Mr. BARR of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUNT. I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. BARR of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished chief deputy majority whip for providing this time on the floor today as PAUL and his family are coping with a very serious medical illness that has befallen our colleague from Georgia on the other side of this great Capitol building.

□ 1600

PAUL COVERDELL is a man of Georgia. He is a true patriot of this country, and he works tirelessly on behalf of the people of Georgia and the United States of America. But first and foremost, he is a man of God. We ask the Lord's blessing on him and his doctors today as they cope with this very serious illness, and we ask for the prayers of all of our colleagues and all of those many millions of Americans whose very kind and gentle work and lives PAUL has touched with his work over the years.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL).

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with my colleagues in praying for a speedy recovery of Senator COVERDELL. I have had many differences with the Senator on legislative issues, but I have not met anyone that has been more of a gentleman, more of someone that respects the other view, and someone that really respects the institution of the House and the other body.

It is times like this that we throw away the labels of Democrat and Republican and realize that God's hand is involved in everything that we do, and at a time like this, only our prayers can be of any assistance to our colleague.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS).

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

I, too, would just like to echo the sentiment of all of my colleagues. PAUL COVERDELL is a great American. Nobody does more for his country or loves this country more than PAUL COVERDELL. He is simply a great American and great individual to work with us.

Our prayers go out to PAUL and Nancy as he goes through this very difficult time. We just look forward to a very speedy recovery for PAUL and return to the United States Senate.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS).

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me. I thank him, too, for bringing this matter and this announcement before the House of Representatives.

PAUL COVERDELL is a colleague, but most of all he is a friend, a friend for many years to many of us. In fact, PAUL COVERDELL has been a role model for many of us who followed him and served with him in the different bodies of the legislature.

When we received the call on Sunday afternoon that he had been admitted to Piedmont Hospital, our prayers began immediately, because we understood the severeness of his problem.

I hope and I pray that all of my colleagues would join us, join with the people of Georgia, the people of this Nation in praying for a speedy recovery and a full recovery of PAUL COVERDELL.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON).

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, it is times like this and many other times when one is dealing with PAUL COVERDELL that one no longer thinks of him as a United States Senator. One does not think of him as one of the most influential men in America. One thinks of him just as PAUL, PAUL and Nancy Coverdell, two friends whom we have all worked with over the years, whom we have all known and respected.

One thing about PAUL is one may agree or disagree with him, but one always respects his energy level, his knowledge of the issue, and the way he is so focused in attacking things. We are all his friends. He is a friend of the institution, and he is a friend of the governmental process, somebody who respects everyone and has that respect both ways.

Our prayers are with him, and that is the best that we can all do at this time.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friends for participating today and the indulgence of the House as we talk about a person who is really of great value to the House.

About a year ago, I was given an assignment that allowed me to work with Senator COVERDELL every week. I told the person that gave me that assignment several months ago I would have done that job in retrospect if for no other reason than to get to work with PAUL COVERDELL.

He is truly, as the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) said, one of the great gentlemen of this Congress. We need him to get our work done. We wish him well. Our prayers are with him and his family.

□

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The Chair has, under today's unusual circumstances, allowed unusual latitude in references to a sitting member of the other body.

□

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on the remaining motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any record vote on postponed questions will be taken later today.

□

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1660

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw my name as a cosponsor from H.R. 1660.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Hawaii?

There was no objection.

□

DEBT RELIEF RECONCILIATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2001

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4866) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 103(b)(1) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2001 to reduce the public debt and to decrease the statutory limit on the public debt, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4866

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Debt Relief Reconciliation Act for Fiscal Year 2001''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds that—

(1) fiscal discipline, resulting from the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, and strong economic growth have ended decades of deficit spending and have produced budget surpluses without using the social security surplus;

(2) fiscal pressures will mount in the future as the aging of the population increases budget obligations;

(3) until Congress and the President agree to legislation that strengthens social security, the social security surplus should be used to reduce the debt held by the public;

(4) strengthening the Government's fiscal position through public debt reduction increases national savings, promotes economic growth, reduces interest costs, and is a constructive way to prepare for the Government's future budget obligations; and

(5) it is fiscally responsible and in the long-term national economic interest to use a portion of the nonsocial security surplus to reduce the debt held by the public.

(b) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act to—

(1) reduce the debt held by the public with the goal of eliminating this debt by 2013; and

(2) decrease the statutory limit on the public debt.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC DEBT REDUCTION PAYMENT ACCOUNT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 31 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 3114. Public debt reduction payment account

''(a) There is established in the Treasury of the United States an account to be known as the Public Debt Reduction Payment Account

(hereinafter in this section referred to as the 'account').

