

the standard farm bill we have done in years past. This is what legislating is all about. It is extremely important we work toward completing this legislation. So that is why we have the press we are having now.

I would also say, after we finish this week, we only have 4 weeks left until Thanksgiving, and then we have 2 weeks we will be out for Thanksgiving, and then, if we come back, we are going to have only 3 weeks before Christmas. We have a lot to do. I will not go through the list of what we are obligated to do, but it is a lot of stuff. I hope everyone would understand that and be thoughtful and considerate of others.

We may have to work some late nights. We may have to work some weekends. We have been very fortunate this whole year. We talked about working weekends a lot, and we have not had to do it except on a couple of occasions. The reason we have not had to do it more is because of the press of the weekend coming upon us we get our work done. That may be the case this week. I hope so. But if not, everyone should understand, if they have obligations at home, they better have some alternatives or consider missing some votes.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes within our allotment of morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I have, as the saying goes, some good news and some bad news. The good news is the budget deficit has dropped in the last year from 1.9 percent of the gross domestic product of this Nation down to 1.2 percent—a historic low level for the budget deficit. But as Members of the Senate know, the budget deficit is just a year-to-year statement of what the financial obligations are of the Federal Government. The figure that is the bad news is the debt; that is, the bills, if you will, owed by the American people to finance the cost of Government. The bad news is on September 27—a short time ago—this Congress voted to increase the debt ceiling for the United States of America from \$8.965 trillion to \$9.82 trillion.

Now a “trillion” is more money than any of us can possibly imagine, but let me break it down to what it means for every man, woman, and child in America. It means today, every man, woman, and child in America owes \$30,000 of the Federal debt—the cost of the Federal Government doing business.

So instead of passing on to our children and grandchildren the kind of prosperity and opportunity to start on a level playing field and to reach their God-given potential to achieve their dreams, we are burdening our children and grandchildren today, if we do not do anything about it, with a minimum of \$30,000 of debt.

The fact of the matter is, it is actually worse than that. As to Social Security, we understand from the Social Security trust fund, they will be running red ink by the year 2017, unless we do something about that. In other words, as to the Social Security taxes that are deducted from your paycheck and mine and everybody’s in America to help pay our share of Social Security, the money that has to be paid out will exceed the amount of money coming in as a result of those Social Security taxes by 2017, if we do not do anything about it.

In addition, Medicare is even in worse shape. By 2013, the amount of money coming in to pay for Medicare for seniors will be exceeded by the outflow of funds. So instead of being in the black and being able to sustain itself, both Social Security and Medicare are on the road to insolvency and worse.

Just when you think the story, the financial picture, could not be any worse, there comes the revelation that actually Congress is spending the current surplus for Social Security, for Medicare, for Civil Service Retirement, and the Transportation trust fund, spending money that is a surplus now and issuing debt to be paid by our children and grandchildren—in other words, funding out of the Civil Service Retirement Fund, Medicare, Social Security, and the Transportation trust fund, taking money out of that to pay the current bills of the Federal Government.

This is a dire financial circumstance that only the Federal Government could ignore. No family, no business, no one in America could run their finances this way and get by with it, except for the Federal Government because the Federal Government can continue to issue debt to borrow from surpluses in one fund to pay for bills in another. Frankly, this is a train wreck we are beginning to see in slow motion taking place right before our eyes and will be played out over the next few years, unless we act in a more fiscally responsible way right now.

The President has vetoed the State Children’s Health Insurance Program, and I want to talk about that in a minute. Thursday, I believe the House will vote on whether to override that veto and there has been a lot of mis-

conceptions about that and I wish to clarify that with my remarks.

But I want to suggest to you that before Congress votes to expand current programs, even successful programs, beyond their original scope, such as the SCHIP program, which has been enormously successful, targeted at low-income kids whose families earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to buy private health insurance—before we expand that, not by 40 percent, which I support, but by 140 percent, to cover adults in 14 States, and with a combination of waivers that can be issued by the executive branch of Government to potentially cover people up to 400 percent of the poverty level, displacing private health insurance and taking individuals who currently have health insurance and replacing it with Government—read “taxpayer”—subsidized free health care for people, families making up to \$82,000 a year—before Congress should attempt to expand programs in this sort of irresponsible manner, in my view, we ought to take a look at the programs that have been rated by the Federal Government in terms of their effectiveness and look at opportunities for cost savings there.

