

the President's list, after all of these other new programs are created. Remember, too, that President Clinton is proposing to spend the entire \$93 billion surplus that the Social Security system will itself generate—spend it on other things.

So what did President Clinton really mean when he spoke of Social Security in his State of the Union? Here is what he said:

I propose that we reserve 100 percent of the surplus—that is every penny of any surplus—until we have taken all the necessary measures to strengthen the Social Security system for the 21st century.

His budget clearly spends the surplus, so what hidden meaning could there possibly be in his apparently very carefully crafted words?

Treasury Secretary Rubin explained to the Budget Committee that the President was merely declaring his opposition to using surpluses, should they materialize, for any purpose other than paying down the national debt until Congress and the President have agreed on a long-term solution that ensures the solvency of the Social Security program. In other words, nothing may ever be set aside specifically for Social Security.

Mr. President, I am confused, as I think most Americans are, about President Clinton's intentions with respect to Social Security. John Rother, chief lobbyist for the American Association of Retired Persons, told *The Washington Post* that many of his members are also confused and mistakenly assume the surpluses will be used to pay future Social Security benefits.

Crafting next year's budget, let alone tackling the coming problems in the Social Security system and the many other important problems facing this administration and the country, requires straight talk and straight answers. Either Social Security is first or it is not. Either we reserve any surplus for Social Security or we do not. Tell the truth, and the American people will support what needs to be done.

Senior citizens deserve better than to be treated as a political football by this President.●

#### FOOD CHECK OUT DAY

● Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, today we celebrate "Food Check Out Day" and commemorate the day when the average American will have earned enough income to pay for the entire year's food supply. We celebrate the bounty from America's farms and ranches and how it is shared with American consumers through affordable food prices.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, on average, American consumers spend only 10.9 percent of their disposable income for food. When applied to the calendar days, that means that the average American will have earned enough income to pay for his or her family's annual food supply in just 40 days. We commemorate this fact on February 9th, which is the 40th day of this year.

Compared to other expenses facing America's families, food is a bargain. While Americans must only work until February 9th to pay for their yearly food supply, last year they had to work until May 9th just to pay for their taxes. In addition, the percentage of disposable personal income spent for food has declined over the last 25 years. In 1997, Food Check Out Day would have been on February 10. In 1970, Food Check-Out Day would have been 11 days later than it is today—February 20.

This is made more notable by the fact that trends indicate Americans are buying more expensive convenience food items for preparation at home, as well as more food away from home.

The Agriculture Department's latest statistic, compiled for 1996, includes food and non-alcoholic beverages consumed at home and away from home. This includes food purchases from grocery stores and other retail outlets, including food purchases with food stamps and vouchers for the Women, Infants and Children's program. The statistic also includes away-from-home meals and snacks purchased by families and individuals, as well as food furnished to employees.

Mr. President, many states will mark today with an event to raise food donations for their local Ronald McDonald House. The Ronald McDonald House provides a "home-away-from-home" for the families of seriously ill children receiving medical treatment in their local areas. The food donated from these Food Check Out Day programs will be used to help feed visiting families staying at the House.

The bottom line, Mr. President, is that food in America is affordable, in large part because of America's productive farmers and ranchers. Food Check-Out Day allows us to recognize their hard work, the benefits of which we all enjoy. As a fellow rancher, I personally want to salute these Americans and thank them.●

#### 70TH BIRTHDAY OF PRESIDENT EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE

● Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I call the Senate's attention to an individual who has dedicated his life to liberating his people and restoring his nation. Eduard Shevardnadze's career of government service is marked most significantly by his personal journey from being a member of the Soviet hierarchy to being the prominent democratic leader he is today. I am proud to have met him on several occasions and draw the Senate's attention to this extraordinary man's accomplishments in celebration of his seventieth birthday which was January 25, 1998.

Eduard Shevardnadze's career began with a steady rise through the Communist Party. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs, his ability as a diplomat brought the United States and Soviet Union into a better understanding of one another. He was a significant force

in ending the Cold War peacefully and ushering in an historic era of improved world-wide relations. In 1991, however, Eduard Shevardnadze was at odds with the dictatorial policies of the Communist Party. His strong principles ultimately drove him to forego the trappings of the elite political class and he resigned his position.

Upon his resignation, Eduard Shevardnadze returned to Georgia. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, his homeland was destabilized and struggling economically. Eduard Shevardnadze began assisting in the revitalization of Georgia, and in November, 1995, he was elected president. His policies have focused on restoring territorial integrity, as well as promoting economic and political independence. Since his election, President Shevardnadze's notable achievements include adopting and implementing a new constitution, introducing a new currency, cracking down on organized crime, and negotiating important treaties with neighboring countries to secure Georgia's future.

President Eduard Shevardnadze's personal journey from communist to democratic leader is a compelling example of the triumph of the human spirit. His high standing among Western leaders has been earned through his principled democratic leadership and perseverance in the face of adversity. I would like to express my warm regards to President Shevardnadze in wishing him a prosperous seventieth year.●

#### PROHIBITING THE DESECRATION OF THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. KEMPTHORNE. Mr. President, I rise today to express my strong support for S.J. Res. 40, a resolution to propose a Constitutional amendment to prohibit the desecration of the flag of the United States. I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of this resolution.

The people of Idaho have told me, quite clearly, that they feel we must take steps to protect the Stars and Stripes. By way of a resolution passed by the Idaho State Legislature approximately three years ago, my constituents let it be known that Idahoans want the opportunity to ratify an amendment to the Constitution which would prohibit the desecration of the flag. The resolution stated, "...the American Flag to this day is a most honorable and worthy banner of a nation which is thankful for its strengths and committed to curing its faults, and a nation which remains the destination of millions of immigrants attracted by the universal power of the American ideal. . .".

Perhaps nowhere is the desire to protect the American ideal exhibited better than in the men and women who serve this nation in our armed forces. As a member of the Armed Services committee, I have had the opportunity to visit with many of these outstanding Americans who serve our nation