MAMMOGRAPHY QUALITY STANDARDS REAUTHORIZATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FOX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to address an important topic, that is that we want to make sure that we eliminate breast cancer in our lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, studies predict that one in nine women will develop breast cancer in the course of their lifetime. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among American women. Last year, approximately 44,000 women died from it.

Mr. Speaker, the best hope women have to detect breast cancer and ultimately survive is a screening mammography, an X-ray procedure that can detect small tumors and breast abnormalities up to 2 years before they can be detected by other means. Congress wisely enacted the 1992 law to promote the use of mammograms.

Over 90 percent of the cases of breast cancer in these early stages can be cured. The original bill required that mammography facilities use only radiological technologies and equipment designed for mammography; use only qualified physicians able to interpret mammogram results; establish quality assurance and control programs to assure the reliability, clarity, and accurate interpretation of mammograms; to undergo inspections by qualified inspectors on an annual basis; and be subject to accreditation by a Health and Human Services-approved organization.

Mr. Speaker, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, reports that among women aged 50 and older, the proportion receiving mammograms in the past year has increased from 26 percent to 57 percent. Among women aged 40 to 49, the increase over the past 2 years was from 59 percent in 1990 to 66 percent in 1995.

So I commend the House this week for approving legislation that I support, which is the Mammography Quality Standards Reauthorization Act, which establishes national uniform standards for mammography and adds the following key provisions this year:

It clarifies the responsibility of the mammography facility to retain mammogram records for at least 5 years, or at least 10 years if the facility performs no subsequent mammograms, in order for women to obtain their original mammogram; it establishes that both State and local government agencies have inspection authority; and, it ensures that patients and referring physicians will be advised of any mammogram facility deficiencies; and, requires that direct patient notification be written in layman's terms.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, we can cure breast cancer in our lifetime, but we must encourage our grandmothers, our mothers, our wives, our sisters and daughters to get annual mammograms and continue our work to double the NIH budget, the National Institutes of Health, so we can have the research, the education, and the testing so that we can cure breast cancer in our lifetime.

PRESERVING SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, tonight I want to discuss the need to strengthen Social Security for the long term. I just wanted to say that I think a lot of people are not aware of how successful the Social Security program has been.

Of course it was created by Franklin Roosevelt quite a long time ago in the wake of the Great Depression, but it has been our most successful domestic program in the Nation's history.

Just to give some examples, Social Security has kept millions of retired seniors from living in poverty by providing a guaranteed cash benefit with a lifetime protection against inflation. For about two-thirds of beneficiaries, Social Security provides about half of their annual income; and, for 30 percent of beneficiaries, Social Security provides 90 percent of their annual income.

Social Security is the only source of income for one in every six older Americans. And in large part, Social Security relieves today's workers of the economic burden of supporting their aging parents.

In addition, the comprehensive benefits provided by Social Security saves millions of families from financial disaster in the event a worker's death or disability. Finally, 39 percent of all Social Security benefits are paid to workers who become disabled, survivors of deceased workers, and spouses and children of retired and disabled workers. So this, again, is our most successful program in the Nation's history.

That is why I think that it is so important that all Americans be aware of what the Republican leadership wants to do with the projected Federal surplus. They are supposed to vote on this in the House Committee on Ways and Means as early as tomorrow. I think that young people and seniors alike should be concerned with the Republicans' intention to use budget surpluses for tax cuts, instead of saving that money until we have developed a way to protect Social Security for the long term.

What we are hearing from the Republican Leaders that is going to be voted on in committee tomorrow is a tax cut plan that would cost $80 billion. That sum is so large that it could not be financed without dipping into the budget surplus, which incidentally we do not even have. We have not seen it yet.

We talk about, and the media talks about a budget surplus, but we do not really know exactly what it consists of or whether it is real. The CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, in fact estimates that were it not for a surplus in the Social Security trust fund, the total Federal budget for this year would indeed be in a deficit.

So what we really know is that without the application of the trust fund, the money from the Social Security trust fund, in fact, there would be no surplus at all. That is why we need to guard against what the Republicans are proposing to do tomorrow. I will explain it a little more, and I have the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN), who is going to join me as well.

Mr. Speaker, as many people are aware, and I hear this a lot at town hall meetings and the senior forums that I have in my own district, particularly during the August recess, the Federal Government uses the surplus in the Social Security trust fund to fund other government programs. In effect, the government borrows from Social Security. So if there is excess money or surplus in the Social Security trust fund, it is essentially lent to the Federal Government and the Federal Government uses it for other purposes.