I think the American people do not resent paying their fair share of taxes for efficient Government and for a consensus role in what Government should be doing as opposed to the private sector. What they have a right to resent is the fact the Federal Government wastes their money and grows Government at the expense of the private sector in ways that crowd out the private sector.

I would like to suggest to my colleagues they look at a Web site called Expectmore.org. This is a Government Web site that, through the Office of Management and Budget, rates various Federal programs and agencies. What they have concluded—the Office of Management and Budget—is that out of 1,016 programs they have evaluated, 22 percent—almost a quarter of them—have been rated as ineffective or, perhaps even worse, we cannot tell whether they are working as intended—22 percent.

Only 18 percent have been rated as effective; 31 percent, moderately effective; and 29 percent, adequate. This is a miserable scorecard for the Federal Government in terms of the taxpayers’ dollars actually delivering the kind of services we should expect Government to deliver, efficient use and respectful use of the taxpayers’ dollars.

Before we talk about growing any program—even the SCHIP program—by 140 percent to cover adults and people in the upper middle class with free taxpayer-subsidized health insurance, should we not try to eliminate some of these ineffective programs that have been inconclusive in terms of the evaluation?

As it turns out, I have introduced legislation, along with some of my colleagues, designed to do this, building

on the successful sunset commission programs in Texas and elsewhere, which periodically—say every 10 years or so—take an agency and evaluate it and make the agency justify its continued existence, start with a zero-base budget and justify each and every dollar they use in order to perform that function, in order to make sure it actually is effective.

In my State of Texas, the sunset commission has been responsible for eliminating a number of different programs and saving taxpayers a lot of money. We can do the same thing for the Federal Government in Washington if Congress would merely have the will.

Another idea, another proposal I have made, along with some colleagues, is modeled off of the enormously successful Base Realignment and Closing Commission, the BRAC Commission. This, as my colleagues know, is a way for Congress to make sure we eliminate unneeded and unnecessary military installations. When trying to do it on an individualized basis, is very hard because there is always a constituency for maintaining a military base someplace, even if it is not needed by the military. But the BRAC situation is an independent commission that collects recommendations for all of the unneeded bases and presents it to Congress for an up-or-down vote. No cherry picking, no putting some in and taking some out. We have to vote on all of them up or down. That BRAC Commission has been enormously successful in eliminating unnecessary, unneeded, and costly military installations. We need to do the same for the Federal Government. Before we spend any more of the Federal taxpayer dollars, I think we need to show the taxpayers we are being good stewards of the money they faithfully pay to the Federal Government for their tax obligation.

In addition to not taking care of this growing crisis I have described, Congress continues not to keep its fiscal house in order. It is common knowledge that we have not passed a single appropriations bill for the current fiscal year, and we are operating on a continuing resolution that Congress passed because we have not been able to take care of the simple matter of paying the bills—again, something no family or business could get away with. But the Federal Government is guilty of fiscal mismanagement, once again, by failing to pass a single appropriations bill and sending it to the President.

What this is leading up to, as we all know—and this is no secret—is likely pulling together all of the various appropriations bills, all 12 of them, or some combination of them, into an omnibus appropriation, which somebody told me the other day is Latin for “watch your wallet.” We are going to have a huge game of chicken between the President of the United States, who wields the veto pen, and the Congress over how much excessive spending Con-

gress is going to be able to pass against the President’s stated intention to veto excessive spending.

Again, this is not for the benefit of the American people; it is, rather, for partisan political benefit—a big game of chicken and potential Government shutdown because Congress isn’t taking care of its business and its fiscal house is in a state of disarray. The American people are enormously skeptical, and they have every right to be given what I have described a moment ago. What they want us to do is quit the partisan game playing and trying to score points, and simply work things out in the best interests of the American people, being respectful of their tax dollars and not wasting 1 penny more than we must.

