

wages, up to \$7 an hour? Effectively, they get a tax increase because the earned income tax credit has been cut.

Do you know what else is really ironic about it? Those people do not pay taxes. They do not make enough to pay taxes. So you know what? They do not get a child tax credit. They are getting a tax increase by cutting the earned-income tax credit, and they get nothing to offset it because it is only if you pay taxes that you can offset the tax cut for each child.

What kind of lunacy is this? What do the American people expect from us? They expect a little decency and they expect fairness.

Mrs. BOXER. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BUMPERS. I am happy to yield to the Senator.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, first, I want to say to the Senator from Arkansas, thank you for coming to the floor today and talking to us and to whoever is watching here. As the Senator has a way of doing, he finds the truth. He finds the truth in all of this. The truth that he pointed out—and then I will ask a question—when you get through with this Republican budget, what you realize is that it hurts the people of this country. It hurts the hardest working people of this country. We will bring that out in the next few days.

The question I want to ask the Senator is this: We know when the Government shut down and we had that crisis, it was because the President of the United States stood up and said to this Republican Congress, "I'm not going to back down. I'm going to stand up for Medicare and the elderly who rely on it. I'm going to stand up for Medicaid and the poorest children who rely on it, and the poorest seniors in nursing homes who rely on it." He was going to stand up, and he did, for the environment and for education.

I say to my friend, has he looked at this Republican budget that they have just unveiled with great fanfare, and that budget which the President vetoed, and does he see similarities between the two?

Mr. BUMPERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to proceed for 4 additional minutes.

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

Mr. BUMPERS. Let me say to the Senator from California, this question reminds me of something Franklin Roosevelt said. My father taught us when we died we were going to Franklin Roosevelt's. He was the only one who ever did anything for us.

This budget is a manifestation of almost total disdain for people trying to reach for the first rung on the ladder. It is protectionism at its worst of those who have much. Franklin Roosevelt once said, and I know the Senator is familiar with the quote, "The groans of the full pocketbooks of the wealthy are louder than the churning of the empty stomachs of hungry people." That is not so true now as it was during the

Depression, but the principle in this budget is the same.

You think about cutting education \$60 billion. You think of how many children will not be educated as a result of that. I have said time and time again if it had not been for the GI bill waiting for me when I got out of the service, I would not be standing here right now.

And that applies to millions and millions of people. There was a very poignant story in the Post this morning about a woman who said, "I wouldn't be in this position if it hadn't been for student loans and student grants." So what are we doing? We are cutting education \$60 billion. Everybody wants clear air and clean water. So what are we doing? Cutting the environment. Nobody wants to see a child go without health care. So we are cutting Medicaid. I could go on and on. But I find this budget almost identical to the budget we debated last year—

Mrs. BOXER. That is right.

Mr. BUMPERS. The one followed by a reconciliation which the President had the good sense and the courage to veto. Had he not vetoed it, we would be on our way to third-world status right now. That is how bad I felt it was.

Mr. President, I know my time has about expired. Every time I think of the fact that two of my very best friends and best Senators in the U.S. Senate lost their seats because they cast a very courageous vote here in 1993, it makes me sad.

So, Mr. President, there are going to be a limited number of amendments. I have a number that I wish I could offer on the budget, but I know time constraints will not permit that. However, I will offer a few. One amendment would keep the U.S. Government from selling assets to balance the budget. Think about selling the power marketing systems. Think about selling the Elk Hills Petroleum Reserve. Sell everything. What do you do for an encore when everything is gone?

A woman once said her husband came home from the law office and said, "I had a great day today." She said, "What happened?" He said, "I sold my desk." That is what we are doing in this budget. I am not going to vote for it. I am going to vigorously speak against it, and there will be 53 Republicans that will vote for it. We are starting down the same road we just left.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

GAS TAX REPEAL

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, a few moments ago, the other side of the aisle effectively blocked the efforts to repeal President Clinton's August 1993 increase on gasoline, diesel fuel, and jet fuel. Now, just to put this in perspective, when the President was run-

ning for the office he now holds, he said, in unequivocal terms, that a gas tax was the wrong thing to do, he said it was egregious for low income, and he said it was harmful to the elderly, all of which is true. It is as regressive a tax as one can find because the lowest income families in America pay the highest share of their disposable incomes. It ranges as high as 8 percent of their disposable income that has to be invested in the purchase of gasoline.