Now, it seems only logical then that when the Federal budget realizes a true surplus, in other words when the general revenues are in surplus, that that surplus be used to pay back what has been borrowed from Social Security. That is what Democrats have been saying ever since we realized that the Federal Government may have a surplus sooner that was expected.

Let me say again in a few more words that when we passed the Balanced Budget Act last year, we did not anticipate that there was going to be a surplus for some time. But because the economy has been good this year on an annual basis, we understand that there may in fact be a surplus. But that is only in general revenues. That has nothing to do with the Social Security money that people pay, wage earners pay in their taxes on a regular basis when they earn a certain income.

So even though there may be a slight surplus in general revenues at the end of this year, we have borrowed so much money from the Social Security trust in the past, and we will continue to do so this year, that that little surplus in general revenue does not make up for the money that we have borrowed from the Social Security trust fund.

So what we are saying is that if we add that money borrowed from Social Security, in effect we have no surplus since we have to pay that money back. Whatever money is generated annually through general revenues should be applied ultimately to pay back what is owed to Social Security.

Back in January, the President said in his State of the Union address that he believed that Congress should not touch whatever surplus and revenues are generated this year until lawmakers come up with a plan to shore

up Social Security for the long-term. We know that 20 years from now, there is not going to be enough money in the Social Security trust to pay the beneficiaries at that time because a lot more younger people, the baby boom generation, will be retiring at that point and we will need more money in the Social Security trust fund. In addition to that money, that has to be paid back. The President believes, as I do, that protecting Social Security should be a bipartisan goal and he recently made a radio address stating that Republicans and Democrats alike must maintain fiscal discipline, setting aside the surplus until we save Social Security.

Let us talk a little bit about this bill. A number of my colleagues and I, going back to February after the President's State of the Union address, a number of our Democratic colleagues back then in February introduced H.R. 3027. This establishes a fund called the ''Save Social Security First'' reserve fund to hold all Federal budget surpluses.

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It literally says the funds shall be used to save budget surpluses pending Social Security reform.

This is a very simple bill that was introduced by a lot of the Ways and Means members back in February. And if the Republican leadership would just bring this bill up on the floor tomorrow, which they could do, then we could easily pass it, it could be signed into law, and we would know for sure that any action that was taken in terms of taxes or spending would, in effect, require first that the surplus go into Social Security.

Obviously, the Republicans are not bringing up that bill and, instead, what we are hearing is that they are going to bring up this tax cut that is going to cost the surplus $80 billion. And that, of course, will really have an impact on the Social Security Trust Fund because it will mean that we have $80 billion less that we can apply towards Social Security.

I would like at this time, there is a lot more that I could say on this, but I will at this time yield to my colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Green), who has expressed concern about this issue before on the floor, and who is here with me tonight, so we can try to get a little more light on this subject to the American people and our colleagues.

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues from New Jersey for requesting this time tonight. I know it is 8:30 on the East Coast, but it is 7:30 in Texas and our folks are just getting up from the dinner table, so we can let them know what is happening in Congress. I heard some of my colleagues in earlier 5-minute special orders, and I agree that truth and righteousness should have the first place in our society and our halls of Congress and our government. But what I am concerned about is all the smoke and the fire on what is happening with the President's problems may be masking what may be happening over the next week or 2 here with this tax cut bill that comes up.

I am glad the gentleman pointed out that there really is no budget surplus; that until we pass legislation to remove the receipts of Social Security from the unified Federal budget, that we will not have a surplus because Social Security receipts, those that are paid in by employees and employers, are part of the general revenue, supposedly, of the Federal Government, even though it cannot be used for our other programs. So it is masking the deficit.

Sure, we have a balanced budget using funny numbers. Or we have a surplus this year, at the end of this month, using funny numbers, but the American people ought to deserve the truth. We talk about truth from the President, let us tell them the truth here.

In fact, I remember when our Republican colleagues were not in the majority that there was a bill that they were talking about that would remove the Social Security Trust Fund from the budget. I agree with that. In fact, why do they not bring that bill up tomorrow? They could do it without committee meetings or committee hearings. They have done that so often this year with bills anyway. We can bring a bill up that removes the Social Security receipts from the Federal budget and we will have actual honest budgeting.

That would be a great bill, and I would hope that we would have a majority on each side to pass it, and the Senate, and send it on to the President. Maybe that is the honesty we need to have on ourselves and to say let us be honest with the American people about the real Federal budget deficit, or the Federal debt.