This is especially true in the SCHIP program, the State Children’s Health Insurance Program, which I described. It is currently, again, on a continuing resolution. It is currently in effect and not in any danger whatsoever of coming to an end. There is bipartisan support for the continuation of this successful program, if it is intended and does affect children of low incomes, up to 200 percent of poverty. There is not a political consensus; indeed, there are those who object—and I am one—to a radical expansion of this program to cover adults in 14 States and to go up to, along with the Presidential waiver, 400 percent of the poverty level for a family of four making \$82,000 a year. At that level, for every two people added, one of them will get Government-subsidized health care by dropping their private health insurance—an unhealthy development, to say the least.

Here again, Congress is up to its old tricks. It relies on an unsustainable funding stream, a regressive tax that hits low-income Americans the hardest, and a budget gimmick that will demand that either Americans’ taxes be raised by 2012 to continue the program or children will be dropped from the program.

I have a prediction to make. There is, as Ronald Reagan said, no such thing as a “temporary” Government program from the Federal Government. I believe he said that a temporary Government program in Washington is the closest thing we have to eternal life here on Earth. I think he has been proven right.

What I would hope that the leadership—Majority Leader REID and Speaker PELOSI—would do is sit down with Republicans and with the President and try to work out our differences. As I said, everybody supports continuation of this program. I am willing to predict, without equivocation, that this program will continue; it will continue to help poor children—and it should—on a bipartisan basis. We should not have a game of chicken where, as Leader REID said and Speaker PELOSI said—Senate Majority Leader REID said this:

If the President says let’s sit down and talk about it, it is something that is not going to happen.

He said that in Congress Daily on September 28, 2007. Later, he said on that same day:

We have compromised all we are going to compromise.

What we see here is more political theater and partisan point scoring, as opposed to working together to try to find ways to resolve this impasse. We can do it. It is strictly a matter of political will and, frankly, I think it is what the American people want us to do. They are sick and tired of Congress being dysfunctional when it comes to meeting the very clear needs of the American people. I have described some of them. But at least we can try to work out this SCHIP impasse in a way that is fiscally responsible and meets the intended goals of this important Children’s Health Insurance Program.

Today, a Gallup poll reported, for what it is worth, in USA Today that 52 percent agreed with President Bush that most benefits should go to children and families earning less than 200 percent of the Federal poverty level, about \$41,000 for a family of four. Only 40 percent in the Gallup poll reported today in the USA Today said benefits should go to families earning up to \$62,000. As I said, there is a provision for a waiver that can go up even higher if, for example, President Clinton is in the White House after the next election.

The Gallup poll says 55 percent of those polled are very or somewhat concerned that the program would create an incentive for families to drop their private health insurance.

At a time when the American people are taxed at huge levels, you can see that this chart says “living essentials squeezed by Federal taxes.” The American wage earner has to work 120 days a year to pay all their State, local, and Federal taxes, while they work 62 days a year to pay housing, 52 days a year for health care, 30 days for their food, and 30 days for their transportation. But, again, it is 120 days to pay Uncle Sam and State and local taxes.

Should we not be taking care of our finances in a way that does not pass a huge IOU down to our children and grandchildren that we will never repay? Should we not quit robbing from the surpluses of Social Security and Medicare today rather than using that money to finance other programs? Should we not be eliminating ineffective programs or those programs that have been rated as inconclusive in terms of whether they are actually effective? Should we not take a more restrained approach to the growth of Government programs, including programs that have worked, such as SCHIP?

Instead of a 140-percent increase and transforming it into something that bears very little similarity to what Congress originally intended when they

started this program, should we not take a more restrained and careful approach?

Rather than drawing lines in the sand and threatening the termination of benefits of their health care to poor kids, shouldn't the majority leader, the Speaker of the House, the President of the United States, and the folks on the Republican side of the aisle sit down and try to work it out?

As I said, everybody in Congress supports this program, virtually without exception. The only difference is between those who believe this is an irresponsible, radical expansion of the program beyond recognition, and one that others have offered—including me—is a reauthorization of the program designed to meet its original target, and that is poor and low-income kids.

I hope the leadership will listen and make a sincere attempt to try to meet in the middle on this. The children of this country will benefit, and I think the American people will be enormously relieved.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Texas for leading the national dialog on health care. I think Americans expect us to address this issue and not just fight about it, as the Senator from Texas has said.

