

In this morning's Washington Post, Attorney General Gonzales says we have a choice: either accept this flawed conference report or it will expire. I respectfully disagree. We must not allow the PATRIOT Act to expire. There are provisions we desperately need to keep America safe. But we should not pass a reauthorization that fails to protect basic constitutional rights. Once we give these rights away in this act, can we ever reclaim them?

The 9/11 Commission said it best: The choice between security and liberty is a false choice. Our bipartisan coalition believes this legislation can be changed and improved to protect civil liberties and give the Government the tools it needs to fight terrorism.

We believe it is possible for Republicans and Democrats to come together, dedicated to protecting our basic constitutional rights. We believe we can be safe and free.

The American people have already lived with the PATRIOT Act for 4 years. They shouldn't have to wait any longer for Congress to take action to protect their constitutional rights.

This morning, the Senate majority leader came to the floor to speak about a provision in the PATRIOT Act which I certainly support. It is the Combat Meth Act. My State of Illinois, many States with rural populations, knows that this insidious drug crime has been increasing with these meth labs and an addiction which has destroyed lives and created chaos, starting, of all places, with rural areas and small towns. The Combat Meth Act includes \$15 million in COPS funding to combat the growing methamphetamine problem, and I support it. However, what the Senate majority leader did not mention was that the Republicans in this Chamber have consistently voted against COPS funding.

As recently as last March, when the Senate considered the budget resolution—I see my friend, the chairman of the Budget Committee, and he may respond—Senator BIDEN proposed an amendment to increase COPS funding by \$1 billion. That amendment did not receive a single vote on the other side of the aisle. Time and again, the President has proposed eliminating funding for hiring additional police officers through the COPS Program to help combat this methamphetamine problem. Simply authorizing another \$15 million in COPS funding in the PATRIOT Act is not enough. It is time for Congress to take a stand and provide real money to fund the COPS Program, to help State and local law enforcement fight this insidious meth epidemic across America.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

DEFICIT REDUCTION ACT OF 2005

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair now lays before the Senate a message from the House.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 1932) entitled "An Act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 202(a) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2006 (H. Con. Res. 95)", do pass with the following amendment.

The bill is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of November 17, 2005.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of motions to instruct conferees with respect to S. 1932, and the Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, we are now proceeding to try to appoint conferees for the purposes of passing, hopefully, at some point, the deficit reduction bill which would reduce the deficit of the United States by \$45 to \$48, maybe \$49 billion and, thus, reduce the debt of the United States and be the first piece of legislation passed in the last 8 years which attempts to address one of the most serious issues we have as a matter of Federal spending policy, which is the issue of how we bring under control our entitlement accounts. It is important, as we move down this road, that we once again set the table as to what the issues are. It is a complex issue, and it is one which a lot of people who are not focusing on it probably do not really appreciate the subtleties because it is something that takes a certain amount of expertise or at least a fair amount of time relative to understanding it.

The way the Federal spending process works is that there are essentially two different sets of accounts. One is discretionary. Those are accounts that we spend every year. They are for things such as national defense, education, environmental cleanup, health care, items which every year need to be appropriated. That is called the appropriations bills. They represent about a third of the Federal spending.

Another set of accounts is entitlement accounts. Entitlement accounts are programs from which you, as American citizens or an organization, have a right to receive a payment. It is not a question of being appropriated. In other words, there doesn't have to be a law passed every year for you to get that expenditure like you have to do with national defense.

Rather, this money, you have a right to because the law says you meet certain criteria. You may be a veteran. You may be a student going to college and you have a right to a student loan. You may be a senior citizen who is retired and you have a right to Social Security payments and you have a right to health care payments. You may be a low-income individual and you have a right to Medicaid payments.

The problem we confront in the Federal Government is that although the

discretionary accounts have been held at a very low rate of increase—in fact, nondefense discretionary funding has essentially been frozen under the budget resolution we passed. That freeze has been enforced through what is known as spending caps, where in order to go past this essential freeze, you have to have a supermajority to do it. On the entitlement side, there is no way in the regular order of the Senate to control the rate of growth in entitlement spending because, for a certain number of people or programmatic activity, the payment must be made. We confront a fiscal tsunami, driven by the fact that we are facing the largest retired generation in the history of this country, the baby boomers.

As Chairman Greenspan pointed out in what was essentially his wrap-up statement as to what he thought were the concerns we as a Nation should be looking at in the area of fiscal policy—or maybe not his last statement but maybe a major policy statement made in London. He said the one thing that most concerned him was the fact that the baby boom generation—this large generation born after World War II, through the 1950s—when it hits the retirement system, tremendous demands are going to be put on the Federal Treasury and, therefore, on the taxpayers of the country—the younger generation who are trying to earn and have a good lifestyle—are going to be overwhelmed. We are essentially going to confront the situation where we will have so many people retired compared to the number of people working that those people who are working are going to have to pay a disproportionate amount of their income in order to support the retired generation, and it will be to a level that will essentially eliminate or dramatically reduce our children's and grandchildren's ability to have a quality lifestyle. These pages today are going to have a tax burden that is so high that basically their ability to buy a house, to send their children to college, to have a quality of life that is equal to or better than ours—which is, of course, what we hope to pass on to our children—will be dramatically reduced.

To put this in context of dollars—and the dollars are so big it is hard to understand it—there is presently \$47 trillion of unfunded liability out there to support the generation that is about to hit the retirement system. That is an unfunded liability. That means there is no way anybody knows how to pay for those programs. The vast majority of that is in the health care area, where there is about \$24 trillion of unfunded liability between the Medicare and the Medicaid systems. Those numbers were not numbers I thought up or even that CBO thought up or OMB thought up, the in-house accounting groups we turn to for advice. Those numbers came from the independent, totally objective source of the Comptroller's office.

So we confront this huge cost, and the issue for us as policymakers and as