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Senate

The Senate met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, thank You for the gift of vibrant confidence based on vital convictions. We are confident in Your unlimited power. Therefore, at no time are we helpless or hapless. Our confidence is rooted in Your Commandments. Therefore, we are strengthened by Your absolutes that give us enduring values. Our courage is based on the assurance of Your ever-present, guiding spirit. Therefore we will not fear. Our hope is rooted in trust in Your reliability. Therefore, we will not be anxious. Your interventions in trying times in the past have made us experienced optimists for the future. Therefore, we will not spend our energy in useless worry.

You have called us to glorify You in our work here in this Senate. Therefore, we give You our best for this day's responsibilities. You have guided our beloved Nation through difficult periods of discord and division in the past. Therefore, we ask for Your help in the present debate over crucial issues today. Thank You for the courage that flows from our unshakable confidence in You. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 10:30 a.m.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CAMPBELL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. BURNS. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. BURNS pertaining to the introduction of S. 1453 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, thank you very much.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL FAILURES

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I have asked my staff in California to begin to monitor air traffic control failures. They have started with the San Francisco Bay area, and I would like to make a report this morning on what they have found in the last 5 months.

The San Francisco Bay area is essentially controlled out of Oakland where nearly 18 million square miles of airspace is under control by air traffic controllers. Next week I would like to make a report on Los Angeles.

I sent this in writing to the Secretary of Transportation. But I believe the findings of the last 5 months really deserve to be printed in the CONGRES-

SIONAL RECORD and deserve the attention of the U.S. Senate because I think air passengers are very much at risk today.

I am unconvinced that the situation is being looked at with the urgency it demands, and my great fear is that it is going to take a major human tragedy to really get the kind of attention the situation needs.

This morning I want to urge the FAA to make the acquisition of new and reliable equipment its highest priority. In the past, the FAA has resisted incremental improvements in the Nation's air traffic control system in favor of huge changes that never materialize. This leaves centers across the United States that are operated by mainframe computers and vacuum tubes that are over 25 years old. The irony here is that the air equipment, the planes in the air, are new. The system that controls their safety is old and failing. Backup systems are being used more and more frequently, and in some cases the backup is no more reliable than the equipment it is replacing.

The following is a summary of incidents of equipment failure in the San Francisco Bay area since August of this year.

Let me begin with August 8, 1995. The Bay TRACON system located at the Oakland airport, controlling the entire bay area airspace at below 15,000 feet, experienced partial radar failure for 3 to 5 minutes before reliable radar data was displayed on controller scopes.

The next day, August 9, 1995, the air traffic control center at Oakland located in Fremont, covering 18.3 million miles of airspace, suffered a total failure of radar, radio, and landline communications, including backup systems. Radar remained out for 34 minutes. Radios and landlines were out for

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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21 minutes. There were 295 airplanes airborne under Oakland's ARTCC's control at the time of the outage.

A few weeks later, August 22, a power failure at Bay TRACON disabled Oakland's radar system again. Backup radar provided only 85 percent coverage and took 3 to 5 minutes to come on line.

And 3 days later, August 25, 1995, a dual sensor problem disabled Bay TRACON's Oakland radar system.

September 6, the controllers lose power to voice and computer data lines at Oakland ARTCC used to control and track aircraft over the Pacific Ocean.

The next day, September 7, 1995, the main and backup power supply fails at Oakland ARTCC. Power is not restored in time to preserve the data base in the oceanic computer known as ODAPS. Controllers rebuild the data base manually when the computer power is returned. The shutdown lasted 4 hours.

A few days later, September 13, 1995, the Bay TRACON's Oakland radar failed three times when a 26-year-old microwave link malfunctioned. The first failure lasted 32 minutes. The second failure lasted 81 minutes. And the third failure lasted for hours.

Two weeks later, September 25, 1995, an internal power failure at Bay TRACON disabled so-called noncritical systems and caused air-conditioners to go out. Controllers were exposed to 90-degree heat in the control room, computers overheated and failed due to the extreme temperature increase.

October 1, 1995, a power surge at Moffett Field caused a radar site to switch to engine generators. While repairs were being made the next day, the bay area was without a backup system for 7 hours.

October 27, 1995, during the morning inbound rush and foggy conditions, the Bay TRACON computer froze and caused controllers to perform automated functions manually.

November 3, 1995, faulty computer connections forced air traffic controllers in Fremont to track aircraft with a backup system for nearly 48 hours.