''(b) The Secretary of the Treasury shall use amounts in the account to pay at maturity, or to redeem or buy before maturity, any obligation of the Government held by the public and included in the public debt. Any obligation which is paid, redeemed, or bought with amounts from the account shall be canceled and retired and may not be reissued. Amounts deposited in the account are appropriated and may only be expended to carry out this section.

''(c) There is hereby appropriated into the account on October 1, 2000, or the date of enactment of this Act, whichever is later, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $25,000,000,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001. The funds appropriated to this account shall remain available until expended.

''(d) The appropriation made under subsection (c) shall not be considered direct spending for purposes of section 252 of Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.

''(e) Establishment of and appropriations to the account shall not affect trust fund transfers that may be authorized under any other provision of law.

''(f) The Secretary of the Treasury and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall each take such actions as may be necessary to promptly carry out this section in accordance with sound debt management policies.

''(g) Reducing the debt pursuant to this section shall not interfere with the debt management policies or goals of the Secretary of the Treasury.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The chapter analysis for chapter 31 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3113 the following:

''3114. Public debt reduction payment account.''.

SEC. 4. REDUCTION OF STATUTORY LIMIT ON THE PUBLIC DEBT.

Section 3101(b) of title 31, United States Code, is amended by inserting ''minus the amount appropriated into the Public Debt Reduction Payment Account pursuant to section 3114(c)'' after ''$5,950,000,000,000''.

SEC. 5. OFF-BUDGET STATUS OF PUBLIC DEBT REDUCTION PAYMENT ACCOUNT.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the receipts and disbursements of the Public Debt Reduction Payment Account established by section 3114 of title 31, United States Code, shall not be counted as new budget authority, outlays, receipts, or deficit or surplus for purposes of—

(1) the budget of the United States Government as submitted by the President,

(2) the congressional budget, or

(3) the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.

SEC. 6. REMOVING PUBLIC DEBT REDUCTION PAYMENT ACCOUNT FROM BUDGET PRONOUNCEMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Any official statement issued by the Office of Management and Budget, the Congressional Budget Office, or any other agency or instrumentality of the Federal Government of surplus or deficit totals of the budget of the United States Government as submitted by the President or of the surplus or deficit totals of the congressional budget, and any description of, or reference to, such totals in any official publication or material issued by either of such Offices or any other such agency or instrumentality, shall exclude the outlays and receipts of the Public Debt Reduction Payment Account established by section 3114 of title 31, United States Code.

(b) SEPARATE PUBLIC DEBT REDUCTION PAYMENT ACCOUNT BUDGET DOCUMENTS.—The excluded outlays and receipts of the Public Debt Reduction Payment Account established by section 3114 of title 31, United States Code, shall be submitted in separate budget documents.

SEC. 7. REPORTS TO CONGRESS.

(a) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.—(1) Within 30 days after the appropriation is deposited into the Public Debt Reduction Payment Account under section 3114 of title 31, United States Code, the Secretary of the Treasury shall submit a report to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate confirming that such account has been established and the amount and date of such deposit. Such report shall also include a description of the Secretary's plan for using such money to reduce debt held by the public.

(2) Not later than October 31, 2002, the Secretary of the Treasury shall submit a report to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate setting forth the amount of money deposited into the Public Debt Reduction Payment Account, the amount of debt held by the public that was reduced, and a description of the actual debt instruments that were redeemed with such money.

(b) REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES.—Not later than November 15, 2002, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit a report to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate verifying all of the information set forth in the reports submitted under subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4866.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 4 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, last month, H.R. 4601 took the first step toward eliminating the national debt by the year 2013. That bill set aside additional non-Social Security surpluses for fiscal year 2000 for debt reduction by depositing the money in a newly created public debt reduction payment account in Treasury. Money deposited in this account would be taken off budget and could not be used for any purpose other than paying down the publicly held debt. The bill passed an overwhelmingly 419 to 5.

Well, what a difference a month makes. Since then, as my colleagues may recall, the budget surplus for this next year was going to be about $180 billion, the Congressional Budget Office has announced that that now is going to rise to a level of $268 billion. So today, H.R. 4866 would build on that progress of H.R. 4601 by depositing into the account an additional $25 billion out of the non-Social Security surplus for the fiscal year 2001.

A debt reduction payment account has already been established from Treasury. The account is not part of the budget. So any cash, any money that we put into that would be taken outside of the budget. Twenty-five billion dollars of the non-Social Security surplus is automatically deposited into this account if this bill is passed. The statutory debt limit will also be reduced by an equivalent amount. Once the money is deposited into the account, the Treasury must use the money to reduce the public debt. The money cannot be used for any other purpose.

Thirty days after the end of the year, after the end of fiscal year 2001, Treasury has to submit a report detailing to Congress the amount of money that was deposited into the account, the amount of the public debt reduction, and the exact Treasury securities that were redeemed with those funds; and this information is verified by the GAO.