So those that have the least resources are those for which this tax causes the most difficulty, which, as I am sure, is why the President said it was the wrong thing to do. Nevertheless, on arrival at the White House, an increase in gasoline taxes was put in his tax increase on America, which, as we all know, was the largest tax increase in American history. These policies have had the effect of costing America's average families, all of them put together, about \$2,000 to \$3,000 in lost income.

Some people around here do not seem to think that is a lot of money. But for the average family in Georgia, let me try to put it in perspective. An average family in Georgia makes \$45,000 a year. Both parents have to work to get that. In fact, in many cases today, the kids have to work, too, to make ends meet. By the time this average family in Georgia pays their Federal taxes, FICA, Social Security, Medicare, State and local taxes—their share of the regulatory apparatus in our country, which is at an all-time high—they have 48 percent of their gross income left to do everything that we have asked them to do. That is unbelievable.

If Thomas Jefferson were here today, or any of the other Founders, they would absolutely be stunned that we have grown up the Government so large that it takes over half the resources from labor, leaves them with less than half of what they earned to do what they have to do, to promote their own dreams, to educate, to house, to feed, to clothe, to transport, to provide for the health of their families and their communities. No wonder there is so much anxiety in the workplace today, so much anxiousness among our people. We have literally pushed the American family to the wall.

So, suddenly, there is a phenomenon that makes everybody focus on the price of gasoline. The prices have been skyrocketing because there is a refinery shortage, because there was a bad winter, because the price of the crude product costs much more today. And so some Members came to the floor and said let us at least, in the face of this, get rid of that burden. Let us repeal that gas tax. Let us remember what the President said when he ran for President. And then even the President said, "Yes, I agree. I would sign a repeal of the gas tax."

But when we tried to do it in these last 5 or 6 days, with us saying it should be done, with the President finally agreeing, remembering his remarks during the campaign that it was

a wrong tax, a regressive tax, a tax hard on low income, a tax that is hard on senior citizens—so we had the majority and the President both agreeing. But the other side will not let it come to a vote. They will not even allow this modest reduction of economic pressure on the American family.

In the face of vast public support, a modest attempt to put a few more dollars in the checking accounts of these American families, for which—to step back a moment, Mr. President, last week we acknowledged, just for taxes—forget the regulatory reform—an American family, a Georgia family in my case, works today from January 1 to May 7 for the Government, and May 8 is the first day they get to keep their paycheck. For Heaven's sake, a family in America has to work from January 1 to May 7, and on May 8 gets to keep their first paycheck.

I might add that, under this administration, the date you get to keep your check is the latest in the year that it has ever been. These policies have added 3 more days that a family has to work for the Government before they can keep their own earnings.

We just heard remarks from the Senator from Arkansas bemoaning attempts to try to lower that impact. The last balanced budget that the Congress sent to the President would have put \$2,000 to \$3,000 in the checking account of that average Georgia family I was talking about. That is the equivalent of a 10- to 20-percent pay raise. Now, if you are currently having over half of your resources taken, just think what an important event it would be to be able to keep another \$2,000 to \$3,000 in the checking account of that average family. A phenomenal impact.

As I said, it is almost not comprehensible. I would never have believed while growing up that I would be in the U.S. Senate at a time when a family has to work from January 1 to May 7 before they get to keep their first paycheck.

If we ask Americans what would be a fair tax level, no matter their circumstances, they will tell us 25 percent. That would be working from January 1 to March 1, and then on March 2 you get to keep your paycheck. But no. No. Now it is May 8 before you get to keep your paycheck.