We talk about a surplus this year. The economy is good. More people are paying taxes, welfare rolls are down, and that is great, but it is masking the Federal deficit for this year because of Social Security receipts. It is not honest budgeting and we ought to fix it. I am saying that as a minority member because I cannot bring up a bill on the floor of the House, but my Republican colleagues can, and so they ought to do that.

I have town hall meetings, like everybody else does, and I have heard even my Republican colleagues and leadership about how they want to safeguard Social Security first and to pay down the debt. I agree with that. Why do we not do that? Why do we not give a tax cut? They say, well, we are going to give two-thirds to Social Security. That is not the case. That is smoke and mirrors, because that money, until we actually have an honest Federal budget, that money is Social Security. That money is Social Security receipts that is being paid for by employees and employers so they will have a retirement income. Maybe not enough to buy them a Cadillac but maybe enough to buy them a used Chevy when they retire.

Social Security was established 60 years ago after our Great Depression to combat poverty and, most importantly, to protect the elderly. Today, two-thirds of our elderly rely on Social Security to keep them out of poverty when they retire. It is estimated that 44 million workers and their families across the country receive Social Security benefits. Knowing the vital role it plays in our lives and many Americans, how can we even consider risking its future?

We have this surplus, the first one on an annual basis since 1969, although, again, it is masked. In 1969, we did not include Social Security receipts into the Federal budget. Sometime in the seventies, Congress did that to mask the Federal deficit. And now, because we have that, that is the first step we ought to make instead of giving tax cuts, even with smoke and mirrors by saying two-thirds is going to the Social Security, because it is not. Every penny we take out is taking away from the Social Security Trust Fund.

In 1993, we recognized that the financial solvency of Social Security would be a major challenge. And that is when we were in the majority, by the way. We also recognized that in order to protect its financial security we had to balance the budget. Fortunately, today, we are closer to that balanced budget and are, hopefully, heading in the right direction. But to say that we have a surplus and so let us go shopping is really outrageous.

And that is, I think, the truth and honesty that we are worried about in our country. We need to have truth and honesty on the floor of this House and when we are talking to our constituents and the American people about what is being done with their tax dollars and these budget gimmicks that we are living with today.

According to my Republican colleagues, we have a surplus. Does that mean we can then provide tax cuts while at the same time continuing to borrow from Social Security, which is what we are doing? I am not a mathematician, but I know that if we borrow money, it is because we do not have that money left over to pay our bills. So we are continuing to borrow from Social Security.

In my district, the average income is a little over $20,000 a year. Few of them will benefit from the proposed tax cuts, but many of them would be devastated if they lost their retirement income in Social Security. Let us not kid these people. Let us not say that we are safeguarding Social Security with two-thirds of this imaginary surplus, because every penny of that is Social Security money masked and it is hidden. Again, I think we need to have some truth in taxation, truth in tax cutting, and we have a responsibility to save Social Security first.

We have a responsibility to continue our efforts for a balanced budget. We have no right to risk the retirement future not only of my father, who is 83 years old, but also of the generation who are 50, and 40 today, or the generation of individuals who are 30 and 40 who are paying into Social Security not only for their parents and their grandparents but also for their income so they will not be destitute when they retire. This means putting 100 percent of this surplus into the Social Security Trust Fund.

I remember my colleagues on the other side agreeing that their first priority, again, was to save Social Security. Well, now we hear, and we do not know what the bill may say until the bill comes out of the Committee on Ways and Means, but now they are saying, well, it is our first priority, that two-thirds of this will go to Social Security. It is not two-thirds of it. All of it should go to Social Security because it is Social Security receipts that they are giving back as tax cuts.

Again, what worries me is that in the year 2020 or 2029, when we say we will run out of money, we may have to reduce Social Security payments in 2020. I wonder how many people will look back at 1998 and say if the Republican Members of Congress had made some financially correct decisions, then we would not be in the shape we are today. I do not want to wait until 2020, because I may not be here, and neither will the gentleman from New Jersey, and, frankly, most Members of Congress may not be.

We need to make some reasonable decisions today and this week and before October. And again I call on my colleagues, instead of worrying about tax cuts, and I would like to have a tax cut, I would like to get my constituents a tax cut. That would be great. There are some things in that bill, I have heard, that actually is a bill that I introduced to give tax reductions for people who pay their insurance premiums when their employer may or may not provide insurance, may not provide their whole insurance premium. I would like to see that happen, but I would like to see it without jeopardizing Social Security, and that is what I worry that my colleagues on the Republican side are doing. They are willing to take the money and run and mask this deficit in smoke and mirrors, and that is what I worry about.

