

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.

I am not the one who is, of course, engaging in the obstruction of the gas tax repeal that we have been going through now for nearly a week. I would like to comment just a bit on the budget. Even though we are not into the budget debate, there are comments that have been made this afternoon that I think require some little comment. Finally, just a little comment on where we have been this year in terms of obstructionism and holding us back.

It is kind of frustrating, maybe more so for those of us who are new here, and I think very frustrating for the people in the country, to see the Senate not able to move forward on issues that certainly cause disagreement. Nevertheless, we do have a system for that, and that is called voting. If the issue gets more votes than it does not get, then it passes. If it does not, it does not. That is the concept of most of us on how to run things. So it is a little frustrating finding yourself in the position of not moving when there are things to be done, when there are things that are important to families in this country.

One of the other things I think is particularly frustrating is we have here, and very proudly so, a government of the people and by the people, where people make the final decisions on how they stand, how they believe on issues. But, to do that, it is necessary to have the facts. Increasingly in our society, I think, and it troubles me a bit—we have more ability now to communicate than we have ever had. We have the opportunity now, regardless of what happens here or what happens around the world, to know about it instantly through this communications system. Yet, at the same time, despite that system, we find ourselves with more noninformation all the time. It is not the province of any one particular party, it is not the province of any one person, but we find ourselves, I think, with more and more information that is spun to make a point and that is not, frankly, accurate. I think that is too bad. It is really difficult to make decisions with respect to policies and issues if the information we have is distorted. I think we see that increasingly happen to us.

Talking about the budget, a little bit ago there was discussion on the floor about the budget that will be brought out and talked about tomorrow. Among other things it was said EPA takes a whopping cut. The fact of the matter is discretionary spending at the EPA would remain at the level provided in the recently signed appropriations bill. It is not a cut. It stays as it is.

The allegation was also made that education would be cut. Education will increase from \$47.8 to \$52 billion. That is not a cut. Last year we got into this business about Medicare and talking about the cuts. There were no cuts. What it was was reducing the level of growth so we could maintain that program. If you like Medicare, if you like

health care for the elderly, then you have to do something. We thought then that you had to do something by about 2005 or whatever. Now it has been refined to where you have to make some changes by 2001 or the system will go broke. That is no one's projection except the trustees, three of whom are appointed by the President.

The resolution, as a matter of fact, would increase the spending for beneficiaries from \$4,800 in 1995 to \$7,000. That is not a cut. Yet we hear, and the media continues to utilize that word, "cut."

So it is very difficult, it seems to me, to really deal with this. There is a legitimate difference of view. I understand that. Much of the conversation that goes on here, even though we talk about details, is basically a philosophical difference. A little bit ago one of our associates on the other side of the aisle was talking about the benefits of tax increases because they helped reduce the deficit. Of course they do. But the philosophical question is, do you want to reduce the deficit by controlling spending and reducing the level of spending, the rate of spending which would balance the budget, or do you want to continue to spend at the same level and raise taxes to offset it? That is a philosophical difference. That is basically what we talk about here.

It is a defining choice. I suspect everyone, even though it does not happen, says: Yes, let us balance the budget. We have talked about a constitutional amendment here, talked about it this year—everybody, when they initially stood, said, "I am going to balance the budget. We do not need a constitutional amendment. We can do it."

Yes, we can. We have not done it for 25 years, however. So it does seem to me a constitutional amendment is something reasonable. But further than that, and at least as important, is what is the philosophy of doing it? Do you want to continue to grow at the rate we have in the past, which is like 8 percent a year faster than the growth in the economy? Or do we want to reduce that level, that rate of growth, and balance the budget that way? I happen to favor that idea.

I think voters said, in 1994, the Federal Government is too big, it is too costly, we need to do something to contain it. I think we should do that. So that is the great debate. To have that debate, you have to have some facts there. You have to talk about the same numbers. Then we argue about the philosophical difference, because there is one.

The idea, somehow, the statement that "I am not going to vote for any tax cuts" does not seem to me to be the kind of thing that I support. I think we ought to have tax cuts. I think we ought to be able to leave more money in the pockets of American families. About 40 percent, on average, of our income goes to some level of taxation. I do not think anybody ever intended for that to be the case.

