

We have seen problems of Michigan schoolchildren coming down with hepatitis A as a result of importing of strawberries from Mexico. We have seen a variety of problems with pesticides. Pesticides that are banned for use in this country still are manufactured here, sold to Central American and Latin American countries, including Mexico. Then they are applied on crops and sold back into the United States, pesticides that we have made illegal because we know they are unhealthy for consumers.

Promise number four was that NAFTA would help us deal with the illegal drug problem. One former drug enforcement official called NAFTA a deal made in narco heaven. In fact, that Customs report where he said that has not been released to the American public. In spite of repeated attempts by me and others to get that report public, they will not release it, in large part because it contains so much bad news about drugs coming across the Mexican-U.S. border. The DEA estimates that the drug trade is bringing in, coming across the border, what amounts to over \$10 billion a year.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, promise five, that NAFTA would not reduce the safety of our highways, again has been an abysmal failure. Fewer than 1 percent of the 3.3 million Mexican trucks coming into the United States each year are inspected. For 5,000 trucks per day across the Texas-Mexican border, only two to five inspectors are on duty during weekdays, fewer on weekends. Governor Bush has not done his job, the U.S. Government has not done its job. Then in the year 2000 those Mexican trucks will be allowed to come into all 48 States.

Mr. Speaker, NAFTA has been a failure. We should consider repealing or markedly revising that agreement.

TRUTH IN BUDGETING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleagues this morning: How can the budget be in surplus if the debt went up last year by \$109 billion? Indeed, how can the budget be in surplus if the debt is projected to go up another \$101 billion this year, and another \$90 billion the year after that?

Did anyone question these numbers, numbers which were released on January 29 by the Congressional Budget Office? Mr. Speaker, is there a single Member in this body who can deny that the national debt will continue to rise until the year 2005? It is interesting that we have become too careless with our language, or perhaps crafty, that the next few years of budget surplus will result in billions and billions of dollars more in debt over the next 6 years.

The reason for this situation, of course, is the social security trust fund. The temporary surpluses in the social security trust fund are masking the true size of the deficit.

That is why I am introducing "The Honest Balanced Budget Act of 1999." The intent of this legislation is simple: to guarantee honesty in budgeting. The social security trust fund surplus should not be used to fund other programs. It should not be used to mask our Nation's deficit.

Added to that is the irony that this very same fund is scheduled to go bankrupt soon after the baby boomers start to retire, so this trust fund, which will soon go bankrupt, is now in surplus, hiding the true state of the Federal budget.

Rarely has a government program caused so much confusion, misled so many people, and bedeviled so many policymakers. What is the lesson we should draw from this situation? Number one, our budget problems, despite all the talks about surplus, are far from over. Entitlement spending is still on auto pilot, and still growing by leaps and bounds.

Medicare is still projected to go bankrupt not long after that. Social Security is still projected to go bankrupt not long after that, also. The national debt, which is the sum total of all the earlier budget deficits we have been running for so many years, the national debt is still at \$5.6 trillion and climbing.

This may be disappointing news to some, politically unwise to bring up to others, but it is the truth, the reality, the actual state of the situation. That is why we should pass legislation to require truth in budgeting, to require Members of Congress to acknowledge these facts and to require the media to point them out.

We have been very zealous in cutting welfare spending and reducing the size of our government's bureaucracy. We should keep up our efforts and continue to cut unnecessary spending. Whatever surplus we may have is the result of lower taxes, controlled government spending and our balanced budget.

What would happen, Mr. Speaker, if the economy should start to falter? How would that affect the budget process if the surplus were to shrink, keeping in mind that the true state of our budget surplus is dubious at best?

That is why I hope my colleagues will join with me by cosponsoring The Honest Balanced Budget Act, so we can bring truth in budgeting finally into the process.

THE DEBT AND AMERICA'S CURRENT BUDGET SITUATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk also about

debt and how we can get rid of it, and about our current budget situation.

We are getting better, which is the good news. In 1992 it seemed like we would never have anything but rising yearly deficits contributing to a larger and larger national debt for the rest of our lives and beyond. But we have turned that around.

We have seen the earlier deficits go down steadily since then and we have now even heard talk of actually running a surplus. The gentleman who preceded me is absolutely correct, we are not there yet, because we are still borrowing money from the social security trust fund and counting that as income, but we are getting closer. Even without counting social security, the debt this year was \$30 billion, which is a lot less than it was 5 or 6 years ago. If we maintain the path of fiscal discipline we can get to the point where we begin to run surpluses.

What I would like to talk about today is taking that one step further, not just begin to run surpluses, but actually begin to pay down the debt. That debt is pushing towards \$6 trillion, and has a devastating effect on our economy. We should get to the point where we can start paying down that debt to do a lot of positive things: to reduce interest rates and also stop the amount of interest we have to pay.

I have a couple of charts to illustrate this point. The first chart talks about how much money we spent on the debt. There are a lot of crushing needs that we have in government: defense, education, infrastructure, Medicare, social security. But this shows that one of the biggest items that every year out of the budget is paid is interest. Two hundred forty-three billion dollars, or 14 percent of our budget, is paid on interest, which does nothing for us. All it does is it meets our obligations on the debt.

To the extent we can reduce that debt, we can reduce the amount of money that we have to spend on interest and free up more money for tax cuts or for spending on other programs that are necessary, like national defense or Medicare. That is a huge blow to our budget. Every \$100 million we can spend down on this debt will reduce this crushing figure we have to face and pay every year.

This goes beyond the effect it has on government. Paying down the national debt will have a profound effect on the lives of individual citizens, as the second chart will show. We have achieved a record level of home ownership in this country, and that is great, but it is still only about 60 or 65 percent.

We need to go even higher, and those of us who are homeowners would also like to see the monthly payment reduced. If we can pay down the debt, the government will not be the single largest borrower in this country. We will not be out there gobbling up all the money and driving up interest rates. We can actually reduce interest rates. What this basically means is that we will save in our mortgages.