Let me just give those people at home that I know watch what happens here with a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of concern, let me give them a thumbnail sketch of what we are talking about here today.

The budget, when we passed it in April for fiscal year 2001, was going to have a surplus of $180 billion. The Congressional Budget Office has now reestimated that surplus to be $268 billion.

Now, let me tell my colleagues what we have planned based on this bill and based on our budget for how that money should be used. First of all, $166 billion of that is Social Security. It is taken out of the budget under our budget plan. It is taken away. Nobody can touch it. We have done that now for the third consecutive year. We have had the opportunity to take Social Security completely out of the budget.

The Medicare surplus, the Medicare Trust Fund surplus, $32 billion, is taken outside of the budget. Nobody can use it for anything else, as it was used in the past. The debt that we are reducing is $25 billion. All right. There will be tax relief of about $5 billion to $6 billion.

Let me give my colleagues some of the percentages. The debt reduction of this bill alone represents 83 percent of the budget surplus going to reduce the national debt. We have the opportunity today to pass on to our kids a little less debt than we did the day before. The tax cut by relationship is only representing about 2 percent of that particular budget.

This is the second bill in a row to reduce the national debt, and there is still the opportunity to have a third bill in the fall to, again, make another principal payment toward the national debt.

Now, it is not going to be very glamorous to do this, and there is going to be a lot of people who run down here to the floor and say, oh, well, this would automatically happen. Yes, sure. For the last 40 years, it has not automatically happened. Nobody reduced any debt during that period of time. If someone wants to believe this is automatically going to happen, I have got some swamp land someplace to sell to them.

This is prioritizing how the surplus ought to be used, national debt number one.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this bill comes to the floor under the Suspension Calendar, which it is a suspension of the rules. But I would assume it also means it is the suspension of common sense. I have never before heard anybody that is going to reduce the deficit by proclamation.

I was amazed that the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE) would say that he was addressing his remarks to the people at home, because I would be embarrassed to tell the people at home that I am supporting a bill that never went through any committee in the House of Representatives.

It is just that someone woke up in the middle of the night and said let us give a message to the people at home. Last night, the message would have been that we would reduce the budget by $7.5 billion. But that was not a sufficient message for the people at home. That would not fly in going to the convention. So we say, let us reduce it by $90 billion or whatever the new numbers are going to be.

One does not reduce deficits just by standing on the floor proclaiming what one wants to do. One does not reduce the deficit by just trying to find out what is the new surplus under the Clinton-Gore administration, what has been announced, and then, as soon as one does, one adds it to the list of tax cuts that one has had that, so far, is $611 billion. Then, too, one has to restrain one's spending.

The people at home know that the only way to reduce debt is to increase revenue or to decrease spending. So what my colleagues are trying to do is to do both. But since we know that this is merely a proclamation for the people at home, and since we know that nobody in this House is against the concept, and since we know that the gentleman that is supporting the bill on this side belongs to the same committee I belong to, and it certainly did not come from our committee, that maybe it came from the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee.

I do not have any problem with that, because we Democrats would support the reduction of the deficit. It is a waste of people's time to do this. We need people to do things by action, not just by statement.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT), who is a member of the Committee on Ways and Means, and maybe the more committee members we have of the Committee on Ways and Means, we can see where this suspension came from.

(Mr. MCDERMOTT asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, it is Howdy Doody time again.

Mr. Speaker, I will enter into the RECORD my remarks of June 20 when we passed the last iteration of this foolishness.

Mr. Speaker, I started by saying that Groucho Marx said the main requirement to be a good politician is to appear to be serious.

The Washington Post recently commented on the performance of the majority in this Congress by calling this the ''pretend Congress.''

Now my colleagues get the second act from what I said in June. Because after we passed the bill, immediately the Congress went to work and started passing a supplemental appropriation. They reached into this lockbox that they say they are creating, and they took out of it all of the money and spent it. Then they started on the budget for 2001, and they started moving around pay days and when contractors get paid. It is all a flimflam.

Now, for the folks back home who are listening, let me explain something to them.

□ 1615

When the Federal Government gets tax money in, it sits in the treasury, and when the bonds come due, those government bonds, people say——

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, point of order.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. I am explaining to the Speaker, because he may not understand either, from the way these bills come.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The gentleman will suspend.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. FLETCHER).

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, point of order. My understanding of the rules on the floor is that we are to address the Speaker, not the people back home, and yet he directly addressed them.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The Chair would advise all Members to address the Speaker, and not the television audience.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I want you to understand how the budget money is dealt with, because I know you may not have been on the Committee on the Budget.

When the money is in the Treasury and the bonds come due, if there is money laying there, they buy back those bonds. They do not have to borrow money to roll over the debt. It happens automatically. It happens automatically. It has done it for years. We do not need bills like this, which come out here 2 weeks before the convention to say that we are reducing the debt. We have been reducing the debt. It has been going on on a regular basis.

