important points that were made last night, the most important points with respect to the fiscal condition of our country.

I came here to the U.S. Senate 12 years ago. The thing that compelled me to run was the fact that fiscal conditions in the country were a disaster. I was convinced that unless steps were taken to get us back on a sound fiscal track, the future economic security of our country was threatened, which would have an adverse effect on the people that I represent in the State of North Dakota. We are very much affected by the national economy.

But I was also concerned about where we were headed in terms of a national legacy. What were we going to leave to our children? Remember those times when we were running massive deficits? It looked like there was no end to red ink. So I came here with a commitment to get our fiscal house in order. I wanted not only to balance the budget, as it is called in Washington, but I also wanted to see us stop the practice of looting the Social Security trust funds in order to make the deficit appear smaller than it really was.

So last night was a very special night for me. I was able to hear a President say he was going to submit a balanced budget for the first time in 30 years. I was also able to hear a President say that he was going to go further than that and he was going to move to stop the practice of raiding and looting Social Security trust fund surpluses.

Madam President, I think that is critically important to the Nation's future. I want to describe what has happened, what is happening and why it matters to people.

I brought this chart along to show precisely what has happened and what the differences are between the budget we talk about here in Washington and what I think any fair commentary would be on the budget. If we go back to 1992, the blue line shows what is termed the unified budget. What has happened to the so-called unified budget? That includes all of the resources of the Federal Government, all the revenues and all the expenditures. Of course, that means it also includes the Social Security surpluses.

The red line shows the budget of the United States if you exclude the Social Security surpluses. What these lines show is that in 1992 we had a unified budget deficit of $290 billion—$290 billion. And the projections were that the