

to give proper accolades when we completed that work.

I say again how much I appreciate the leadership of Senator DOMENICI, the chairman of the Budget Committee. As always, he exhibited real leadership. He knows more about budget substance, about the numbers, and about the points of order than all the rest of us combined probably. He did a great job of getting the bill through in, I believe, record time at least in recent history, certainly since I have been in the Senate since 1988. So I thought that was a tremendous accomplishment. He did get good cooperation from Senator LAUTENBERG, the ranking member of the Budget Committee, and he worked on both sides of the aisle to hold down some of the amendments that really did not need to be offered, either sense of the Senate or could be offered at another time.

It was really a tremendous accomplishment to get it completed from a process standpoint, but also the substance deserves more attention than we were able to give it late last night. It is a historic budget because it does for the first time since, I believe, 1969 get us to an actual balanced budget and to a surplus, hopefully, in this year and over the next few years, hundreds of millions, billions of dollars of surplus, which is something we have not experienced in a long, long time. So it is balanced. It will lead to surpluses. It provides tax cuts, and we hope to have even more tax cuts agreed to in the conference report beyond what was actually included in this budget resolution.

It does take steps to further protect and preserve and allows us to look at reforming Social Security so it will be there not only for our parents but for ourselves and our children well into the next century by setting aside a surplus for Social Security.

I think that is a very positive step. I think we need to think very carefully about how we go beyond not just setting aside some money but how we really deal with the future needs of Social Security. It also, after repeated attacks, continues to say that any tobacco settlement that we may reach will go into Medicare, where it is needed, because over the next 8 to 10 years that program will again begin to have problems.

So the combination was a really good budget resolution. It goes to conference now, as I noted. We will have a good conference. I hope, as we discussed yesterday, that we can actually come up with more tax cuts than we have earmarked in this budget resolution. But I remind my colleagues we can always come up with more than what is provided in the budget if we can find offsets, and we should look for them. We should look for places where there is spending not necessary or that is duplicative or can be better used by allowing people to keep their own money.

I do think we should make a special effort this year to begin the process of

eliminating the marriage penalty tax. How in the world in America can we defend the fact that young couples, when they get married, pay more taxes even though they make no more income. The average tax increase for a married couple over what they pay before they are married is \$1,400. You talk about fairness in the Tax Code. That is one provision that must be changed, and we will work together in a bipartisan way to see if we can eliminate the marriage penalty tax this year.

I also thank the Senate for a lot of good work in other areas over the past couple weeks. We did reach agreement on how to consider the Coverdell A+ education bill. It will be a very fair process. We will have 15 or so amendments that will be offered dealing with education only, not extraneous matters that we argued about for over 2 weeks. It will deal with education from both sides of the aisle. Some of them may be accepted, some of them may be second degreed, but I think we will have a great education discussion when we return on April 20, and hopefully we can complete that bill by April 22.

We do hope to take up the NATO enlargement bill later on that week, but I want to make sure that every Senator is comfortable with how that is done, make sure that we have enough time to debate that very important matter fully, but reach a conclusion within, hopefully, 3 days or so—probably by the 26th or 27th of April.

The Finance Committee took a very positive step forward earlier this week with regard to IRS reform. The House did a good job last year getting it started, but we found where there are other real abuses by IRS. We had a unanimous bipartisan vote to report the IRS reform bill out of the Finance Committee, so that bill will be coming to the floor, probably around the first week in May—May 4, something of that nature. It does deal with abuses of such things like the innocent spouse, where an innocent spouse, even though he or she may be divorced, is now being held responsible for half or all of the debts of their spouse or former spouse in a very unfair way. It does provide for some restrictions on the excesses of penalties and interest. Many of us know instances, now, where people have found that they owe more in penalties and interest on taxes than they originally owed. So this bill will begin to cut that back and get it under control. I think the taxpayers will be very proud of that.

Finally, I think we should take note of the vote that occurred in the Senate Commerce Committee on a tobacco settlement package. It still has a long way to go, but that vote was 19 to 1, and was reported out. Most people thought it would never get beyond the committee, that it probably would never even be considered. But it was considered, and I think that was a move that will lead us to an opportunity in late May to take up that very

important legislation to deal with teenage smoking, to try to deal with the Medicare problems that are caused by the health effects of smoking.

I commend Senator MCCAIN and Senator HOLLINGS, all those on both sides of the Commerce Committee for their leadership there.

So, as is typical of the Senate, after a lot of work behind the scenes, there was a burst of activity this week, and I think it has put us in a position to complete a lot of good bills when we return the latter part of April.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR—S. 414

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Larry DiRita, my legislative director, and Jim Sartucci from the Commerce Committee professional staff, be allowed floor privileges during the duration of the debate on S. 414.

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

OCEAN SHIPPING REFORM ACT OF 1997

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. 414, and it be considered under the following limitations: A substitute amendment offered by Senator HUTCHISON and an amendment to the substitute on application of the act to be offered by Senator GORTON.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 414) to amend the Shipping Act of 1984 to encourage competition in international shipping and growth of United States imports and exports, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 1997".

SEC. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE.

Except as otherwise expressly provided in this Act, this Act and the amendments made by this Act take effect on March 1, 1998.

TITLE I—AMENDMENTS TO THE SHIPPING ACT OF 1984

SEC. 101. PURPOSE.

Section 2 of the Shipping Act of 1984 (46 U.S.C. App. 1701) is amended by—