

SUPPORT IMPACT AID

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for the Impact Aid program. Earlier today, along with 30 bipartisan cosponsors, we introduced my Government Reservation Accelerated Development for Education, or GRADE-A, bill from the 107th Congress.

This bill was intended to fulfill an obligation of the Federal Government made in 1950 when Congress passed, and President Truman signed into law, the Impact Aid program.

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Impact aid was created by Congress recognizing the obligation of the Federal Government to assist school districts and communities that experience a loss in their local property tax due to the presence of the Federal Government. Between 1950 and 1969, the impact aid program was fully funded by the Congress. But since that time, the funding level has not kept pace with the amount required to cover the Federal Government's obligation.

As we prepare for war and deploy troops overseas, I can think of no better time to support our military personnel and their families. This support should begin with ensuring our soldiers that their children are receiving a quality education. There are 15 million school children in this Nation who are eligible for impact aid. Enrolled in one of 1,331 eligible school districts, these schoolchildren depend on their schools to provide them with an education, and their parents depend on the schools to act as a community of support when they are deployed in our Nation's defense.

In my congressional district, 36 percent of all students attending North Chicago's School District 187 are impact aid military children. School District 187 spends an average of \$6,500 per pupil on education. And herein lies the problem. The North Chicago School District receives only \$3,250 per pupil from the Federal Government for their military impact aid children. With over 1,400 impact aid students, District 187 finds itself over \$4.5 million short in funding levels. This shortfall creates a huge financial strain on the school district overall, decreasing the quality of education for every child in that school district.

Mr. Speaker, the quickest way to take a soldier or sailor's mind off their mission is to have them worrying about their children's education back home. Kids from military families come from some of the hardest working, most patriotic families, but the schools they attend sometimes face bankruptcy because they lack the tax revenues from the military housing where the kids come from. We need to fund our Nation's schools. Impact aid honors our commitment to military

families and families of Native American Indians. It guarantees those families who serve to protect our freedom that they are in turn protected by the Federal Government.

Our Constitution commands that the first job of the Federal Government is to "provide for the common defense." As we improve the pay and benefits of our men and women in uniform, we must also support their kids and the local schools they attend. This may take many years to accomplish, but the time is now, especially now, to support schools that educate the children whose parents wear our Nation's uniform. Let us recognize our duty to America's children and to our military and support the GRADE-A bill.

BLUE DOG COALITION ON THE FEDERAL DEBT

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

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, this week the Blue Dog Coalition expressed our deep concern over the announcement that the Federal Government had reached the debt limit just 9 months after increasing it by \$450 billion.

The Federal Government hitting the debt limit so soon after raising it by so much merely validates our concern of the fiscal policies we are now following. Due to the debt limit being reached, the Department of the Treasury announced it will dip into Federal retirement programs to circumvent the debt limit, an action for which House Republicans severely criticized Secretary of Treasury Bob Rubin for taking in 1996. Less than 6 years ago, 225 of my Republican friends voted to soundly reprimand and prohibit then-Secretary Rubin from taking precisely the actions announced this week by Secretary Snow. The silence of the Republicans in Congress about the announcement made by the Bush administration stands in stark contrast to the reaction from many of my same Republican colleagues to Secretary Rubin's action.

A 1995 resolution, authored by a then anti-deficit Republican majority, insisted that a balanced budget would ensure lower interest rates, a faster rate of economic growth, increased national wealth, increased rates of savings and investment, faster growth in the capital stock, higher productivity, and improved trade balances. I agreed with my Republican colleagues 6 years. I wish they agreed with me today.

Now, we can disagree about what has put us in the deficit hole today, but we should be able to agree that digging the hole deeper is ill-advised. Yet the President's budget proposes policies that would increase the deficit by more than \$2 trillion over the next 8 years. According to the White House Office of Management and Budget, the tax cut signed by the President and new proposals in his budget are responsible for 45 percent of the \$7.9 trillion deteriora-

tion in our budget outlook. Now, that is 45 percent. Fifty-five percent is the recession and the war and other things that are occurring today. Not the upcoming war.

The suggestion that we will be able to grow our way out of the deficit was contradicted in testimony by Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan earlier this month. Even under the most optimistic, dynamic estimates of the President's tax cut, large deficits will continue as far the eye can see. And the projections of the economic benefits of tax cuts ignore the economic harm caused by government borrowing to finance deficits, higher interest rates, and lower investments in American businesses.

Now, contrary to some suggestions, my concern about the budget deficit has always applied to spending, increased spending, as well as unfunded tax cuts. Even before many of my House Republican colleagues, I volunteered to help hold the line on spending at the level last year requested by the President. I hope the President, Mr. President, that you will send to Congress a list of pork-barrel items that you believe should be eliminated from the funding bill endorsed by the House leadership and recently signed into law. If you do, I will support those spending cuts. But the reality is that under the President's budget the deficit hole will be dug deeper.

Now, the rhetoric from my Republican friends about controlling spending just does not hold up to factual examination. In the 8 years since Republicans took control of the Congress, discretionary spending has increased by an average of 6.5 percent per year, compared to the previous 8 years of 1.6 percent. Those are the facts, not the rhetoric we hear on this floor every time someone stands up and questions the economic direction that we are going.

Now, some days, some of us ignore the most wasteful spending in the Federal budget, the \$332 billion collected from taxpayers simply to cover our national interest payments. This debt tax consumed a whopping 18 percent of all Federal tax dollars last year. Under the budget, the economic game plan that I hear we are going to have on the floor in 2 or 3 weeks, the debt tax will increase 50 percent in the next 5 years. A 50 percent increase in taxes, the debt tax, is what is being advocated.

Now, I do not understand the logic of that. I agreed with the President, and I do agree with the President, and I believe him to be sincere when he says this Congress should not pass on to our children and future generations our debt. That is what we are doing under the proposal that is before us today.

To my friends on this side of the aisle, there are many on this side of the aisle that are ready to reach out and accept the hand and are beginning to work and to recognize that we need a change in direction. Yes, we need to restrain spending. And, yes, we need to