Now, if my colleagues on the other side were serious about reducing the debt, and we get a new announcement from the Congressional Budget Office that says that we have $90 billion more in surplus, why do they come out here and only buy back $25 billion? Why do they not buy it all back? We know why. Because the Republicans want to give tax breaks. We are going to move on one of them here very shortly.

The fact is that we have already given $611 billion in tax breaks over the next 10 years. Now, if my colleagues were serious about paying back the deficit and they wanted to reduce the debt, what they would do is stop spending money, let it accumulate in the treasury, and when the bonds come due, the treasury pays them off. We do not do it by spending every chance we get.

We have to save some money here also for what happens in September. I will say it now so I can get out my remarks in September and say that we are going to spend a bunch of money in September to buy our way out of this Congress. The majority cannot stop themselves. It is an election year. And that makes this a sham.

Now, we are all part of the PR, and we are going to vote for it, like everybody else; but do not, anybody who is watching, pay any attention.

Mr. Speaker, I submit for the record hereafter the remarks I referred to earlier:

DEBT REDUCTION RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2000

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, Groucho Marx said that the main requirement to be a good politician is to appear to be serious. The Washington Post recently commented on the performance of the majority in this Congress by calling this 'the pretend Congress.'

This is one of the new acts. This debt reduction bill here pretends to do something. We are all called here together, we are going to be serious, we are going to give pompous speeches about how we are going to reduce the debt, and we are saving America, and all those Girl Scout cookies and all that stuff will just be fixed by this bill.

Now, the chairman at least was honest, and I really acknowledge the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Archer) honesty. This bill is effective from now until September 30, 2000. It does not quite make it all the way through the election. So it is not really a very good pretend item. It would be better if it went at least until November 8. But this is a bill for 4 months.

Now, you ask yourself, why would anybody be doing such a thing? Well, if you come up to a new reestimate of the revenue estimates here very shortly, the CBO and the OMB are going to come out with a whole bunch more money. Clearly the majority is afraid that they are going to spend it. They cannot save themselves. They have all the votes. This is your problem. We have the votes, as the majority over there, and they are going to put more money on the table and if you do not pass this bill, you will not be able to stop yourself from spending it. That is what this is about, I guess. Or maybe it is not about that.

The fact is that we have a situation where the Treasury does not need this bill to pay off more debt. If we get to the end of the fiscal year and there is some money there, they reduce the debt. They do not have to borrow. It is real simple. They do not need us to pass H.R. 4601 to tell them what they have been doing for 200 years. If they have a surplus, they buy down some of the debt. But this is a symbolic act, as my colleague from California says. I thought this would be on Friday, because this is usually the news cycle on Friday, they want to have something that says the Republicans today have passed a bill to encourage reduction of the debt.

Now, if you think about it, if you want to reduce the debt, you do not give big tax breaks, because taxes bring in money. And if you cut the taxes, there will not be any money to pay off the debt. So when you come out here and vote for tax cut after tax cut after tax cut and then say, And we want to reduce the debt, you simply are not making sense. There are only two ways to have money to pay off the debt, either take the taxes and pay it off or reduce the spending and pay it off, one or the other.

I do not see any evidence so far in this appropriations process that we are actually reducing spending. In fact, we are going up a little bit, and probably we are going to need some of this money along about September 15 to solve the problem to buy off this program or that program so we can get out of here. All we have to do under this bill, we do not have to repeal the act, we do not have to do anything, just pass the supplemental appropriation.

This can be violated by the most simplistic legislative act of all, just bring out another bill, spend some more money, in spite of the fact that we have passed H.R. 4601, the debt reduction bill. This bill will die in the Senate from laughter. There will not be anybody over there that takes this seriously.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds to say that it is interesting that both of the gentlemen who just spoke voted for the bill that they ridiculed. They rush here down to the floor and they say, oh, what a bad bill; oh, it is just theater; oh, we cannot stand it, and then they vote for it. Boy, that is political will. Boy, that is courage.

This is the Democratic magic show. Do not look at what we are doing; look over here. Look over here. We want people to look over here; do not look at what we are working on. Look over here. Let us talk about everything else but the facts that we are reducing the debt.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. Hayworth).

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Committee on Ways and Means, who serves as one of our representatives to the Committee on the Budget, for yielding me this time; and I would note for this House, mindful of the remarks of my colleague on the Committee on Ways and Means from Washington State, my remarks in response to his comments in June that also appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD where we offered the popular definition of insanity. The popular definition of insanity is, doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a substantially different outcome.

And therein we find the horns of the dilemma for our friends on the left. Because they come to this floor and speak disdainfully of process, indeed, Mr. Speaker, inviting our constituents to believe that this is somehow a flimflam. But, Mr. Speaker, the sad fact is the flimflam came in the 40 years of one-party dominance that this Congress saw where our friends on the left continually spent not only the money raised in revenue for general purposes but revenue intended for Social Security, revenue intended for Medicare, revenue that drove us deeper and deeper and deeper into debt.