November 28, just a few days ago, airport surveillance radar at the Oakland airport goes down for an hour.

Needless to say, it is a miracle that no collisions have occurred. This is the fourth busiest airspace in the Nation. The situation and the growing frequency of outages across the United States are simply disasters waiting to happen.

These examples from the San Francisco Bay area are symptomatic of a nationwide problem. At a time when the private sector is building the most advanced airplanes in the world, the FAA is still using equipment that is over a quarter of a century old.

I realize that resources are an issue. Yet the airport and airways trust fund which funds the FAA has an annual budget of \$12 billion a year. I cannot stress enough the importance of this money translating into new equipment for air traffic control centers across

the country. We cannot continue to function with a system that often fails and leaves the safety of airline passengers in question.

These equipment outages, along with a recent Los Angeles Times report of equipment falling off old aircraft and very nearly landing on human beings, has me very worried about public safety. What concerns me more than these dangers, however, is the FAA's assessment that no lives are at risk.

Given the above list of outages along with reports of equipment nearly killing people as it falls from the sky, I find this extremely difficult to believe. Some action must be taken.

It has been suggested that the FAA could operate more effectively if removed from the Department of Transportation. I am not certain if that is the answer, but it is obvious to me that some dramatic improvements must be made in order to ensure the safety of the flying public.

I would like to offer any necessary and appropriate assistance to facilitate a change in the priorities of the Federal Aviation Administration. I look forward to working with my colleagues toward a solution to this increasingly alarming situation.

Next week I hope to come before the Senate to discuss similar incidents at Los Angeles International Airport. I yield the floor.

PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I thank the Chair.

Mr. CRAIG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

BALANCING THE BUDGET

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, we had asked last night for a period of a special order this morning to discuss the President's veto of the Balanced Budget Act of 1995. Certainly I, and I think a good number of Americans, Mr. President, watched yesterday as this President with grand theater and style worked overtime to cover up the fact that he has not produced a balanced budget and in fact cannot, given his agenda, produce a budget that will be in balance by the year 2002.

Instead, yesterday he accused Republicans of not recognizing the need for education, of not recognizing the need to strengthen and save Medicare. And, of course, that simply is not true and the American public knows it.

The Balanced Budget Act of 1995 that the President vetoed yesterday recognizes the importance of education and does not cut student loans. It recognizes the importance of a sound Medicare system to seniors and strengthens Medicare into the year 2000, by spending nearly an additional \$2,000 per Medicare recipient in the year 2002, compared with 1995. And certainly that is also true of Medicaid, which is returned to the States for greater efficiencies and greater humanity as States deal with applying Medicaid to the truly needy of our society.

Several of us have gathered this morning for the purpose of discussing the President's veto, the benefits of the budget that the President unfortunately vetoed, and the budget situation this Congress and our country finds itself in.

At this time I will yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Wyoming.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized for 5 minutes.

A BALANCED BUDGET

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I thank the Senator. I think all of us are very concerned about where we go from here, concerned about the President's veto of the first balanced budget proposal that could have succeeded in 30 years. The President cannot continue to veto the will of the American people who list as their top priority balancing the budget.

You say why, why is that a top priority? Not simply because it is good government, not because it is financial and fiscal responsibility, but because they understand, and Wyoming families understand, and do others, that every day the Government fails to balance the budget, more money is taken from their families' futures.

Families are thinking down the road, fortunately. They care about the world their children will inherit and the fact that we are ready to move into a new century, and they ask themselves what kind of a Government will we pass on to our children and our grandchildren? Will it be the one with the credit card maxed out? That is where we are now.

So these families think about what is coming in the future. Unfortunately, the Clinton administration thinks about the next election. Had the President come to the snubbing post and done the right thing, Wyoming families would have saved money. They would have saved \$2,404 per year—these figures were done up by the Heritage Foundation on a State-by-State basis—\$2,400 per year on lower mortgage payments, over \$300 a year due on State and local interest payments, \$500 per year on lower interest payments for student loans. These are for average families in Wyoming.

The State and local governments in Wyoming—we want to transfer some of that responsibility—would have saved \$57 million over 7 years on lower interest rates brought about by balancing the budget.

So the issue of balancing the budget is the most critical one. We have to balance the budget because of the impact it has on families and the benefits that come from it. The deficit is robbing our families' bank accounts. It must be budgeted. And anything else is the wrong thing to do.

The Clinton administration has done less than the responsible thing. I think we have to start talking about that and not let them get by with going to the media and saying, "We're protecting