our appropriations subcommittee for VA and HUD today. We had before us the Secretary of the agency, Secretary Brown. We showed him the budget projections. This chart shows what the Congress' budget projection was last year. This green line shows a flat line across here.

Actually, we raised that to this level. Last year the Secretary said holding the Veterans' Administration budget flat through 2002 would be devastating; hospitals would be closed, veterans would not be served, there would be tremendous hardship, the system could not operate. He said the system could not operate with flat appropriations, even though the number of veterans is declining.

So I asked him what would happen, because this is the Clinton projection. These are the Clinton administration numbers for the Veterans' Administration budget, going up here in 1997, one more year, and then just plummeting, plummeting by more than $3 billion a year out of just slightly over a $16 billion budget. This, coming down according to the CBO, this would be just around $13 billion or less for the Veterans' Administration.

The Secretary said he could not live with, and the veterans could not be served by, that budget. So I asked him if he were going to send out the e-mail messages and statements in pay stubs that he had sent to the employees of the VA last year when we proposed this budget. He said no. I asked him why not. He said, because the President has personally assured him he will negotiate the budget with him and take care of the veterans.

I asked him, I said, ''Are you concerned that the President is going to live with that budget number that shows the budget plummeting for VA?'' He indicated to me that he had no concern whatsoever that the Veterans' Administration budget would fall like that, because the President promised to negotiate with him.

I had to ask the question, and I ask it again. Who is the President fooling? Is he fooling the taxpayers and Congress when he proposes a budget like that that purports to cut it and cut the budget for the Veterans' Administration a total of $13 billion in this period? Or is he fooling the veterans by telling them, do not worry, we will keep spending up however high it needs to go? Whichever way it goes, it has to call into question whether the President is serious about these budget negotiations. He said that he wants to balance the budget.

We have the President on record and we have OMB on record as saying they want to balance the budget. How are they going to do it? Well, they have some very draconian cuts in their appropriated spending accounts. This red line shows how sharply those cuts are going to be made. This is the President's entire budget, and he hopes to get to a balance in 2002 by cutting it like that.

Part of those cuts are reflected in this precipitous cut in the VA budget, showing this for the Veterans' Administration only. But he is telling the people, the constituents of the Veterans' Administration, or they believe he is saying, ''Don't worry, we'll negotiate with you a good budget and take care of you.''

We have the promise, on the one hand, of OMB that this is a meaningful budget that shows a reduction of appropriated spending sufficient to balance the budget in the year 2002 under President Clinton's plan. On the other hand, we have the assurance, the confidence of one of the agency administrators whose budget is going to be slashed that it will not be slashed. That is the best of both possible worlds.

For the vast majority of American citizens who want to see a balanced budget, you have these numbers in a budget, but it is really a no pain-no gain situation, because you tell the people who will be directly affected, ''Don't worry because we don't mean this; don't worry, the budget's not going to come down like that.''

Mr. President, what they must be telling us is it is all for show. It sounds good to tell the American people we are going to balance the budget, but we can sure get out and get the word to all of the people who depend upon those particular agencies, ''Don't worry, your agency is not being cut; your agency is not going to suffer any reductions.''

Mr. President, I think the issue of credibility and character are going to be very important in this fall's election, and I think this budget flimflam tells a lot. I think it raises questions about the honesty of the plan that we are being presented on behalf of the Clinton administration by OMB. They would like us to think the budget is going to be balanced, but they assure the people in the area, plan for the cuts, that that $13 billion will not be cut out of the VA budget. Is it going to be cut someplace else? I doubt they will be willing to say someplace else will be cut even more.

I thank the Chair. I note several colleagues wishing to speak. I yield the floor.

Mr. COHEN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

AMENDMENT TO THE HISTORIC CHATTAHOOCHEE COMPACT

Mr. COHEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 345, H.R. 2064.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2064) to grant consent of Congress to an amendment of the Historic Chattahoochee Compact between the States of Alabama and Georgia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be deemed read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be placed at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 2064) was deemed read the third time and passed.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. COHEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 366, H.R. 1743, Calendar No. 367, H.R. 2243, and Calendar No. 375, S. 811, en bloc; further, I ask unanimous consent that reported amendments to the text, as may appear, be agreed to, the bills be deemed read a third time, passed, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, en bloc, and that any statements relating to these measures be placed at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

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

THE WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH ACT OF 1984 AMENDMENT ACT OF 1996

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill (H.R. 1743) to amend the Water Resources Research Act of 1984 to extend the authorizations of appropriations through fiscal year 2000, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Environment and Public Works, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Section 102 of the Water Resources Research Act of 1984 (42 U.S.C. 10301) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by inserting '', productivity of natural resources and agricultural systems,'' after ''environmental quality'';

(2) in paragraph (6), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(3) in paragraph (7), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

''(8) long-term planning and policy development are essential to ensure the availability of an abundant supply of high quality water for domestic and other use; and

''(9) the States must have the research and problem-solving capacity necessary to effectively manage their water resources.''.

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

Section 103 of the Water Resources Research Act of 1984 (42 U.S.C. 10302) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (5)—

(A) by striking ''to''; and

(B) by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) in paragraph (6), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(7) encourage long-term planning and research to meet future water management, quality, and supply challenges.''.