Of course, there are functions of Government that we all support. There are functions of Government that we need to fund and finance, but I do not think anyone had the notion that we would be doing it at the level of 40 percent of our income.

So I hope as we go through this budget—and it is more apparent in budgets than anything else—that we can say: Here are the basic sets of facts. We ought to start there. Then if you disagree, fine. Disagreement is what it is all about.

Let me talk a minute about the gas tax filibuster. We have been trying to do that for a while. What are we talking about? First of all, the bill that is on the floor has to do with Travelgate reimbursement, reimbursing those employees who were unjustly taken to court, who had worked at the White House, to pay their legal fees. That is the basic issue.

The amendments to that included a gas tax reduction of 4.3 cents. It has to do with the minimum wage, a controversial issue, but a valid issue, useful. It has to do with the TEAM concept of allowing employers and employees to be able to come together to use some of the new techniques that have been developed in management, to allow employers to call upon employees to find better ways to do things. We have seen this happen around the world. I come from Cody, WY. The guy who started that kind of management in Japan came from Cody, WY, of all places. And it works. But we do not allow that to happen unless there is a change.

The minimum wage is a legitimate issue. Interestingly enough, it came up here in the Senate about a month ago and had not been talked about for 3 years. But when the AFL-CIO was here and promised \$35 million for the election, suddenly it became an issue. It is a legitimate issue. We ought to talk about it.

The gas tax, however, the 4.3 cents—the average gas tax paid in this country is about 38 cents. About half is Federal, about half State. I come from Wyoming where people drive a good deal more. Someone mentioned their family, when using their car, would save about \$20. Ours is about \$70, because we do drive a great deal more. So it is a little unfair regionally. I have a parochial concern about that.

I think one of the interesting things, though, is that this 4.3 cents, out of the 18 cents, is the only portion of the gas tax that does not go to the maintenance and building of highways. It goes into the general fund. I think it would be a mistake to begin to tax this commodity generally for nonhighway uses. That is what we have done. So we have an opportunity now to change that.

One of the reasons it comes up, of course, is because of the extraordinary recent prices in gasoline over the last month or less. Is this the answer to that? No, of course not. But this needs to be repealed under any circumstances. It provides an opportunity

to talk about it, some way to say, "Well, the 4.3 cents will never get to the consumer."

I do not believe that. First of all, it has such a high level of visibility that it surely will have to go there. Second, there is great competition, as you know. If I have a gas station on one corner and you have one on the other, and I lower mine, you are going to lower yours, too. That is going to happen. Competition has a great deal to do with that.

We had a hearing this week and took a look at the costs of gasoline, and it is roughly a third—about a third for crude oil, about a third in the refining and marketing, and about a third in taxes. Not many commodities are taxed that high. So we ought to do that.

I am very disappointed that instead of voting on it, instead of following the advice of the President, who over the years has indicated that he was opposed to a gas tax, who indicated during his campaign that that was not a good tax because it taxed the poor at a much higher level of a percentage of their income than the rich—it is true—now supports it, brought it to us. So we need to change that. Why do we not? Because our friends on that side of the aisle will not let it come up.

Filibuster. This is not the classic filibuster where people stand up and talk all night and bring their sleeping bag and cook dinner out in the back. This is the kind where it is simply obstructionism that will not let it come to the floor, and it continues.

So we need to change that, Mr. President. We need to move forward. Let these issues stand for all as they will.

Finally, I think there has been some frustration, at least on my part, this year in that this is not the first time or the only time it has happened. My friend from Georgia just indicated that some 60 times this has happened this year, more than any other time in recent history. We have set about to make some changes this year.

I think those of us who just came last year in the last election are maybe more aware of the need for change, feel more of a mandate to make a change. I think, to a large extent, we have succeeded in causing that change to happen. We have not come to closure on as many things as I wish we would have and could have, but I can tell you that we have changed the debate here.

