

president, National Trust for Historic Preservation. The President also referred to his memorandum of October 13, 1999, on protection of for-

est roadless areas (*Public Papers of the Presidents: William J. Clinton, 1999 Book II* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001) p. 1765).

The President's Radio Address

August 5, 2000

Good morning. Seven years ago this month we set out on a course to eliminate the deficit, invest in education, and open markets for American products overseas. By sticking to that path, we have turned record budget deficits into record surpluses and produced the longest economic expansion in history, over 22 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest minority unemployment rate on record. Income taxes for the typical family are the lowest now in 35 years, and we're on track to achieve something unimaginable a few years ago, a debt-free America by 2012.

Now, this is the right path for America. A path that allows us to pay down the debt, lengthen the life of Social Security and Medicare, keep investing in education, and cut taxes for middle class families. We can't retreat from this opportunity of a lifetime to keep our economy strong and move our country forward. That's why I'm vetoing legislation that represents the first installment of a fiscally reckless tax strategy.

Today's economic progress is the direct result of a commitment to commonsense, kitchen-table values, responsibility and fairness, putting first things first, not spending what we don't have, looking out for our children's future. To stay true to these values, I've consistently vowed to veto tax breaks that abandon our pledge of fiscal discipline. For without this commitment, we wouldn't have a surplus today; we wouldn't be paying down the debt; we wouldn't have lower interest rates, which have led to record business investment and an effective tax cut for typical families—\$2,000 in lower home mortgage payments, \$200 less in car payments, \$200 less in student loan payments.

Now once again, in spite of all this evidence, America is being asked to turn back. On Capitol Hill, the Republican majority has passed a series of expensive tax breaks to drain nearly a trillion

dollars from the projected surplus. On the campaign trail, they are proposing over another trillion dollars in tax giveaways.

If they support both the tax cuts this year and the tax cuts of their Republican Presidential campaign, they would drain over \$2 trillion from the projected surplus. And that's just what it is, projected; it's not money in the bank.

Even by Congress' own optimistic estimates, their total tax breaks would put us back into deficits. That means higher interest rates, which is like another tax increase on ordinary Americans.

So I asked the Republican leadership, do you really stand behind this \$2 trillion tax cut strategy? If so, how do you justify leaving nothing for Social Security or Medicare, nothing for a new Medicare prescription drug benefit or education? And how will we ever make America debt free?

Now let me be clear. I support tax cuts but tax cuts we can afford. We can't afford a \$2 trillion U-turn on the path of fiscal discipline and economic progress. That is not the way to continue our efforts to use these good times for great goals.

For 7½ years we've achieved those great goals in the economy, in education, in welfare reform, in health care, in crime, in the environment, in building one America. If we want to keep making progress, we've got to keep making good choices. And committing 100 percent of the surplus, that may or may not materialize, to tax cuts is not a good choice. There is a better way.

Earlier this summer, I made an offer to the Republican leadership that I would sign a marriage penalty relief law if they would pass an affordable, voluntary Medicare prescription drug benefit available to all seniors and disabled Americans who need it. Unfortunately, they rejected my offer. They've got another chance, though. When they come back, we can work

together for a middle class tax cut to help Americans send their children to college, provide long-term care for elderly or disabled relatives, make child care more affordable, provide targeted marriage penalty tax relief. We can do that and still pay off the debt, strengthen Social Security and Medicare, create a voluntary Medicare prescription drug benefit, and invest in education. We can do this. And that's what we ought to do. We ought to keep interest rates down and save the future for our children.

Let's not squander the surplus or this moment. Let's keep our economy strong, provide affordable tax relief, and extend our prosperity into the future. Let's do it together.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:18 p.m. on August 4 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 4 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval Marriage Tax Relief Legislation

August 5, 2000

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 4810, the "Marriage Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2000," because it is poorly targeted and one part of a costly and regressive tax plan that reverses the principle of fiscal responsibility that has contributed to the longest economic expansion in history.

My Administration supports marriage penalty relief and has offered a targeted and fiscally responsible proposal in our fiscal year 2001 budget to provide it. However, I must oppose H.R. 4810. Combined with the numerous other tax bills approved by the Congress this year and supported by the congressional majority for next year, it would drain away the projected surplus that the American people have worked so hard to create. Even by the Congressional Budget Office's more optimistic projection, this tax plan would plunge America back into deficit and would leave nothing for lengthening the life of Social Security or Medicare; nothing for voluntary and affordable Medicare prescription drug benefits; nothing for education and school construction. Moreover, the congressional majority's tax plan would make it impossible for us to get America out of debt by 2012.

H.R. 4810 would cost more than \$280 billion over 10 years if its provisions were permanent, making it significantly more expensive than either of the bills originally approved by the House and the Senate. It is poorly targeted toward delivering marriage penalty relief—only

about 40 percent of the cost of H.R. 4810 actually would reduce marriage penalties. It also provides little tax relief to those families that need it most, while devoting a large fraction of its benefits to families with higher incomes.

Taking into account H.R. 4810, the fiscally irresponsible tax cuts passed by the House Ways and Means Committee this year provide about as much benefit to the top 1 percent of Americans as to the bottom 80 percent combined. Families in the top 1 percent get an average tax break of over \$16,000, while a middle-class family gets only \$220 on average. But if interest rates went up because of the congressional majority's plan by even one-third of one percent, then mortgage payments for a family with a \$100,000 mortgage would go up by \$270, leaving them worse off than if they had no tax cut at all.

We should have tax cuts this year, but they should be the right ones, targeted to working families to help our economy grow—not tax breaks that will help only a few while putting our prosperity at risk. I have proposed a program of targeted tax cuts that will give a middle-class American family substantially more benefits than the Republican plan at less than half the cost. Including our carefully targeted marriage penalty relief, two-thirds of the relief will go to the middle 60 percent of American families. Our tax cuts will also help to send our children to college, with a tax deduction or 28 percent tax credit for up to \$10,000 in college tuition