If we see that they are committed to putting Social Security at risk, they are playing with the lives of those individuals who have already paid into the system. Americans pay into the program and they have the right to rely on that for their retirement. Our first priority should be to strengthen Social Security and protect its solvency. We cannot do this without a real balanced budget. And I say a real one, not one that is using Social Security receipts to mask the budget deficit.

I am proud that this year, for the first time since the 1970s, we actually will have a balanced budget. But, again, it is not a balanced budget. There is no surplus until we not consider Social Security receipts. Again, I ask where that bill is.

I saw a poll that was mentioned today in Congress Daily that said 41 percent of the people surveyed would prefer to put all surplus funds into the Social Security Trust Fund. Another 28 percent would pay off the Federal debt. So 41 and 28, and only 23 percent favored using the money for tax cuts. But, again, when we ask another question and say, okay, wait a minute, if we have a surplus and two-thirds of the surplus goes to Social Security do you support it then? That question was badly worded because they did not say it is not real surplus, it is Social Security receipts that is causing that surplus and it is not honest budgeting.

So this poll our colleagues may be relying on may get a surprise when they see ''the rest of the story'', as Paul Harvey says; that over 70 percent of the American people want Social Security saved first and then pay down the deficit.

We have a $5 trillion debt that has been built up over the last 50 years, and yet we are not going to pay any part of that on the deficit. Again, we can only provide our own experiences in the real world, whether it is the gentleman's own personal life or the business that I help run. If we had a good year, we tried to pay off some of our equipment that we had borrowed on. Same thing. If we have a real surplus, let us safeguard Social Security first and then let us start paying down that $5 trillion plus debt that exploded in the 1980s when Congress gave tax cuts and increased spending at the same time. Bad fiscal management.

Let us do not make that same mistake in 1998 and try to have our cake and icing before we actually take care of the meat and potatoes of people's security in their retirement.

With that, I thank my colleague. I see my colleague from the Midwest is here, and I know it is good tonight to be able to talk about this, but I will be glad to thank my colleague for yielding the time to me.

Mr. PALLONE. Let me first thank the gentleman from Texas for the comments that he made. I would like to yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin, but let me, if I can, comment briefly on what the gentleman from Texas said, because I think it is so important.

The gentleman stressed how we were so successful and it took so long to get to the Balanced Budget Act, which was passed last year, and I think it is, in part, because of that and because we are not creating more deficits that our economy continues to be strong. Because I believe very strongly, I do not know what economists I can cite for it, but I am sure there is a lot of commentary to suggest that as we continued to build these deficits in the last 10 or 20 years, it had a negative impact on the economy. I think that a good part of the reason why the economy is doing well is because the Balanced Budget Act was passed and we are not creating more deficits.

But we have to go further with this because the bottom line is that we still have this money that is owed to the Social Security Trust Fund. And when that has to be paid back, and it has to be paid back with interest, the money has to come from somewhere, and I am concerned. And the gentleman talked about a good economy. We have to deal with this problem about how to pay back this money over the long term, which really has not been addressed yet.

In fact, if the economy gets worse, future generations may have to pass a tax increase to make sure they are paying the money back to the Social Security Trust Fund for the benefits to be there in 10, 20, 30 years when the need arises. What are the consequences if we do not have the money to pay back? And there may not be the will to pass a tax increase to pay for that in a few years. Then what happens to the benefits? They may not be there. They may cut back on the benefits as an alternative.

So this is really crucial in terms of where this Social Security program goes. We need to put that surplus in there to make sure that we are paying back this borrowed money, otherwise it may not be there for future generations.

I think the gentleman made the point well when he said that this is the time to think about it, when the economy is good, and not to just go head over hog in dealing with some tax relief program that puts us further into debt and does not solve the Social Security problem. So I just wanted to thank the gentleman again for that input.

I would like to yield now to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND).

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Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from New Jersey for yielding.

I want to commend both of my colleagues here tonight for staying this evening and talking about an issue that is incredibly important for the future of the country. We are at a pivotal moment as far as fiscal policy is concerned as a Nation. This time of year when it comes down to budget crunch time and the passing of the 13 appropriations bills, some crazy things happen. Although I am a new Member, I have had a chance to live through one budget cycle already and it is very discouraging to hear some of the comment, some of the talk that is happening, especially what might occur tomorrow in the Committee on Ways and Means, the tax-writing committee in this House, in regards to the tax cut and how that tax cut is going to be paid for.

