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Senate

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

Mr. CARPER. I thank the Senator for yielding.

I spoke several weeks ago as we were taking up the budget resolution. I quoted a fellow from Great Britain, Dennis Healey, who used to be the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Dennis Healey used to talk about the theory of holes. The theory of holes is pretty simple. It says, when you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.

In 1990, we as a country were in a pretty big hole with respect to our budget deficit. Some people in the House and the Senate, the White House, Democrats and Republicans, decided to stop digging. What they decided to do was to adopt a commonsense approach to budgeting, which we call "pay as you go."

The idea is if Senator Coleman, our Presiding Officer, were to come to the Senate and propose new spending, he would have to come up with an offset, either cut spending some place else or raise revenue to offset it. Or if Senator Carper came up with a tax cut, I would have to come up with an offset to make sure we did not make the hole any deeper. For about 12 years, it was the law of the land.

During those 12 years, from 1990 to 2002, we actually were able to reduce the deficit and for the first time in 30 years we actually balanced the Federal budget for several years in the late 1990s and the beginning of this decade.

That law lapsed in 2002. We voted in the Senate that it should be reinstated. They very nearly voted in the House yesterday, kept the vote open over an extended period of time so they could twist some arms on the other side in order to defeat the effort to instruct the House conferees to go back and adopt this pay-as-you-go principle.

We ought to do that. If the House conferees will not, we should at least adopt those provisions, this standard, for the Senate, for the way we conduct business.

There was a great editorial in the Washington Post called "Dodge as You Go." I ask unanimous consent that this article be printed for the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[Washington Post, Mar. 31, 2004]

Mr. CARPER. I will quote one or two sentences out of the editorial.

Other principles used to carry some weight in the U.S. House of Representatives: allowing lawmakers to vote their consciences, not manipulating voting rules to get the desired result, and opposing a reckless amassing of budget deficits selfishly left for other generations. But that was the leadership of other speakers, and other Presidents.

We can do something about it. Our conferees can do something about it. My hope is they will stick by our guns to try to make sure at least for the Senate we adopt those rules that served us so well for 12 years.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore.
The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we had another one of our colleagues in the Senate assert support for the PAYGO provisions means one is opposed to the middle-class tax cuts. I would ask my colleague from Delaware, does he believe support for the budget disciplines that requires new spending or new tax cuts to be paid for means he opposes the extension of middle-income tax cuts?

Mr. CARPER. If I could respond, the answer is absolutely no.

My dad used to say something to my sister and me when we were kids growing up. The Senator's father and mother probably did the same thing. Senator Nickles' mom and dad probably did the same thing, as well as Senator Coleman's. They harp on something over and over again. When my sister or I used to pull some boneheaded stunt, my dad would always

turn to us and say, just use some common sense. He must have said that to us, because we pulled a lot of boneheaded stunts, day after day, week after week, year after year. Finally, it worked and internalized.

Whenever we approach an issue in the Senate or when I was Governor of Delaware, I would oftentimes say to my cabinet, just use some common sense.

Pay as you go is common sense. It is flat in-your-face common sense. It works in State governments. Frankly, it worked here for about 12 years and it will work again. It is not the only thing we need to do but, by golly, it is a big part of it.