Now we are talking about how do you balance the budget, arguing about which aspects of the budget we can change to balance it. For 25 years we did not talk about balancing the budget at all. Now we are. Now we are talking about ways to make Government more efficient and more effective and, indeed, to move some of the functions of Government back closer to people, the States and the counties. That is a new idea. Not since the Great Society with Lyndon Johnson have we talked about making it smaller rather than larger. So there have been a lot of

things that this same sort of obstructionism has caused not to happen.

Tort reform. A lot of people believe that we ought to do something in our legal system, do something about litigation so that we do not have this constant pressure. We cannot do that because there is obstruction from the White House.

Regulatory reform. Almost everybody understands and recognizes that we are overregulated. Sure, we need regulations, but they need to be the kind that are efficient and effective and not so costly. We did not get regulatory reform because it was obstructed.

The balanced budget amendment to the Constitution failed by one vote in the Senate. As I mentioned, people argue, "Well, we don't need to do that." The evidence is we do. We do it in my State. We do it in most of our States. We do it in about 43 States, I think. There is a constitutional amendment that you cannot spend more than you take in. That makes sense. It is morally and fiscally responsible. We ought to do that.

Welfare reform. Almost everybody believes that we need to help people who need help, but we need to help them back into the work force, and we need to make some changes so that can happen. We need to move that much more to the States. Certainly the delivery system in Wyoming for welfare needs to be different than it is in Pennsylvania. We have 100,000 miles and 475,000 people, half of what is in Fairfax County across the river. Our system has to be different. We need to let the States devise that delivery system.

Health care reform is stalled right now. It is not an extensive health care reform, but it has to do with portability; it has to do with accessibility to insurance. It is hung up now. We cannot move forward.

I have been involved, as have many of us, with Superfund reform. Everybody knows Superfund reform has to come about. One of the main contributors to cleaning up Superfund sites are insurance dollars, and 85 percent of those dollars go to legal fees, not to cleaning up Superfund sites. That needs to be changed. We need to reduce spending. Talk about balancing the budget—spending has continued to grow.

So, Mr. President, those are some of the effects, it seems to me, of sort of obstructing moving forward. This one is more pronounced than most. We cannot move on the gas tax. But it has been going on all year. That apparently is the strategy to move into this election, to make sure we do not do anything. I think that is too bad.

So, Mr. President, I hope that we can do something about it. I hope we can make a move. I think the 4.3-cent gas tax needs to be repealed and needs to be returned. I hope, as we move into the debate on the budget, that we can at least talk about facts, put the numbers out there as they really are, and then argue about whether you like it

or not. I hope that we can move forward on a great many of the issues that I believe people would like to see considered and would like to see passed.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry. Are we in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business.

CLINTON ADMINISTRATION POLICY ON DRUG SMUGGLERS

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, after reading a May 13 report in the Los Angeles Times, I wrote to Attorney General Reno expressing my shock at reports that Clinton administration officials are letting drug smugglers go free as a matter of official policy.

Although I have not yet heard back from Attorney General Reno, this is a disturbing matter that requires action now. Drug use among our children is on the rise and is contributing to the rise in juvenile crime.

Therefore, tomorrow I plan to offer a sense-of-the-Senate resolution calling on Attorney General Reno to investigate this matter and report back to Congress in 30 days, and calling on the Attorney General to ensure that any policy that allows drug smugglers to go free is stopped and that all such persons be vigorously prosecuted.

Mr. President, the Clinton administration has been indifferent, at best, to the war on drugs right from the beginning when President Clinton largely dismantled the drug czar's office. I hope my colleagues will join me in sending a strong message that, for the sake of our children today and tomorrow, we believe we must aggressively put these drug smugglers—who are nothing more than merchants of death—where they belong, behind bars.

I will point out a few statistics. These are not Senator DOLE's facts. These are facts given to us by people who are experts in the area. The number of young people between 12 and 17 using marijuana has increased from 1.6 million in 1992 to 2.9 million in 1994. That has probably increased a lot more since the end of 1994. And the category of "recent marijuana use" has increased a staggering 200 percent among 14- to 15-year-olds. About one in three high school students uses marijuana, and 12- to 17-year-olds who use marijuana are 85 percent more likely to graduate to cocaine than those who abstain from marijuana. Juveniles who reach age 21 without ever having used drugs almost never try them later in life. If you make the first 21 years