

better plan without any need for concern.

The Finance Committee's bipartisan work helps build on the bill sent to us by the House of Representatives and makes it much better—fair to seniors and disabled veterans—and, as important as that, more effective in stimulating the economy with the breaks it gives to businesses.

That is the bottom line. It will do the job. It will work. People say: Why do we need to go to conference? We have to go to conference anyway. The House-passed bill allows the benefits to go to undocumented people. I don't think Senators want to vote for that provision. A vote this afternoon is simply a vote to proceed to the House bill. We have to go to conference anyway because of that provision; that is, rebates for undocumented persons.

We have a chance to stimulate the economy and help more struggling Americans. I hope we can all work together, Democrats and Republicans—in fact all Senators—to build on the good work done by the House of Representatives by supporting this bipartisan Finance Committee legislation. It is good legislation.

This is it. People need not look further. If the package does not pass, that is the end of the line. That will be it. It will be a shame. We will have to look at something else after we dispose of this stimulus package to try to do something to stimulate the housing industry, give unemployment benefits, to do something about LIHEAP. It would be a shame that we would miss this opportunity. The Republicans should join with us. The bill has to go to conference anyway. Let the conferees determine, working with the President, what we should do to stimulate the economy. We believe ours is a Cadillac package. It is what the American people need. It is what the economy needs. It is fair. It is just. It is quick. The House bill is, as I said, a step in the right direction but a very small step.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

CHEMICAL DEMILITARIZATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today Congress received the fiscal year 2009 budget request from President Bush. It is a budget that does not raise taxes and provides a framework for eliminating the deficit within 5 years. Both objectives are consistent with and critical to our long-term economic goals.

It is now up to Congress to fully and fairly consider this budget proposal and each appropriations bill.

I do not need to remind our colleagues we are also hard at work to pass an economic growth package. While considering the budget, we must

not undo the economic growth policies contained in that package by increasing the size of Government, when we should be increasing the size of the economy.

Turning to one particular item in the budget that is of great importance to me and my home State of Kentucky, I wish to speak briefly about the budget request for the disposal of chemical weapons at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Richmond, KY.

For years, I have led the fight in Congress to safely and efficiently dispose of the deadly chemical weapons at the Blue Grass Army Depot, and for years the Department of Defense bureaucracy has dragged its feet on this issue and refused to comply with Congress's direction that disposal of such weapons be given serious attention and the resources to get it done.

As a result, complete disposal of these deadly weapons has been pushed further and further into the future, even though the people of Richmond and Madison County, KY, have been living for too long already with over 500 tons of chemical weapons in their midst. This includes VX nerve agents, one of the deadliest nerve agents ever created.

You can understand the people of Madison County and, frankly, I have had enough. So I am pleased to report that after making my wishes clear to Defense Secretary Gates, I have convinced the Department to increase the fiscal year 2009 budget request amount to a level that will help enable the Blue Grass Army Depot to more safely and quickly dispose of these weapons.

I personally thank Secretary Gates for his involvement in this success. I have worked with and been frustrated by Defense Secretaries under both Republican and Democratic administrations. But Secretary Gates gets it and he took action. I thank him for that, and I know the people of Madison County do as well.

Before we intervened, DOD had initially set fiscal year 2009 funding for the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives Program, or ACWA, at \$351 million. ACWA is the program that will dispose of these chemical weapons.

Now the ACWA budget has been increased to nearly \$398 million, thanks to Secretary Gates. This is the third consecutive year we have been able to persuade DOD to increase the ACWA budget request. By increasing the funding level, we can speed up the disposal.

In addition to adequate funding, legislation I authored and that was enacted into law now sets a deadline for DOD to complete work on disposal by 2017. That is right, it is now law that disposal must be completed in less than 10 years, by 2017.

This is a two-pronged approach to solving this problem and these two prongs complement each other. Together, increased funding for disposal and a deadline set into law are moving us closer to the disposal of these heinous weapons.

In short, when it comes to the chemical weapons stored at Blue Grass Army Depot, dollars plus a deadline equals disposal. That is the goal: the quick and safe disposal of these chemical weapons. The people of Kentucky deserve no less.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is true we have the President's budget, the eighth one, the eighth and last budget from this President. To think anyone has the audacity to suggest this deficit will be gone in 5 years following the President's plan is almost laughable, a man who has run this country from a \$7 trillion surplus over 10 years to now approaching \$12 trillion or \$13 trillion in debt.

The Presiding Officer knows as much about the military as anyone serving in Congress, having been a distinguished combat veteran in the Marine Corps and Secretary of the Navy. No one is more supportive of the military, than the Presiding Officer. I try to be also. The Defense budget I get from morning reports, without having seen the budget, but the press has reported the Defense budget will now be approaching \$700 billion this coming year. But there is not a single penny in this budget for the war in Iraq. That is in addition to this request. We are told that in less than 2 years, the cost of the war in Iraq will be \$1 trillion, borrowed money from China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Mexico. And, of course, it has been long pronounced this budget of the President's will have cuts in Medicare.

The President had us over a barrel last year on the appropriations bills because we did not want another continuing resolution. We did not want another continuing resolution. But he does not have us over a barrel this year because either Senator CLINTON or Senator OBAMA will be the President in less than a year. If we have to deal with a CR next year, we will deal with it. We will finish that by the end of January. We will whip through that CR in a short time. We are not going to be held hostage to the unreasonableness of this President—cutting NIH, cutting the COPS Program. What is that? Law enforcement to bring down crime rates in our country as it has—the damage to the cities that has already taken place because of the priorities that are so misarranged in this budget that he suggests to us.

Education—I brought the Teacher of the Year here to watch the State of the Union Address. She is devastated by what the No Child Left Behind legislation has done, with the President not living up to what he said he would do in funding it.

I am glad the budget is here. It is part of the law. I look forward to working with our colleagues and hope we