When I was running for Congress and wanted to serve and represent the people in western Wisconsin, I made a

promise to them then that I was going to be a fiscal watchdog, that I was going to keep an eye on their tax dollars and try to make fiscally responsible decisions. One of the proudest moments I have had so far as a freshman in this 105th Congress was the hard work that all of us put in, a lot of Members on both sides of the aisle, in negotiating a good bipartisan balanced budget agreement that we were finally able to come to agreement on last year that set a good blueprint for the next five years on fiscal decisions and tax policy in this country. It amazes me as a new Member that no sooner is the ink dry on those type of agreements that there are proposals out there that would virtually violate all the hard work and all the effort that went into reaching that agreement. That is what is coming up right now with this tax cut proposal. I think it could be incredibly harmful for the country.

Mr. Speaker, let me just amplify a few important points that the gentleman from New Jersey and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) were talking about earlier. First of all, and the American people get this. The people back home on the main streets in Wisconsin, they get this. There is no budget surplus, not unless we are going to continue with the fraud and the tricky accounting procedure that has been perpetrated on the American people over the past few years about robbing from the Social Security trust fund in order to finance other government operations or tax cuts within the budget. They understand that. That is why they get a kick when I am back home talking about fiscal issues, they get a kick about all this talk about budget surpluses for the next 10, 15 years or so. They all know that there is this robbery going on with the Social Security trust fund. We need to take that off-budget, we need to set that money aside to anticipate the baby boomer generation that is going to start retiring early next century and we need to stop these budget accounting games that are going on right now. They find it funny that there is all this talk about a surplus. They are very supportive of protecting that trust fund in order to bolster and shore up the Social Security system.

It is amazing that the proponents, the advocates of this $80 billion or so tax cut that is going to work its way through the Committee on Ways and Means are admitting that what they are going to do is finance at least part of that tax cut by continuing to rob from the Social Security trust fund. That is just plain wrong. It is misguided policy. But at least they are acknowledging the fact that they are going to do that. They are up-front with the American people. I guess that is what elections are all about, surrounding issues such as this.

Another point that the gentleman from New Jersey already raised, that is, that the Social Security trust fund is there, not only to protect that and if we can move it off-budget, that is great, but by moving it off-budget, what we would in essence be doing, starting to pay back the $5.5 trillion national debt that has been accumulated throughout the many years of this republic. There is a golden opportunity that we face right now in order to do that, in order to get the trust fund off-budget and start going to work on paying off that $5.5 trillion national debt. It is an amazing price tag that we pay every year on just interest payments on that national debt. It is the third largest spending program in the Federal budget of roughly $250, $260 billion every year going to pay the interest payments on our national credit card for this $5.5 trillion in debt.

We face a great opportunity to do right with our senior citizens in the country, by protecting the Social Security system, but also by doing right for our children and grandchildren and future generations by starting to tackle this $5.5 trillion national debt, rather than trying to pass some election year tax cut gimmick. Because everyone knows that in an election year, people love to hear about tax cuts. But hopefully the American people are going to see through this, I am confident they are, because they already get the budget gimmick that is going on with the trust fund already and they are going to say no. They are going to agree with the President in his State of the Union address and what he has said consistently from day one on this issue, that is, not a new nickel, not a new dime for any new programs or any new tax cuts until we first shore up the Social Security system. I think that is a very wise and prudent policy.

Finally, the third point I want to raise, and again the gentleman from New Jersey touched on this, is that there is no guarantee that we are even going to see this surplus materialize over the next five or 10 or 15 years as CBO is attempting to calculate right now. It is very hard to calculate with any accurate projection what the fiscal numbers are going to look like a couple of months from now, let alone five or 10 years. When you wake up, America, and start taking a look around us and the international financial crisis that we are facing right now, I think that this highlights the concern that many economists have in this country that things can slow down dramatically as far as economic growth and productivity in this country because of the impact of the financial crisis in Asia and in Russia and in eastern Europe and the domino effect that that might have. We are seeing some very disturbing signs now in Latin America and in South America. All this is going to have an impact on the U.S. domestic economy as well. One-third of the growth that we have experienced over the past few years in this country has been export-related. If those markets dry up because of the financial crisis in those countries, that is going to have a tremendous slowing effect. The revenue projections are going to get thrown way off. But if we this year in an attempt to please voters in an election year try to pass this tax cut gimmick, then we are locked in on that. Everyone knows it is going to be virtually impossible to have to increase revenues at some later date to make up for a shortfall. We may have a repeat of what happened during the early 1980s. Our memory is young enough to remember what happened then when the Reagan administration came in and promised huge tax cuts that did pass in the first year of his administration, but the problem with that economic package was those tax cuts were not offset in the Federal budget. In fact, spending increased, primarily in defense-related projects. When you have a shortfall in revenues because of the tax cuts and an increase in spending, that led to the annual structural deficits that happened throughout the 1980s, early 1990s and now fortunately in this administration we have had six consecutive years of deficit reduction, we are heading in the right direction, we are starting to make the corner when it comes to true fiscal responsibility and doing right with the Social Security program, having a chance to pay back the national debt.

