

ANY WAY THE WIND BLOWS

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I, too, would like to talk a little bit about the budget passed last week and the threatened veto.

President Clinton reminds me lately of the weather vane we used to have atop the barn of my family's dairy farm. Ours happened to be shaped like a rooster, and we always knew which way the wind was blowing because that old rooster would spin around and around with the breeze. Like that old weather vane, the President is spending a lot of time on the roof these days, and he must get awful dizzy up there, testing the wind, shifting his position each time it changes.

Last week, this chamber delivered on last November's mandate by the voters and passed a far-reaching, historic piece of legislation that turns this Government around by balancing the budget and cutting taxes.

With the vote behind us, the budget reconciliation conference committee is now moving ahead with our plan, shaping a bill to send to the President. The newspaper columnists and the TV political panels have been busy reporting on just what President Clinton thinks about what we are doing.

Or rather, on what the polls and his many political advisers tell the President he should be thinking. This is a President, after all, for whom "taking a tough moral stand" means finally admitting he raised taxes too much in 1993, and then recanting his story the very next day, blaming his confession on "sleepiness."

What the President is apparently hearing when it comes to the budget is that he ought to veto the reconciliation bill.

Let me quote from the Washington Times of October 20:

The White House is already preparing the post-veto campaign, mapping out travel schedules for Cabinet secretaries and culling poll results to determine the key issues the President will push.

A top White House aide has even been promoted—a battlefield promotion, I guess—as "assistant to the President." His new duties? To "calculate the political impact of a veto."

Mr. President, this Congress is tackling the serious issues that come with fundamental reform of the Government, issues like how to preserve the troubled Medicare program, how to save our kids and grandkids from having to carry the load of our debts and deficits, how to stop the welfare system's cycle of dependency, how to give working-class folks the tax relief they desperately need. While we are doing all of that, the White House huddles in its War Room calculating how many political points the President would score by trying to squash our efforts.

It seems President Clinton's advisers have told him that he needs to veto the reconciliation bill to, "draw policy differences with the Republicans."

"Without a veto," says a White House spokesman, "you cannot draw the bright lines. And we are in a period

where drawing that bright line is everything to the election."

That election is still more than an entire year away.

Yet at a time when this Nation is desperate for strong leadership from its Chief Executive, a distant election has become the guiding force of this Presidency.

Mr. Clinton's advisers say he is going to veto our budget reconciliation bill. Well, it surely cannot be because his agenda is so fundamentally different from ours.

We are calling for tax cuts, and the President says he wants tax cuts, as well. He supports the child tax credit and has hinted lately that he is agreeable to cutting the capital gains tax.

Our budget plan preserves Medicare by slowing its growth and offering seniors choices—proposals strikingly similar to the Medicare plan touted by the President in his health care reform bill just 2 years ago.

We are also easing back the growth of Government spending, and that is something for which President Clinton has been an advocate. After all, is not that what reinventing Government is all about?

Now, after months of adamantly denying it could ever be accomplished, the President has admitted that balancing the budget in 7 years—not 10, or 9, or even 8, as he originally proposed—was a reasonable goal.

Clearly, the President is moving closer toward us as this budget process continues. But still, he is going to wave his veto pen and just say "no"—not because he believes in his heart that he must, but because the political winds suggest that he ought to.

That is not leadership.

I suggest to President Clinton that he resist playing politics and involve himself seriously in negotiations that will move this budget forward, on behalf of all Americans—and not stop it in its tracks to placate his political base.

Mr. President, leadership does not mean having a finger sensitive enough to tell you which way the wind is blowing. And as any farmer knows, a flimsy weather vane that sits too long out in the elements is eventually going to wear out and need to be replaced.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent I be allowed 1 minute to close the order.

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

Mr. CRAIG. I thank my colleagues for joining me on this Halloween day. I hope the message that we send to the American people is that the efforts we are involved in here in Congress are not a trick but a treat—a treat rewarding them for the profound statement they made last year in the dramatic realignment of the political structure of this country, toward a time when Government's budgets will be balanced, when its programs will be responsive, as concerned about the taxpayers as it is about those who should be the recipients of responsible and caring Government programs.

So the day of Halloween ought not to be scary, but a profound statement to the American people that their Government in this representative form of government heard them and heard them well.

 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I submit a report of the committee of conference on H.R. 2002 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The report will be stated.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendments of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2002), making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report.

The Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of October 20, 1995.)

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, we are here this morning to present the conference report to accompany H.R. 2002, the fiscal year 1996 Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. As we all know, the Department of Transportation, like many other departments, is operating under the very strict terms of the continuing resolution. This conference report will allow the Department to operate for fiscal year 1996 without the restrictions of the continuing resolution; but more importantly, it will fund vital programs such as air traffic control, Coast Guard search and rescue, and other critical safety functions.

I am pleased that, in conference with the House, the Senate was able to increase funding for a number of important programs, since the conference allocation for the bill was \$100 million higher in budget authority and \$193 million higher in outlays than the Senate-passed bill. This year, the problems facing the conferees were the same as those faced in the past—that is, how to strike the best possible balance between the operational needs of the Federal Aviation Administration and the Coast Guard with sufficient funding for the Nation's infrastructure and transportation safety needs. I believe that this agreement provides a balanced and fair solution for the challenges we faced.