This national discussion is bringing us to some agreement, at least. I think all of us have decided in Congress—or at least most of us—that every American should have access to a health insurance policy they can afford and own and keep. Where we disagree is how we get to that point. I think the disagreement in this body goes to how we do that. Do we do it more like Canada did, where we say, OK, everybody needs to have insurance, so let's let the Government take it over; let's have Government-run health care?

Some are saying the Canadian system works fine, until you talk to doctors and patients from Canada and find out that every year the waiting lines get longer, every year the program gets more expensive, and every year the health care is of less quality. So now the people in Canada who have the means come to the United States to get health care.

The reason we have had such good health care in the United States for most of our history is that it has been done by private doctors working with patients, hospitals that are independent of Government; our free enterprise system has worked to a great degree.

Government programs, such as Medicare and the program we are talking about today, such as the children's health plan, have helped those in need to buy health insurance and have access to health care. But for the most part, Americans have resisted Government-run health care.

We do know in the early nineties there was an attempt to move totally

to Government health care. When that failed, we were able to see that the advocates of Government-run health care believed the best way to get to Government health care was to do it one step at a time with the children first because it is very hard to vote against expanding health care for children.

Certainly, all children should have health care. They should have health insurance. But the fact is, every American should have health insurance, and it is not good enough just to expand a Government program from covering poor kids to covering middle-class kids.

We do not need to mistake the fact that this is moving us toward Government health care. If my Democratic colleagues get their way on this children's health bill, over 70 percent of the children in this country are going to have Government health care. What happens to them once they become adults we have not discussed. We need to help every American own a health insurance policy.

What Republicans want to do is continue this children's health plan, to add additional funding to cover inflation and additional children. We have some good proposals. One of them, by Senator MARTINEZ, would continue the program as it is but also offer tax credits to children and families who are 200 and 300 percent of poverty so they can buy their own insurance, believing that the best thing we can do for families in this country is to help them have insurance they can afford, own, and keep.

There are other Republican proposals that we will be talking about that include tax credits for every family who buys their own insurance. It would also allow employers to give money to individuals to help buy their insurance. We do not do that now. Employers are not allowed to contribute to an individual's health plan.

We also have proposals that would allow individuals to shop for health insurance all over the country. A lot of folks don't know that we don't allow that now. You can only shop in your own State.

There is a proposal that would allow people who put tax-free money in a health savings account to use that money to buy their own health insurance plan. It is pretty amazing that as a Congress, we will not allow people to use their own health savings account to pay for health insurance premiums. And there are proposals to allow small businesses to come together to buy health insurance that is less expensive than when they buy it individually.

There is a lot we can do as a Congress that does not cost taxpayers any money but would make it easier for individuals to have health insurance they can afford, own, and keep.

I hope this debate will continue to open this issue in a way that Americans can really understand. The goal is that everyone has affordable health insurance, good health insurance. The goal is not to turn more and more of

our health care and health insurance over to the Government because we know that won't work, we know it is not efficient, and we know the children we are trying to help are eventually going to have to pay the debt we put on their heads by paying for something we cannot afford.

The fact is, we can get better health insurance, better health care for less money, if we do it with private health insurance just by helping individuals buy health insurance they can afford, own, and keep.

We started the national discussion on health care. I hope as we look at this debate, specifically children's health care, that we will see it as part of a larger issue and decide today that it is not good enough just to get a few more children insured.

Every American needs a health insurance policy, and we can do it, first of all, by taking down the barriers that Congress has put in front of individuals when they are trying to buy their own insurance, but we can also look at those in need. Whether it is tax credits or tax deductions, we can help every American have a health insurance policy they can afford, that they can keep from job to job and throughout their life. We can have better health care, and it is better for our future.

I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to speak. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time for morning business be extended by 5 minutes for each side.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for 5 minutes, and that following my presentation, Senator CHAMBLISS from Georgia have the remaining 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, we pass lots of laws in the Congress of the United States, and from time to time there is a byproduct of the passage of some of those laws. It is called the law of unintended consequences. Such is the case with the Endangered Species Act.

In my State of Georgia, we are in a level 4, 100-year drought. As many as 7 million citizens in my State are looking at the possibility of there being no drinking water in less than 120 days. Our State has imposed restrictions of every kind. Landscapers are out of business, car washes are threatened, and there is no outdoor watering.

My home county of Cobb, in the last 14 days, has reduced, through conservation, water consumption by 20 percent.