And, Mr. Speaker, while we welcome their support, disdainful though it may be, while we welcome their support here and we also welcome their rhetorical endorsement now of debt retirement, we also point out that we stand in support of today's resolution because we intend to retire the debt. We have listened to the folks back home, Mr. Speaker; and, moreover, we understand this fundamental truth that fails to be grasped by our friends on the left: the money in the United States Treasury, Mr. Speaker, belongs to the American people, the American taxpayer. And, yes, we proudly stand and say that the American people ought to hold on to more of their hard-earned money instead of sending it here to Washington.

Now, it is a legitimate debate. My colleagues on the left believe the highest and best use of taxpayer money, of the American people's money, Mr. Speaker, is to keep it here in Washington for more and more expenditures, for more and more grand schemes, because the Washington bureaucrats know best.

We know exactly the opposite is true, Mr. Speaker. That is the voice of fiscal sanity here. We say let the American people hang on to their money and let us take a portion of that money that remains in Washington and use it to pay down the debt with this particular resolution to the tune of $25 billion, paying down the debt, in effect lowering the debt ceiling, for the second time since 1917, and thereby making history.

No, Mr. Speaker, it is not gimmickry. It is something that is unique and novel to our colleagues on the left. It is sound accountancy and ultimately being accountable to the American people.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), the ranking member of the Committee on the Budget.

(Mr. SPRATT asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, there are different ways to skin this cat; and I guess the puzzling, perplexing aspect of this bill is why we are reaching for a new solution when we have got other solutions ready at hand.

For example, as the gentleman from Iowa knows, we are way over the discretionary spending caps. There is no chance that we will adhere to the caps that we set in 1997. We could reset the discretionary spending caps, reinstate the process we call sequestration, so that if we exceed those caps, there is an automatically across-the-board series of cuts that reins in spending to the level we have set.

We also have something around here we call the pay-go rule. It applies to tax cuts and entitlement increases. It says, basically, if we want to have either, we have to pay for it. We have to offset it. There must be an offsetting tax increase to diminish the revenue loss or there must be a decrease in an entitlement in order to pay for an increase in entitlement. Those rules are there. Why not simply put them back into working order?

Furthermore, if we are really in earnest, the surplus projected for next year, 2001, is $102 billion, per CBO's most recent report. $102 billion is the on-budget surplus without including Social Security. Why go for $25 if the on-budget surplus is $102? Why not raise our sights, lift the bar a bit, and go $50, half of the on-budget surplus? At least why not go for $32 billion, because $32 billion is the amount of surplus calculated into that $102 billion surplus which is attributable to the surplus in the Medicare hospital insurance trust fund?

Now, the last time we had a similar bill to this on the House floor, there was a companion bill which sought to redefine the on-budget surplus to exclude the surplus in the Medicare trust account. The surplus in the Medicare trust account is $32 billion in fiscal year 2001. This amount should be, if we are really in earnest about protecting the Medicare surplus, at a minimum $32 billion. Why is it $25 billion? Why have we set the bar so low, and what do we accomplish by doing all this?

Now, I voted for it the last time; I will vote for it again this time. But I really think this is more about showmanship than about substance, because there are other ways to do what we want to do. And if we are really sincere and earnest about doing this, it ought to be higher than $25 billion.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER), the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. This is not showmanship. This is not just for rhetoric. This is a sincere attempt to try to prevent new spending, which occurs over and over again when we are about to close a congressional session.

Is it perfect? Maybe not. But it is genuinely designed to protect the update in surplus, which we have just received from the CBO, over and above

what we planned when we passed the budget earlier this year, from being spent on programs which will continue to grow like Topsy in the years ahead.

Is this for the people back home? I heard a Member say, oh, but this is for the people back home. It is for the people back home. It is to protect their hard-earned money that has come to Washington as a windfall profit to the Federal Government, a windfall profit that should not go into new spending programs.

And, yes, we must be honest. Politicians will find a way to spend money. It is seductive. It is not just on one side or the other. This is a genuine attempt to put this money off budget so it cannot be spent and that it will go where it should go: to pay down the debt.

Now, it has been alluded to that, oh, well, this relates to new tax relief. There is no way any new tax bill can get at the updated surplus for this year. The only thing that can happen to it that is not in the interest of the people is that in the last moment it will be spent on new programs. And we want to stop that. Yes, we do. And, yes, it is for the people, because it will protect their earnings that they have sent to Washington from new spending programs.

This should be overwhelmingly embraced by both sides of the aisle, if they genuinely want to stop new spending this year. I encourage a bipartisan vote for this bill.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to join with the chairman of this committee in asking for a bipartisan vote on this, I guess we can call it a bill.

