

would cost us \$100 to \$200 billion. He was asked to leave the administration for his candor. Now we can't get the administration to even tell us what this war, not only the waging of it but the cost of the occupation force afterwards, is going to cost. It isn't even factored into the budget deficit.

Make no mistake, I will say this as a person who has questioned this administration's approach on foreign policy. If and when this war begins, I will join an overwhelming bipartisan majority in Congress to provide every penny necessary to wage this war successfully and bring our men and women home safely, having completed their mission. We are going to do that. It is a given. To ask the administration what this is likely to cost is not unreasonable. We went into a bidding war over the last several weeks when it came to Turkey, how much money we would send to Turkey, if they would allow us to base our troops there for an invasion of Iraq. The numbers went from \$15 billion to \$26 billion. We were bidding right and left. What is it going to cost overall?

This administration is not putting money into homeland security. This administration is not budgeting what it takes to defend America against terrorism. We are budgeting what it takes to prepare to attack in Iraq; we are not budgeting what it takes to prepare to defend in America.

When all these are put together, understand that we are headed down a perilous course with President Bush's economic policy. It is a course which, frankly, is not going to invigorate the economy; it is not going to create jobs; it will not create consumer confidence. It will create a debt and deficit at the expense of Social Security and Medicare for generations to come. We should not, in a weak moment, rally behind a President who clearly is on the wrong course when it comes to America's economy. We need to stand up and make certain that we are going to work for a sound economy, a fiscal approach that is prudent and cautious and takes into consideration the needs of America in the long term.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina). The Senator from Nevada.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent—this has been cleared with the majority—that the Democrats be entitled to 45 minutes in morning business, and the Republicans 45 minutes, because of the prayer.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

MEDICARE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise to thank my colleague from Illi-

nois for his eloquence regarding the direction of our economy and the Federal budget and the grave concern he has that I share about the looming and massive long-term debt that is accumulating by the policies of this administration.

When we look at where we are going and the fact that the entire Medicare and Social Security trust funds are currently being used to fund tax cuts geared to the very top, the very wealthiest 1 percent, and when we look at the discussions we are having in the Budget Committee, we begin to see a picture that is disturbing. Because when we ask what will happen, when we are using all of these funds for other purposes, and we know that in just a matter of a few years, the baby boomers will begin to retire en masse and they have the expectation, as they should, that Social Security and Medicare will be there for them, they have paid into the system, and we are told, when we ask, how will we afford that, how will we be able to keep that commitment, well, that assumes that Medicare and Social Security will be structured the way they are today. That assumes there will be no reform.

What is becoming clear is that reform is a code word for privatizing; that there is a real interest, a commitment and movement to privatize or eliminate Medicare and Social Security, as we know it, in the long term.

Today I wish to speak again very specifically about Medicare because I believe that is the most imminent threat because the debate that has occurred since 1965, when Medicare passed, in various forms is occurring yet again today. That is the question of whether Medicare is a big American success story, which I believe it is, or just a big Government program, which I believe this administration feels it is.

I wish to speak specifically about special interest politics versus the needs of the public, the willingness to provide tax policy that benefits only a few, rather than the middle class, and small businesses that drive our economy, as well as the fact that in Medicare, we are seeing a willingness to move the system in a way that benefits, again, special interests over the needs of all of our seniors and the disabled in our country.

On page A6 of the Washington Post this morning, there is a very disturbing article. It says: "Bush Plan a Boon to Drug Companies." The President went before the American Medical Association yesterday and spoke about his plans for Medicare, again using the word "reform," which we know now is a code word for "privatization." Reform equals privatize when we talk about this issue of Medicare. We now find that it also directly relates, once again, to special interest politics, which is very disturbing.

The second headline is: "Medicare Prescription Proposal Would Also Benefit Insurers, Analysts Say." Not the insured, not the seniors about whom we

all talk, not the disabled people about whom we all talk, but the insurance industry.

It begins:

Health care economists said the drug benefit President Bush proposed for Medicare yesterday would be a bonanza for the pharmaceutical and managed-care industries, both of which are huge donors to Republicans.

It went on to say:

Marilyn Moon, a health economist at the Urban Institute, said Bush's plan would hand tremendous negotiating power to health insurance companies.

"By making the private plans such a central part of the future of Medicare, the government is going to have to meet their demands for greater contributions to the cost of care, over and above the subsidy for prescription drugs," Moon said.

Bush's proposal is vague on many points, including the terms for insurers. Tricia Neuman, a vice president of the Kaiser Family Foundation, said the plan would have to provide a windfall for the companies—

"Would have to provide a windfall for the companies."

or too few would participate for the plan to work.

The analysts said drug companies also could be expected to reap huge profits under Bush's approach.

Huge profits under Bush's approach. We have to ask ourselves: Is that the purpose of Medicare? Is that the purpose of health care? Is it the same as purchasing a pair of tennis shoes, purchasing soup, purchasing a new shirt so that we are talking about what profit margin we have off our Medicare recipients, or is the goal to make sure we have quality health care for every senior citizen?

I believe it is our responsibility to make sure this is a streamline system with as few dollars as possible going into administration and that the dollars should go directly to health care for our seniors, not into huge profits. We welcome profits in many areas. We need profits in our economy. We want businesses to be successful. But when we are talking about Medicare, we have a different priority in what we need to do to help our seniors make sure they have care.

To continue with the article:

Bruce C. Vladeck, who was President Clinton's head of the federal agency that runs Medicare, said Bush's plan "strikes me as the kind of proposal that pharmaceutical companies would write if they were writing their own bill."

These are the kind of comments we heard last year when we were debating prescription drug coverage and were told—in fact, we heard comments coming from staff in the House quoted in the paper as to how they were running their proposals by the pharmaceutical industry to make sure they were OK. It is clear this one is OK, and we should all be very concerned about who we are trying to help.

Continuing to quote:

"A slew of private health plans would have nowhere near the negotiating power that Medicare would have if there was national drugs benefit," said Vladeck, now a health