I read the other day that roughly 83 percent of the entire national Federal debt that we have today, the $5.5 trillion, roughly 83 percent of that was accumulated during the 1980s and early 1990s. This is a relatively new phenomenon in our Nation's history that we are laden with this very heavy national debt, we are paying this exorbitant national interest rate every year in the Federal budget, $250 billion every year in the budget to help finance the national debt. If we go down this road again, if we are going to be willing to take our chances with the economy with so-called surpluses and projected surpluses over the next five and 10 years, we could very easily find ourselves slipping back into those annual structural deficits again. That would be disastrous.

Two of the most credible voices when it comes to monetary and fiscal policy in this country today, Secretary Rubin of the Treasury Department and Alan Greenspan, Chairman Greenspan of the Federal Reserve, are in agreement on this issue. Both of them are on record. Chairman Greenspan and Secretary Rubin were just on Capitol Hill again today but both of them are on record as saying we need to be extremely cautious in how we deal with this so-called budget surplus. Obviously Secretary Rubin is in agreement with the President when he says no new tax cuts, no new spending coming out of the surplus until we first protect the Social Security program. Chairman Greenspan has reiterated time and time again when asked by Members of Congress in the Senate and the House what would be the best use of the surplus, and he said, ''Let me tell you what you shouldn't do.'' This was about a month and a half

ago when he was testifying on Capitol Hill. ''What you shouldn't do is start spending the so-called surplus on any new programs or any new tax cuts before that surplus materializes.'' That was a point he has emphasized again and again and again. In fact, he is on record as saying the best use of any surplus, if you call it a surplus, is to start paying down this $5.5 trillion national debt, because of the economic activity that it is going to generate, the increased investment in capital, the increased production we are going to get out of the American workers by investment activity because it is going to lead, he said, to a lowering of long-term interest rates by the Federal Reserve. That ultimately is the big tax cut that everyone is going to benefit from. If we can maintain fiscal discipline, if we can continue reducing the deficit and move the trust fund off-budget, start paying back the $5.5 trillion national debt, that is going to give confidence in our financial markets, it is going to give confidence in the Federal Reserve Board to lead them to reduce long-term interest rates even further which is going to be a boon to the economy with increased investment and productivity, but also any American that has a credit card, that has to make house payments or car payments, are going to realize savings because of reduced interest rates. That is really where we should be going with our fiscal policy in this body, not jeopardizing the future of the Social Security program and the future of our children by hoping these surpluses are going to materialize. That would be disastrous.

Finally, let me just comment on some feedback that I received from the constituents in western Wisconsin who are very fiscally conservative. That is why I have so much fun representing them, because I come from the same cloth, I come from the tradition of Senator Bill Proxmire who was a fiscal hawk in the Senate for decades before that term was in vogue, before anyone was real concerned about deficits and Federal spending. I did a survey earlier this year asking my constituents what they think would be a wise use of the so-called budget surplus. The response was overwhelming, over 4,000 people responding on this simple survey back in the district. Over 80 percent of them, of my constituents said before we spend a nickel on a new program, before we have a nickel go to a tax cut, let us first shore up Social Security and start paying down the national debt. That was a very loud, a very resounding statement that the people at least in Wisconsin were sending to this representative in this body. I would hope that Members now pushing for this tax cut wake up and finally get that message from the rest of the American people because I do not think Wisconsin is all that different from what the average working person in this country is thinking in regards to these so-called surpluses.

Mr. PALLONE. Let me say to the gentleman that what he said about Wisconsin is certainly true in New Jersey. I had over 20 town meetings, forums during the August break. Particularly senior citizens are very much aware of the fact that we do not have a surplus because we are borrowing from Social Security and feel the same way, along the same lines that you have articulated. The other thing I wanted to say and I think is very important that you raised which really has not come up from what I have heard from the Committee on Ways and Means, certainly not from the Republicans who are pushing for this tax cut, is that we not only have to worry about the Social Security money that has to be paid back but we also have this huge national debt that was accumulated over the years. A lot of people are not aware of the fact that it is only in this one year that we are balancing the budget. We still have to pay back this debt with interest for all those years. So even for those who feel that we should not spend this surplus on a tax cut because of what is owed to Social Security, there might be just as many hopefully that think that we should not be spending it because we have to pay back the national debt. Both of those are very legitimate reasons that you have pointed out.