It really does not mean anything. But if I understand the chairman of the committee and the sponsors of this bill correctly, we have to have this bill to make certain that the politicians do not spend up the surplus and that we reduce the deficit. We have to let the whole country know that we are here to stop these politicians who cannot control themselves.

Now, I assume that the politicians that we are talking about are Members of Congress, because they are the ones that will be doing the spending, and these are the people that we want to control. And I want to control them, too. It just so happens that the people that have created this declaration of wanting to reduce the deficit are the people who are in charge of the spending. Are my colleagues saying that the majority does not trust itself, and so it has to create some type of a mandate, some proclamation saying that they are going to reduce the deficit by $25 billion?

Suppose these same politicians that my colleagues and I are trying to control decide that they do not want to do this, and suppose they have the majority? Then it means that what we are doing today is worth absolutely nothing except to send out some political message. And so why would we not join with our colleagues in saying control the politicians, control the spending, reduce the deficit, pay down the Federal debt so that we do not have this burden of interest to carry?

And since we know that our colleagues know that they are in control of the calendar, they are in control of the tax cuts, they are in control of the spending, why would we as the minority not say, for God's sake, put handcuffs on these people, they are completely out of control? So do not ask why we are joining with our colleagues. We have no choice. Our colleagues are telling us that they have no discipline, as the majority party comes to the end of this congressional session, except to attempt to buy themselves out of it.

Well, I have more confidence in my colleagues than they have in themselves. But if they feel that they can bypass the Committee on Ways and Means and bring a leadership proclamation to the floor that says I love America and I would like to reduce this debt, and figure that any Member is going to vote against it, then my colleagues are mistaken.

So let us suspend the rules, let us suspend common sense, let us vote for this proclamation, and get on to legislation to see whether or not we are really concerned about reducing spending and making certain that we do not just give tax cuts to the rich at the expense of the working poor.

□ 1630

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. FLETCHER) who is the author of the original legislation to set aside this money for debt reduction.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I recall a few weeks ago when the minority was talking when we brought up the initial bill to establish this debt reduction account in the Department of Treasury and I remember one thing they said, and that was that if we were serious, then why would we only do it for 1 year?

We are serious. We are doing it for fiscal year 2001. My hope, my belief is that we will continue to do this for the future.

We have a $3.5 trillion publicly held debt. That is mind boggling. We must continue on this historic path to pay down the publicly held debt. We have an opportunity today to actually appropriate and pay down the publicly held debt by another $25 billion.

Just a few weeks ago we voted to pay it down by $16 billion. Today the Congressional Budget Office reported that the sun is shining ever brighter on America, that we have a greater surplus.

We have voted to set aside Social Security with a lockbox. We voted to set aside Medicare with a lockbox. Now we are setting debt reduction as a priority so that at the end of the year, if we are looking at the surplus, we have to decide truly are we going to take this money from this debt reduction account and spend it on more and bigger government, as has been done by the minority for years and years, or are we truly going to remove the shackle of debt from our children, are we going to reduce that debt, the debt that every family in America and every future generation will have to pay.

This will allow us to set our priorities at the end of the year, yes, and to discipline ourselves, as the gentleman said, to make sure that we pay down the debt, that we reduce this mind boggling debt. That is why we must seize this opportunity. It is like my bill that was passed last month. This bill will continue that historical precedent of paying down the debt by appropriating to this account in the Department of Treasury.

It is the moral equivalent of burning a mortgage or cutting up a credit card when it is no longer needed or when it has been paid off. It is removing the shackles of debt from our children. And we owe it to our children and our grandchildren. It is simple. It is common sense and it is the right thing to do.

In Kentucky we sing a song, ''the sun shines bright on my old Kentucky home.'' And let me say, fiscally, the sun is truly shining bright on America; and we need to continue to repair this roof while the sun is shining. Let us continue this work. Let us ensure that America is a land of hope, of prosperity and economic bounty.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage support of House Resolution 4866.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I only have one remaining speaker so I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) a distinguished member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Debt Reduction Reconciliation Act of 2001.

Recently we learned from the Congressional Budget Office that non-Social Security budget surpluses will be nearly $1.3 trillion more than previously anticipated over the next decade.

Make no mistake, if we do not protect the people's surplus, politicians will find a way to spend it on more government. This legislation protects all the Social Security and Medicare surpluses for fiscal year 2001 while setting aside $25 billion in additional surplus to pay down the public debt.

We must seize this unique opportunity and not just spend it on bigger government. Simply put, paying down the public debt lessens the burden facing the next generation of Americans.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) toned down his

rhetoric momentarily from ridicule to wonderment and to questioning. He wants to know why we are doing this at this point. He thinks it is because maybe we do not trust ourselves.