We came forward and said, "Look, the President has vetoed all this tax relief. But let us at least at a minimum take this gas tax burden off the backs of the working families." I might point out that it would mean somewhere around \$100 to \$200 that would be left in the checking account. Several people on the other side have suggested that is too little money to be concerned about. Well, if it is such a small amount, why are we in such an argument about returning it to the families that earned it? Let us go ahead and give it back to them. If it does not matter to them, why does it matter to us?

I remember several years ago in my State when we raised the fee on the li-

cense tag \$10 to \$15, and it almost created a revolution, from my mother to every neighborhood. "Why am I paying this additional \$5?" We got rid of that in a hurry, and we ought to get rid of this gas tax. We ought to leave that money in the checking account for those who earned it.

In my State alone, the gas tax removed \$238 million annually from the economy. That is an enormous sum of money. Removing that money from the State, taking it out of the families that earned it and the businesses that earned it and shipping it up here to the Treasury so some Washington wonder wonk can decide where to spend it makes no sense under the current conditions that we face.

But even this modest attempt to lower taxes even the slightest amount has found stiff opposition from the other side, and they have consistently refused to allow this measure—which now their own President says he is willing to sign—they will not let it get passed; deadlocked; cannot end the debate; another filibuster, which I might point out is a 60-to-50 effort to stop a filibuster, more than any other session in contemporary history.

Whenever we get into these tax questions, Mr. President, I always get back to this average family. I asked for a snapshot of that family about 3 months ago. It has been absolutely fascinating. I do not think many people in America, even those paying this burden, understand that half of what they earn is being taken right out of their checking account and shipped up here so that another set of priorities can be imposed.

That is an inordinate burden, and there is no institution in America that has had a more profound effect on the American family and its behavior than their own Government—more than Hollywood, more than all these cultural issues that we talk about all the time. There is no institution other than our own Government that has had such a profound effect. I mean, what else can sweep through your home and take half the resources you earn?

When I was a youngster, I was told that the largest single investment that I would ever make was my home. Wrong. The largest single investment I make and all my fellow citizens make is the Government. We have long since surpassed the investment in the home with the Government. The Government now takes more than your mortgage, clothing, and transportation combined—the Government.

Back in 1950 when the quintessential family was Ozzie and Harriet, Ozzie was sending 2 cents to Washington out of his paycheck. If he were here today, he would be sending a quarter; 2 cents to a quarter in 50 years. Do you know that Harriet would not be at home either? She would be in the workplace. She would have to be in the workplace so that they could maintain what they are charged to do for their family and deal with the tax burden.

Several months ago I took a chart from 1950 to 1996 and tracked the tax burden, which has grown and grown from 2 cents to 25 cents federally. I tracked a number of families in which both parents had to be in the workplace, and you will not be surprised, Mr. President, they track each other identically right on the line. As the tax burden went up, another set of families had to have both parents in the workplace.

I know there are many other features of our new world—the desire for professional accomplishment, the lifting of the glass ceiling. There are many factors that are in the workplace. But I argue that the most significant reason is tax pressure. In fact, there was a recent study that asked the other spouse, "Are you pleased to be in the workplace?" You will not be surprised, Mr. President, a third of them do not want to be there at all, a third of them want to be there as volunteers, and another third of them would work just part time. But the economic pressures that time and this new era have put on those families has literally pressured a total realignment of who is in the workplace.

Families today are in the workplace, husband, wife, and children, just to keep their standard of living in place. The tax burden, Mr. President, has had a more profound effect on the workplace than any other single event in the last 25 years.

Mr. President, I am going to conclude my remarks. But let me just say I am absolutely stunned that even a slight attempt, a modest effort, to go in the correct direction of relieving the tax pressure on the American working family is opposed by the other side of the aisle—attacks in the road, and the barricades across the road to relieving America's families of the enormous tax burden they bear today. They work from January 1 to May 7, and finally on May 8, get to keep 1 day's paycheck. We try to push that clock back just the slightest degree and are railed against by the other side of the aisle. It is perplexing, Mr. President, and I am sure it is to America's families across our land as well.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 10 minutes.

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

THE GAS TAX, THE BUDGET, AND OBSTRUCTIONISM

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I want to talk a little bit about several things.