

defense of our country and national security should be a partisan issue, but it is.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

COOKED BOOKS

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I rise today to read an editorial from today's Columbus Dispatch. I want to read it in its entirety because I believe it strongly makes a point that needs to be made.

The editorial is entitled: "Cooked books—That big federal budget surplus? It isn't."

The editorial reads as follows:

The president and members of Congress should all be kept after school to write this on the blackboard 123 billion times:

There is no federal budget surplus.

The \$123 billion surplus that the president and Congress are crowing about last week really is a \$1 billion deficit, hidden by \$124 billion in excess Social Security tax revenue that shouldn't even be counted in the general budget because it is meant to be set aside in a trust fund to cover retirement-benefit payments later.

Put that Social Security money aside as intended and the truth about the federal surplus becomes evident:

The government spent \$1 billion more than it took in last year.

Certainly, a \$1 billion deficit is a vast improvement over years past, when the government was running in the red to the tune of \$200 billion or more annually and creating a national debt approaching \$6 trillion.

But it is still a deficit.

And it is patently dishonest for the president and Congress to pretend that all that red ink is black.

Even the \$124 billion in excess Social Security revenues is really not a surplus for the retirement program.

Yes, Social Security took in more last year than it paid out, but that surplus is a drop in the bucket of the program's \$8 trillion unfunded liability.

That's the amount of money the program ultimately is obligated to pay out to current retirees and workers above and beyond what those participants have paid or will pay into the system.

The \$124 billion cushion that Social Security has right now puts a mere 1.6 percent dent in that massive obligation.

Congress and the president each pay lip service to the idea of balancing the federal budget and preserving the Social Security surpluses for Social Security, but a genuine commitment to these goals would begin with honest bookkeeping.

Until then, it is back to the blackboard:

There is no federal budget surplus.

There is no federal budget surplus.

There is no federal budget surplus.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Bob Perret, a fellow in my office, be accorded the privilege of the floor during the pendency of S. 1287.

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

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I ask consent to be recognized in morning business. I understand the majority leader and Democratic leader will soon appear on the floor. When they do, I will be happy to yield the floor to them to take care of business they will transact. In the meantime, I would like to speak in morning business about a very important issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

THE INTERSTATE TRANSPORTATION OF CRIMINALS

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, the picture I have displayed on the floor of the Senate is of an 11-year-old child named Jeanna North. Jeanna North was tragically murdered by a man named Kyle Bell. Kyle Bell was a previously convicted child molester, a violent criminal living in the neighborhood. This young girl, out on roller blades one afternoon on a quiet Fargo street, was abducted and murdered.

Kyle Bell was convicted of that murder. On October 13, Kyle Bell was being transported to prison and he escaped in New Mexico from a bus that was transporting him and nearly 30 other prisoners across the country. Kyle Bell, this convicted child murderer, escaped from a company called Transcorps. Transcorps is a private company. There are a number of private companies that states contract with to haul killers and criminals around the country. When you haul toxic waste around America, you have to meet certain requirements. When you haul circus animals around this country, you have to meet certain minimum requirements. But if you are a business holding yourself out to transport prisoners all around this country from State to State, there are no minimum requirements and no standards. Get yourself a minivan, hire your brother-in-law and two cousins

and say you are in business and you want to haul a convicted child killer around the country.

The escape of this convicted child killer occurred in a circumstance where the bus transporting him, which carried over 30 people, pulled up to a service station to get gas. One of the guards apparently was fueling the vehicle, the other apparently might have been getting a hamburger at the Food Mart, and the third was asleep on the bus, and in the meanwhile this killer goes out through a hatch in the roof of the bus. Then the guards get back on the bus and for 9 hours that bus drove across the country, and they never knew this convicted killer had escaped.

He escaped in civilian clothes, incidentally—a convicted killer being transported across this country in civilian clothes. One would logically ask the question: If you are doing that, if you are transporting a convicted killer across State lines, why would you not have an orange prison uniform that says "I Am A Prisoner"? Because there are no regulations, no standards. You can haul prisoners, including violent prisoners, across this country coast to coast and you do not have any standards to meet. I think that is wrong. If you are a company, a private company contracting to haul violent prisoners across this country, it seems to me you ought to meet minimum regulations, minimum standards.

In order to enhance public safety, I am going to propose later this week a piece of legislation that will require the Justice Department to establish standards that private companies effecting that transport must meet. When there is an interstate transport of criminals across this country, especially high-risk criminals, certain minimum conditions must be met.

Minimum standards on background checks for employees—is that reasonable? You bet. Minimum standards for the type of training an employee would have, who is transporting a violent criminal across State lines; restrictions on the number of hours that employees are on duty during a 24-hour period; minimum standards on the number of guards that must be present for supervising violent criminals; standards requiring that high-risk violent prisoners wear brightly colored clothing, clearly identifying them as prisoners; minimum standards on the type of restraint that is used when transporting these prisoners; and a requirement that private prison transport companies notify law enforcement officials of scheduled stops in their jurisdiction when they are hauling a cargo of violent prisoners.

These are standards that ought to be implemented. The murder of this young girl in Fargo, ND, by Kyle Bell is a tragedy. But it is a tragedy that is compounded by the escape of this murderer who now, this afternoon, is on the loose. God forbid he should harm or kill someone else while he has escaped from custody. But this escape should