Mr. KIND. Just another point in regards to the Social Security program. What we are going to hear is that we are just borrowing a little bit from the Social Security trust fund, that roughly 10 percent of the $80 billion tax cut would be financed from the Social Security trust fund. What that means is basically we are going to be collecting payroll taxes from hard-working men and women throughout the country. We are going to be taking those payroll taxes from them and redistributing it into the pockets of selected Americans through this tax cut. It just seems ridiculous to have a tax cut package that will do this. Even if we were to take the entire Social Security trust fund off-budget and not touch any of that money and could stop borrowing from it, it is still not going to solve the long-term challenge that we face with the Social Security program. So even a 10 percent drain from the trust fund is going to make it even more difficult to preserve Social Security well into the future. It is making our job all the harder when we take on the almost daunting challenges that we are going to be facing in the very near future and, that is, trying to find some long-term fixes to preserve the Social Security program. That is another reason why I think this tax cut is misguided. Even though it is just a little bit coming out of the trust fund, even a little bit is going to make it a lot more difficult for us to do right with the Social Security program, again to do right with the seniors in this country and future generations who would like to see that program still existing when they become eligible.

Mr. PALLONE. I would like to just develop a little of what you just said. That is, the way that we pay for Social Security, which is really not a progressive tax. I mean, it is basically a tax that wage earners pay at a certain rate. If you have to rely on that as a means of raising this revenue, we know that a few years ago, I think it was in the 1970s that the FICA, which is the tax that you pay on your earnings that pays for Social Security, was actually increased in order to generate more money that would be needed because it was estimated that we need more money for future beneficiaries. If we five or 10 years from now have to raise that FICA tax again in order to correct the problem that this money has not been paid back, not only would we be raising taxes again in order to have enough money for Social Security, but again it is not a progressive way of financing the program, as you say, paid for really on the backs of working people, strictly working people. That is not really a fair way to go about it.

I think it is also true that we are hearing all these proposals now about not having the Social Security COLA, raising the age before you get benefits. The effort to try to do those kinds of things will be increased. The pressure will be increased because the money will not be there.

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We have not figured out a way to pay this money back. This possible surplus that is being generated now is really the only thing that is on the table that has a real possibility of paying some of this money back that has been borrowed. All the other alternatives that I can think of are not very desirable.

So I appreciate your bringing that up as well.

I think that we probably talked enough about this tonight, but I know we are going to be talking about it a lot more over the next few days, and I am just hopeful that we can get not only most, if not all, the Democrats to support this idea of Social Security first and not implementing this tax cut until the Social Security Trust Fund has been paid back, but maybe get some Republicans as well.

Mr. KIND. If the gentleman would yield, let me just raise final concern on this subject is that there has been a lot of talk here in the halls of Congress lately that the $80 billion tax cut is only the beginning, that early next year they are going to come back and take a look at it, and instead of just taking 10 percent of the Social Security Trust Fund, it is going to a hundred percent of the Social Security Trust Fund with a massive tax cut. And if we go that route and suddenly there is a slowdown in the economy and those surpluses do not materialize, we are looking at massive Federal deficits for many years to come, and that would be a tragedy.

Mr. PALLONE. Because I think that if we do not get our point across now that this is a problem and this passes, then what is to stop it, you know, if the lesson is not learned?

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

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. NEUMANN. My only fear listening to this, most of what you said I agree with wholeheartedly, as you well know, is that this becomes very partisan, and Social Security is too important to become partisan. Many of us Republicans also feel that it is inappropriate to use Social Security money for tax cuts, and I think it is important rather than get into a partisan bickering situation that we, you know, instead of me taking the next hour and coming back and bashing Democrats, this is not about Democrats and Republicans, it is about what is happening in Social Security in our country.

Many of us on our side of the aisle feel that it is inappropriate to use Social Security money. We support tax cuts, and I suspect that if we ask you if we could lower taxes by reducing wasteful government spending or by utilizing a portion of the surpluses from the general fund, not Social Security, as we are also paying down the debt, that that probably might be something that we on both sides of the aisle might find to be acceptable. Many of the Republicans do feel very strongly, as you are suggesting here tonight, that it is inappropriate to use Social Security surpluses for tax cuts, and I think you will see that unfold.

Mr. PALLONE. No, I appreciate the gentleman.

If I could just reclaim my time briefly?

I wanted to make it clear, emphatically clear, that this proposal that is before the Committee on Ways and Means is essentially coming from the Republican leadership, and I know that there are many Republicans, and I heard you speak this morning on this subject, that share the viewpoint that we have been expressing here that we should not have this tax cut until the Social Security money is paid back and until and that the really is not a surplus.

