

President of the United States submitted to Congress, by the revisions last summer, or by any of the further revisions which have taken place during the course of this debate during the fall and winter of 1995 and in 1996.

Now, however, the full restoration of the administration of various departments of the United States depends upon the submission by the President of the United States of just such a balanced budget. These proposals do not require any particular content in that balanced budget, but they do require, and I believe will obtain, a set of proposals from the President which can be compared at that point by Members of Congress, by the news media, and by the people of the United States, with the various proposals the Republicans have made, including the Balanced Budget Act of 1995 recently vetoed by the President of the United States.

Just why it has taken this extended period of time, why the President has so resisted meeting us on common ground, a common ground from which we all hope a valuable compromise can be reached, is difficult to understand. Clearly Members of the Democratic Party can meet the challenge of proposing a balanced budget using honest figures which presumably meets each of the priorities on which they place so much weight with respect to health care, the environment, education, and the like. Conservative Democrats in the House produced such a budget many weeks ago. The leadership of the Democratic Party here in the Senate made such a proposal before the Christmas recess.

Now, much of the debate has revolved around the insistence of Republicans on a balanced budget using figures provided by the Congressional Budget Office. The overwhelming attention of the White House and of many of its supporters has been toward a list, included in the last balanced budget requirement, respecting adequate funding for Medicare, Medicaid, education, the national defense, and a number of other activities of the Federal Government.

But there is a very real distinction between those two parts of that November resolution. The determination of whether or not a proposed budget, whatever its specific content, is in fact balanced under the projections of the Congressional Budget Office is a pure question of fact. Either it is or it is not.

The Congressional Budget Office, basing its judgment on certain assumptions, makes a series of mathematical calculations and tells us whether, in its view, in the year 2002, the budget will be balanced. The answer is yes or no. There is, given the nature of the requirement, no valid difference of opinion as to whether or not a particular budget is balanced. The Balanced Budget Act of 1995 included such a balance. Later proposals by the Senator from New Mexico, the chairman of the Budget Committee, are balanced in that fashion.

The so-called bipartisan proposal set forth by Senators CHAFEE and BREAUX and a number of others reaches such a balance. The Democratic leadership proposal reaches that balance, as does conservative Democrats' budget in the House of Representatives. Whether or not a particular budget adequately funds Medicare, Medicaid, education, the national defense, or does the right thing with respect to taxes, with respect to working Americans, however, is a question of opinion. It is the view of this Senator and the view of the Senator from New Mexico that each of those goals was and is appropriately met by the Balanced Budget Act of 1995.

Members on the other side of the aisle and the President do not agree. Presumably, they feel that each of those goals is met by the Democratic leadership budget proposal. They feel, evidently, that it deals appropriately with the tax burden on middle-class working Americans, even though that proposal increases taxes overall in order to reach balance. I disagree with that proposition as they disagree with my views on various spending programs. But these are matters of opinion; these are matters which obviously are subject to compromise.

What we have gained at this point is the implicit agreement that the President of the United States, now for the first time, will join the conservative colleagues in his party in the House, his leadership in the Senate, and make his proposal, presumably with specific policy judgments with respect to each of these spending items—to the national defense, to our tax structure—that will meet the objective requirements of the Congressional Budget Office.

Only when we have these figures is there any real chance that we will succeed in reaching a middle ground that will objectively lead to a balanced budget by the year 2002 and subjectively, presumably in the minds of those Members of Congress who vote for it in both parties and the President who signs it, meet these other policy objectives as well.

So, Mr. President, I am not here to apologize and say that this is the best job we could do. I find it at least slightly amusing that we are accepting lock, stock, and barrel what the House of Representatives has proposed with respect to the specific language in these various resolutions. But, on the other hand, I think it is safe to say that we probably would not have reached this conclusion this quickly had it not been for the actions earlier this week and late last week by the distinguished majority leader in saying that we had to get out of the dilemma in which we found ourselves.

It does seem to me, however, that given the nature of the immediate crisis we face, as well as our overall goals of balancing the budget, that we have not done a slap-dash job, we have not done a second, or third-best job. We

have done the job right. We will have solved the immediate crisis, and we will have made a gigantic step toward that magnificent goal of balancing our budget; of ending the practice of spending money today on things that we want and sending the bills to our children and grandchildren; of giving them higher incomes, as now is almost a common opinion of economists throughout the United States, by lowering the burden of debt which they will be required to carry; by making their futures brighter and making their futures brighter our own as well.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT—MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Senator from New Mexico will forbear for a moment, the Chair wishes to announce that under the order of September 6, 1995, the Senate, having received a message from the House on S. 1124, therefore disagrees with the House amendment, agrees to a conference with the House, and the Chair appoints the following conferees which the clerk will state.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. WARNER) appointed Mr. THURMOND, Mr. WARNER, Mr. COHEN, Mr. LOTT, Mr. NUNN, Mr. EXON, and Mr. LEVIN conferees on the part of the Senate.

Mr. DOMENICI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

A CLEAN CONTINUING RESOLUTION AND BALANCED BUDGET ACT

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, we are here tonight to talk about two important issues—one is the short-term outlook for the operation of the Federal Government, and the other is the long-term economic future of the Nation.

The Senate is now considering a continuing appropriations resolution [CR] that will reopen the Federal Government and put our Federal employees back to work with pay. This CR will operate the Federal Government for 3 weeks through January 26 and give the congressional leadership and the President the opportunity to again try to agree on a balanced budget plan.

This CR has a reasonable requirement that the President should now present a budget plan that reaches balance over 7 years using CBO estimates. The President committed to this goal when he signed the continuing resolution last November (H.J. Res. 122 Public Law 104-56), but he has yet to submit a balanced budget by CBO scoring.

CHRONOLOGY FOR BBA

Mr. President, the President submitted his fiscal year 1996 budget to Congress on February 6. At the same time, the new Republican Congress was undertaking the long overdue task of balancing the Federal budget.