Well, first and foremost, I would say to the gentleman it is because many of us have been good observers of Congresses over the last 40 years and how we got into that situation and how Congresses and Presidents have this tendency to spend money when it is left on the table. So that is number one is that we are good observers. It does not matter which party it is.

It happens to have been during those 40 years that the Democrats were in control almost all of that time. But the point is that we are good observers. I think experience is a good teacher, and we have learned from those experiences. And that is the first reason.

But the second reason is an issue of priority. It is an issue of choices. Instead of a budget that waits until the end of the year to set a priority, which, as the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), the ranking member of the Committee on the Budget pointed out, is exactly the current process, if, and I put that word out there in big letters, if there is money on the table at the end of the year, there is a mechanism to pay down the debt.

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) is correct, it is automatically then paid down by Treasury because they have nothing else to do with the money, if there is money left over. The problem is that there has almost never been money left over. And, in fact, there has been money that was needed to be borrowed. That is how we got into the national debt in the first place.

So it is a matter of almost like a family with their budget laying out in front of them deciding that the Visa bill has to be paid first before they look at something new to do, before a new family vacation maybe is taken, before they put on a new addition to their house, before they try something new as a new priority, new spending, new indebtedness of any kind, they say it is a priority to pay down the mortgage, it is a priority to pay down the national debt.

And so, instead of waiting until the end of the year to say if there is money left over, we are saying there is money left over, this is a priority, this is a choice that the Congress is making. And if at the end of the year, the President and the Congress decide to do something different, as the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) pointed out very correctly, if we decide to do something different, then the American people know that that choice was made.

It was a choice between new spending and Social Security. It was a choice between new spending and Medicare. It was a choice between new spending and debt reduction. It was a choice between tax reduction and debt reduction.

That is a choice that we can go home and explain to our constituents. This is a choice that we can explain to America. This is a choice that is responsible in the area of budgeting. I believe it is those choices that need to be made.

It is for that reason that we come out here with a bill that we believe is important. No, it is not maybe the most important legislation that the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) has ever seen, but we believe it is an important priority; and it is for that reason that we bring the second bill of debt reduction.

And if in the fall, as the gentleman stated, there is more money, we can bring a third bill for debt reduction.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I just ask the gentleman just one question; and that is, can the same Congress that passes this resolution today be the same Congress to ignore it in September? That is all I am asking.

What we are doing today is just showing good intentions, and that is what it is all about. We could vote for eliminating disease. We could vote against war and for peace. And that is good and I will vote with the gentleman. But I just do not want people to believe that what we are doing today means that we are under any legislative obligation to fulfill what the gentleman is stating.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to answer the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bill. Now, the gentleman has a long and very stellar career in this Congress and I know the gentleman knows full well the difference between a resolution, a proclamation, and a bill. Because a bill can become a law.

That law can be changed, the gentleman is correct, but it is a law and it is a law that must be followed by the Treasury. It is a law that must be followed by the Congress. It is a law that must be followed by the President unless or until that law is changed. And that law can be changed in the fall, the gentleman is correct, but it will be a change of law and a change of priority. It will be the juxtaposition between spending and Social Security.

If they want to spend more money, they can. If the Congress wants to spend more money, it can. Certainly it can raise taxes. It can dip into Social Security. It can decide not to do any debt reduction. But we are deciding today that that choice must be made instead of waiting, as the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) pointed out, until the very end of the day on the very last legislative opportunity to see if there is any money left over.

We are saying it is a priority. And interestingly enough, not only are the Republican majority joining together today to say it is a priority but last month 419 Members of this Congress, including the very respected gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) and the very respected gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), joined with us in that tact.

Now, I understand that there might be some ridicule on their side because they have never been in a position to reduce debt. We believe it is an important priority. We appreciate the fact that the gentleman joined with us in this regard, and we would hope that they would be slightly more enthusiastic as a look at a possible third debt reduction bill in the fall.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we all have to be in support of this once the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE) acknowledges that the same Congress that makes the decision today as to what it is going to attribute to reducing the deficit is the same Congress that is going to come back and say what they think is in the national interest.

It defies reason and common sense why the majority party can come to this House and tell the American people and our colleagues that they do not trust their ability to control spending. But, in order to do this, they have to pass a law to prevent them from doing what they say they do not want to do.

We are going to help them all that we can and we are going to help to reduce the Federal debt. We are going to try to stop them from these outlandish tax cuts that they tried to do in the last session and was vetoed.

When that $792 billion tax cut was vetoed, the majority did not even try to come together and try to override the veto because they never expected that tax cut to pass.

As a matter of fact, I think the good wisdom of the Republicans in this House is that they do not expect any of these tax cuts to become law. They do not even bring them to the floor unless they promise to veto. And they are never discussed, anyway. And so, if they want to call this the Republicans' bill to control itself from excessive spending, why would we not be able to support them in that effort?