So I appreciate your comments.

I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND).

Mr. KIND. I do not want to leave tonight leaving the impression that we are against tax cuts per se. I mean we are for responsible tax cuts that could be offset within the Federal budget. That seems to be a more fiscally responsible way of doing it.

Tax cuts are great. I am a believer in providing tax relief in this country so long as we can pay for it and find some offsets in some other areas in the budget in order to pay for it so that we have some fiscal honesty as we move forward here on up, and I appreciate my friend's remarks from Wisconsin and the position he has taken in regards to the Social Security Trust Fund as well, and it should not be a partisan issue. It really should not, and hopefully it will not be because when you take on Social Security, both parties are going to need to lock arms together on this if we are going to have any progress and do right by the American people, and that is an extremely important point, and I appreciate my friend's comments in that regard.

Mr. PALLONE. I honestly believe, and I will say this now, that I think that the opportunity does exist over the next few days to get a number of our Republican colleagues to join us on this and to defeat this effort to try to spend the alleged surplus. But of course I have to say that it is true that the idea is coming from the Republican leadership, and that is why so many of us on the Democratic side are speaking out against it.

Mr. NEUMANN. If the gentleman would yield, I would hope that we would also lock arms to prevent additional spending in the same way we are talking about the tax cuts here because, as I understand it, we also have a proposal coming at us to do what is called emergency spending, and emergency spending means effectively we are going outside the spending caps and just starting new programs.

So I would hope that we are equally committed to controlling emergency or spending beyond the caps so that if we do have true emergencies out there, as I know exists in some areas of the ag in particular, the ag industry, I would hope that we would find other programs that are less important that we eliminate so that we can pay for or reprioritize the dollars to these other programs rather than just going and spending more money because that new spending also is Social Security money. If we just go and spend more money, that comes out of Social Security too.

So I hope we have the equal commitment here to both hold the line on spending and hold the line on using Social Security money for tax cuts.

Mr. PALLONE. I appreciate the gentleman's comments, and if I could say, and out of no disrespect, that we are going to yield back the balance of our time and you can start your hour so we can go home.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND DISBELIEF OF POLLS ON TV SAYING 60% OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. NEUMANN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. NEUMANN. Mr. Speaker, I do want to continue the conversation that is started down here on the floor tonight, and I want to talk specifically about Social Security, and I want to talk about both sides' commitment to Social Security, but before I do there is something that has bothered me a lot during the last few days here as the Clinton situation is unfolding, and that is I keep seeing these polls on TV that 60 percent of the people support the President. And I frankly cannot quite figure that out because I have read the information, and I just honestly do not believe that 60 percent of the American people find what HAS happened here to be acceptable.

So in our own office we did some counting today, and we have had 1500 contacts to our office either over the phone or E-mail or letters in a short four-day period of time. This is the largest number of contacts we have ever had in our office for any issue. The calls are 82 percent to ask for the President to resign or that he should be impeached. The calls are right now 1294 suggesting that we ask for his resignation or call for his impeachment and 281 that basically say get off his back and forget about it and get on with stuff.

So wherever those polls are coming from, I would like the American people and I would like my colleagues to know what is going on in my office. In my office it is about 8 and a half to 1 against the President at this point.

And when I found these numbers this afternoon, I started asking some of my friends what exactly is the situation in your office, and I am just bringing you back factual information. Every single one I talked to had the same sorts of numbers in their office as what we have in ours.

So I frankly do not understand where the poll numbers are coming from. I know there is a lot of people that feel both ways in this issue out there in America, and I know my colleagues feel differently depending on where you are at on this particular issue. But I do think it is important that we report back some of the things that are happening in our congressional offices and what we are hearing at the grass roots level from our constituents.

So I thought it would be important that we at least start with that particular piece of information, and, going on from there, I would like to ask all my colleagues a question tonight, and I think it puts this whole Social Security discussion into perspective.

If President Clinton had testified truthfully 90 percent of the time, so 90 percent of everything he said was absolutely true, would that make his testimony under oath okay and acceptable?

And I suspect that most of my colleagues would answer that question: No. If he testified 90 percent of the time truthfully and 10 percent of the time untruthfully, that would not be acceptable.

Now what does that have to do with Social Security?

We currently have a plan out here called a 90 10 plan where 90 percent of the Social Security money coming in, over and above what we are paying back out to seniors—

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOK). The gentleman will suspend. As the Chair reiterated on September 10, 1998, Members engaging in debate must