

Third, this reconciliation bill includes medical savings accounts, an idea that I was the first to introduce in the Senate. These accounts will give families independence and choice on health care, the opposite of the President's approach. It delivers security without bureaucracy, providing families the resources to care for their own needs.

The centerpiece of this reconciliation bill is a balanced budget. In the future, this will be recalled as our contribution to history. If we ignore our budget crisis, the child born this year will pay \$187,000 over his lifetime just for interest on the national debt.

The argument for a balanced budget comes down to something simple: It is one of our highest moral traditions for parents to sacrifice for the sake of their children. It is the depth of selfishness to call on children to sacrifice for the sake of their parents.

If we continue on our current path, we will violate a trust between generations and earn the contempt of the future.

There is no doubt we must balance the budget, but in passing this bill, we will accomplish even more, because this bill displays a passion for limited Government, yet it also displays compassion for American families. It finally returns responsibility to the Federal budget, yet it also helps return abused and abandoned children to adoptive families.

It will improve the long-term health of our economy, and yet it will also deliver short-term help to families and to children, relief that will be felt next year and every year beyond.

These are not sideshows or distractions. This plan includes real relief that will be felt and appreciated by the American people, and that relief is specifically directed toward families with children. This is actual, meaningful compassion, not the synthetic, failed compassion of Government programs.

Mr. President, we have come to the beginning of the end of deficit spending in America. We have come to this place because there is no alternative. The work before us is difficult. But it is nothing more than most Americans expect.

We have come to a time that is unique—an authentic moment of decision. It is a moment to act worthy of our words, and to keep faith with the future.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FAIRCLOTH). The Senator from Minnesota.

NO COMPASSION

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I want to talk about an amendment we are going to have coming up on Medicare. Just for the record, let me briefly respond to the Senator from Indiana. In all due respect, I do not see this compassion. I see \$35 billion of cuts in nutrition programs.

I had an amendment on the floor of the Senate that asked my colleagues to go on record saying that if, as a result of this reconciliation bill with its cuts disproportionately targeted on vulnerable children in America, there was more hunger and there was a situation where more children went without medical coverage, that we would revisit this question next year and take corrective action, and I could not get that sense-of-the-Senate amendment adopted. I do not see too much compassion in that vote, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I hope we start this debate soon on the Medicare. I want to start out by responding to my friend from Iowa. I just quote my friend from Illinois, Senator SIMON. He has said it once, twice, 10 times, that to say we are serious about deficit reduction and then to have \$245 billion of tax giveaways is like saying to somebody we are going to put you on a strict diet but first we are going to give you dessert. It is a huge contradiction. I do not find people in cafes in Minnesota saying to me: Senator WELLSTONE, we are serious about deficit reduction, but would you first give us more tax breaks? That is not what I hear from people. They know it is a huge contradiction and that you being cannot dance at two weddings at the same time. It makes no sense.

Second point. Mr. President, \$89 billion is the figure for the trust fund. Instead, we have \$270 billion. People in Minnesota know how to add and subtract. What we have going on here on the floor of the U.S. Senate today is no less than an effort to make Medicare the piggy bank for tax cuts, or tax giveaways. That is bad enough. What makes it worse is it is tax giveaways in inverse relationship to those people who least need the tax breaks. Mr. President, that is simply unconscionable.

The third point. This is a rush to recklessness. I was surprised to hear my colleague from Iowa talking about the benefits of this for rural Iowa or rural Minnesota. I say to my colleague from Iowa, understand that in your proposal you have reimbursement to hospitals, rural hospitals, 2.5 percent less than rate of medical inflation. I tell you right now that our hospitals and clinics in rural America, in greater Minnesota, do not have the large profit margin; that is point one. Point two, they have a disproportionate amount of their patient mix—60 percent, 70 percent.

What I am saying to people watching this debate is that, in rural America, many of the people that come to our hospitals and clinics are elderly. Medicare is hugely important for them. That makes up a large share of the payments that go to these hospitals. They do not have the profit margin. They have a large percentage of the population that are elderly, who depend upon adequate Medicare reimbursement, and you have in your formula 25.5 percent less than the rate of inflation. In rural Minnesota and in

North Dakota and in Kentucky and in rural Iowa, the rural heartland all across this country, the issue, Mr. President, is not just whether we can afford a doctor, it is whether we can find a doctor.

This is a rush to recklessness. This is a fast track to foolishness. Ask your providers, ask your nurses, ask your physician assistants, ask your doctors, ask your elderly, ask their children, ask their grandchildren. What you are about to do is very reckless with the lives of people.

Mr. President, I will tell you something. I just get more than a little bit angry when I see this stereotype and hear this stereotype about the elderly. You would think that the elderly are a bunch of "greedy geezers" that are traveling all over the country playing golf at the swankest golf courses there are. Mr. President, in my State of Minnesota, 70,000 seniors live below the Federal poverty line. In my State, of the 635,000 Medicare recipients, half of them have annual incomes under \$20,000 a year. Mr. President, in my State of Minnesota, of the 635,000 Medicare beneficiaries, they are paying, on the average, over \$2,000 out-of-pocket. Right now, for many seniors, catastrophic health care costs are a nightmare. They are terrified of prescription drug costs.

Mr. President, what we have here is an effort to make Medicare the piggy bank for tax cuts—rather tax giveaways, which flow in the main to the highest income citizens of the United States of America. There is no standard of fairness behind this proposal. People will see through it.

The second thing that is so unfortunate, so unconscionable, so unthinking about this proposal, will be its impact on the people of this country. Mr. President, \$89 billion is not \$270 billion. Please do not tell senior citizens their premiums will not go up, their copays will not go up, and in no way, shape, or form do you have to worry, and your hospitals, clinics, and providers will all get adequate reimbursement, and eligibility will not change, and we will just take \$270 billion out of this health care sector.

Mr. President, senior citizens do not believe it, they should not believe it, they will not believe it. That is why this amendment that will be laid down by my colleague, the Senator from West Virginia, deserves the full support of every Senator in this Chamber.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time for morning business has expired.

THE BALANCED BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT OF 1995

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.