

economy. But we're getting stiff resistance from across the aisle. They have attacked these needed tax cut extensions and sensible spending policies.

But they offer no constructive criticism or alternative solutions. They just throw rocks and complain about our budget proposal. When they ran the Budget Committee, they couldn't even get a budget that could pass on the floor of the Senate.

We also hear complaints about Social Security. Where is their plan to grapple with the future of Social Security? Where were they when the Clinton budgets "spent" the Social Security Surplus?

As our Budget Committee chairman said this morning, this budget will treat Social Security exactly the same as past budgets. The trust fund balances are available for future benefit payments, just as they were described in the fiscal year 2000 Clinton budget, which said, "they do not consist of real economic assets that can be drawn down in the future to fund benefits." We'll keep our Social Security money in treasury bills just as we always have and in fact, are required to do by law.

I am ready to tackle the problems Social Security will face in the next several decades. I, unlike many who just complain about the problem, have spent a lot of time thinking about Social Security, particularly during my time as chairman of the Social Security subcommittee in the House. In the past, I have even drafted and introduced an option for improving the system. Very few can say that. All can complain, but few are willing to be constructive.

I hope my colleagues can look past the partisan bias and rhetoric coming from some across the aisle. We drafted in the Budget Committee a serious proposal that addresses spending levels and our economy.

I support this budget before us today because it recognizes the realities of our world, the necessity to limit spending, and the importance of creating jobs and keeping the average American on the road to economic recovery. I urge my colleagues to support the budget resolution before us.

(At the request of Mr. DASCHLE, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

• Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, as the Senate considers the fiscal year 2005 Federal budget, I want to address what I believe are the deeply misplaced priorities of the Republican budget plan and the dangerous fiscal course facing the Nation.

In 3 short years, the Nation's fiscal health has deteriorated to the point of turning a record budget surplus of \$236 billion in 2001 to a gaping projected budget deficit of \$477 billion. Instead of working to steady the country's fiscal condition, the budget plan the U.S. Senate is considering will contribute an additional \$179 billion to the Federal budget deficit over the next 5 years by permanently extending tax

cuts for the richest one percent of American taxpayers.

There is another approach. It is an approach that strengthens the fiscal integrity of the government, while addressing the pressing needs of the 40 million Americans without health insurance, ensuring the solvency of the Social Security trust fund, as well safeguarding the homeland.

On Thursday, March 4, on a party line vote, the Senate Budget Committee approved a budget that adheres too closely to the President's budget plan and sets the wrong priorities for securing the homeland, creating the conditions for job growth, and tackling the out-of-control Federal budget deficit. Under the budget plan the Senate is considering, the Federal budget deficit would actually increase \$179 billion above the Congressional Budget Office CBO baseline. To forestall a further run-up on the government's credit card, the Senate should amend the Republican budget plan by identifying a combination of spending reductions and increases in revenues that will achieve the goals of reducing deficits and strengthening the economy.

In 2001, President Bush pushed through a sweeping tax cut on the rationale that the historic budget surpluses built up during the Clinton administration justified reductions in taxes. At that time, the Federal budget was at a record budget surplus of \$236 billion and I, along with many of my colleagues in the Senate, agreed that taxes should be reduced. Now that the fiscal condition of the country has swung deep into the red, it is necessary and prudent to reevaluate permanently extending tax breaks for the highest income levels. Such an approach, in combination with focused spending discipline, could reduce the deficit that threatens the long-term fiscal health of our country.

Instead of pursuing this approach, President Bush is asking Congress to make permanent the tax cuts that have put us in this situation. Since the United States is already in red ink, obviously the money for this new distribution will require decreases in important domestic spending and borrowing from the Social Security trust fund. I believe this is a terrible idea when other pressing budget priorities are shortchanged and cut.

Our Nation's veterans are currently on year-long waiting lists to get access to VA health care, our rural hospitals and nursing homes are on the verge of closing because of inadequate Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement, our schools are struggling to stay open due to reduced budgets, and the President says we don't have the funds for South Dakota's water projects. Some may see the people affected by these cuts as "special interests." I see them as South Dakotans who should not be short-changed to provide tax cuts that overwhelmingly benefit the wealthiest one percent of Americans.

I remember when being a conservative meant living within one's means,

and that is the strategy our Nation ought to return to. President Clinton had it right when he called for a secured a balanced Federal budget—that meant we were not borrowing from Social Security, we were not creating huge new debts for future generations to pay off, we were creating millions of new jobs, and we were not jeopardizing Medicare and Social Security. Government is about priorities, and the Bush administration's budget priorities are wrong in too many instances. I will continue to do all that I can to redirect our Nation's resources to an agenda that better meets America's domestic needs and our international moral obligations.●

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. NICKLES. Madam President, we have had a good debate. I appreciate our colleagues staying this late. We have been on this bill for a little over 13 hours today. I think we have made a lot of progress. We are going to have to make a lot more progress tomorrow.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. NICKLES. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each.

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

2004 WOMEN IN SCIENCE WEEK

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, the degree to which our Nation prospers in the 21st century will depend on our abilities to develop scientific talent in our youth, to provide lifelong learning to a well-educated workforce able to embrace the rapid pace of technological change, and to raise the level of public scientific and technological literacy.

That is why I am proud to announce a very exciting series of events taking place this week in my home State of South Dakota.

We urgently need to upgrade American students' knowledge and skills across the educational spectrum, particularly in mathematics, science, and technology. Results of an international science and mathematics study conducted in 2000 indicate that "children in the United States were among the leaders in the 4th grade assessment, but by high school graduation they were almost last." Part of the problem is that many girls and young women in junior and senior high school lose interest in science and technological careers.

As we work to develop the finest scientists and engineers for the 21st century, our human resources policy must move beyond simply the supply and demand of personnel and address the composition of the science and engineering workforce. Achieving diversity throughout the ranks of the scientific and technical workforce presents a formidable challenge; the number of