□ 1645

You are the majority. You are in charge. You set the agenda. You set the appropriations bills at the spending level. You come in and ask for your tax cuts. And then in the middle of the night you smell a surplus that we never had before in all of the Reagan-Bush years. We never really had a chance under Republican Presidents. Even though we had the majority, we did not know what a surplus was until we got President Clinton and Vice President Gore. So this is new to us. And so it is obviously new to you, as well.

We are enjoying a surplus, but we still have this tremendous, close-to-$6 trillion national debt, and it has to be

reduced and it has to be reduced by discipline. I would suggest, since it is too late in this session, that maybe the first thing that we should do next year is that Republicans and Democrats set aside their party label and start to talk with each other as to what is in the best interests of the people of the United States. Maybe then we will not have Republican bills and Democratic bills saying, Please stop us before we spend some more. Maybe we can have bipartisan bills that will be able to show the American people that we are serious.

And so in an effort to show you my sincerity, I stand here tonight and join with you and say, let us do this. Why? Because it is the right thing to do. And with it I pray that you in the majority can control your urge to spend unnecessarily and depend on our support.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I understand that the minority will try and stop us to reduce the taxes on the American people and to reform those taxes, but we will try and stop you from dipping into the Social Security trust fund yet again, the Medicare trust fund yet again, to add to our debt, to add to our deficits as you did for 40 years. We will and we will succeed.

But there is one factor that you left out and that is the fact that the Congress is not the only one in control. Every eighth grade government student knows that the President has to sign the law. I hope he signs this law; and I hope we reduce the debt for my kids, for your kids and grandkids and for all of America.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a ''yes'' vote.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4866, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 4 o'clock and 48 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□

□ 1710

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD) at 5 o'clock and 10 minutes p.m.

□

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 4810. An act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 103(a)(1) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2001.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the bill (H.R. 4810) ''An Act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 103(a)(1) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2001,'' requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. ROTH, Mr. LOTT, and Mr. MOYNIHAN, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

□

MOTION TO GO TO CONFERENCE ON H.R. 4810, MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY RELIEF RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2000

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 553 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 553

Resolved, That upon receipt of a message from the Senate transmitting any Senate amendments to the bill (H.R. 4810) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 103(a)(1) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2001, it shall be in order to consider in the House without intervention of any point of order a motion offered by the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means or his designee to take from the Speaker's table the bill, with any Senate amendments thereto, to disagree to the Senate amendments, and to request a conference with the Senate thereon or agree to any request of the Senate for a conference thereon. The motion shall be debatable for one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the motion to its adoption without intervening motion.

SEC. 2. House Resolution 550 is laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY), the distinguished ranking Member, my good friend, pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 553 provides for consideration of a motion to go to conference with the Senate on H.R. 4810, the Marriage Tax Penalty Elimination Reconciliation Act. The motion will be debatable for 1 hour equally divided between the chairman and the ranking minority Member on the Committee on Ways and Means.

As my colleagues will recall, the House passed H.R. 4810 last week by a bipartisan vote of 269 to 159. This vote marked the second time that the House passed this legislation and the fourth time that it has voted to provide marriage tax penalty relief in this 106th Congress.

The will of the House is clear, and it is time that we finish the job and get this bill to the President for his signature. We are almost there. In fact, the Senate just passed its own version of the marriage tax penalty relief act by a bipartisan vote of 60 to 39. This resolution will allow the House to quickly respond to the Senate's actions by going to conference where the two bodies will negotiate a final marriage tax penalty elimination act that we can send to the President, and in doing so, we will give him the chance to make good on the words he spoke during his State of the Union speech.

During that speech, the President told the American people that we can make ''vital investments in health care, education, support for working families and still offer tax cuts to help pay for college, for retirement, to care for aging parents and to reduce the marriage penalty. We can do these things without forsaking the path of fiscal discipline that got us to this point.''

Mr. Speaker, Congress has helped the President meet his challenge. We have passed legislation to preserve Social Security for future generations, to provide affordable drug coverage to seniors through Medicare, to restore our national defense, to invest in education and to pay down the debt.

We have done all of these things in the context of a balanced budget, and we are still swimming in surplus cash.

□ 1715

Meanwhile, 25 million American couples suffer under the unfair financial burden imposed by the marriage penalty. On average, they pay $1,400 more in taxes than they would if they were single; skip the whole marriage thing and just live together. What kind of message is that for the government to send? Where is the logic in taxing marriage, one of the most fundamental institutions in our entire society?

Mr. Speaker, $1,400 is real money to American families. Families can use this income to pay for health care, invest in a child's education or plan for their retirement. Sound familiar? These are all the things the President says that government should finance before it provides tax relief.

Well, why do we not just cut out the middleman, the government, and let the American people make the decisions about what their needs are and where their money should be spent?