

Mr. COVERDELL. The Senator from Arizona is absolutely correct. The American people know this is out of balance. They know it. You can ask any segment, and they will say that they ought to work from January 1 to about March 1, about 25 percent. So it is double what the American people are paying, which is, of course, why the administration promised to lower it.

But the incredulous thing is, they did the exact reverse and gave us the highest tax increase in American history and therefore have created this enormous weight, this enormous economic burden on every working family, no matter their age or circumstance across our land.

I do commend the Senator from Arizona and notice we have been joined by the distinguished Senator from Tennessee. I yield up to 10 minutes to the Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. FRIST. Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to join my distinguished colleague from Georgia, and having just heard the remarks, which are right on target, from my colleague from Arizona, addressing this issue of taxation, where the country is going and what we can do about it.

Mr. President, America was once the most optimistic nation on the face of this planet, but that is not the case anymore. Today, thanks in large measure, I believe, to the incredible tax burden that is placed on the backs of the American people, Americans have lost not only faith in Government, but they have lost all hope in the future and that the future will be better in some way than the past.

You know, when my parents were growing up, America was a place where, if you worked hard and you played by the rules, you could earn enough to support your family and still have a little something left over to put away for the future, and maybe even have a little bit to buy those little extra special things in life. That was what the American dream was all about. But for most American families today, the American dream is becoming nothing but a nightmare.

When I was a child growing up, the largest single expense that family had was their home. It is no longer the case. That largest single expense is the tax bill. Today, Americans send more each year to the tax collector than they spend on food and on clothing and on shelter.

In 1950, it took just a fraction of our income to go towards our taxes. Today, almost half of everything they earn, the American family earns, goes to the Government in some form or the other—almost half of everything they earn. No matter what they do, they cannot get ahead. The harder they work, the more taxes Washington takes out of their pockets. The more taxes they have to pay, the harder they

work. That is what we mean when we say we are caught in a tax trap. Washington ends up with more, but American families end up with less.

Mr. President, the American dream was also about generational improvement, about believing that our children would have more opportunities, more choices and a better life than their parents. And, indeed, in America, they should have. Why is it, then, that for the first time in our great country's history, an entire generation of Americans have lost hope and lost confidence in the future? Why? How is it that we have lost that vision, that belief in unending dreams and in limitless possibility? The answer is simple: Taxes.

Mr. President, for decades Washington has told America that everything is OK. But, at the same time, Washington has spent our children's inheritance and undermined their future. For decades, Government not only spent more than it took in, but spent that money unwisely. Just to pay for what? A growing Washington bureaucracy, a bureaucracy that has created and encouraged overlapping programs—over 160 different job training programs, over 240 education programs, over 300 economic development programs, over 500 urban aid programs.

How does Washington pay for all of these overlapping programs? By raising taxes through the roof. It should not surprise anyone that more and more American families find it harder and harder to make ends meet, that more and more American families are forced to live from one paycheck to the next paycheck, that too many Americans want to put something away for the future, but they simply cannot, that almost every single American feels squeezed by rising prices, higher taxes, and stagnant wages.

Yet, Mr. President, while in the first 100 days of the new Republican Congress we spent our time trying to cut taxes, to give tax relief to that American family, Mr. Clinton spent his first 100 days in office trying to take more of America's hard-earned dollars. Against unanimous Republican opposition, President Clinton imposed the largest tax increase in the history of this country—\$265 billion, to be exact. Yet, he still expects Americans to save more and to give more, in spite of this tax increase. No wonder most Americans have lost hope. It is the Clinton crunch. It is stagnant wages and higher and higher taxes. That is what the American taxpayer feels.

I repeat, the Clinton crunch is hurting America every day. The Clinton crunch is hurting the American citizen every day. The price of Mr. Clinton's tax trap is high. It not only costs the typical American family \$2,600 in higher taxes and lower earnings, but we also pay the price of less savings, less investment and a less certain future. That is why, as we travel around our various States from community to community, we hear that the American people are afraid. They are afraid that

they are not going to be able to afford that interest on their children's college loan. They are afraid they are not going to be able to afford to buy that first home. Why? Because interest rates are too high. They are afraid they are not going to be able to pay off their own accumulating debt. They are afraid that they will have nothing saved by the time they retire.

Well, it is time to end the tax trap, and we can end the tax trap. It is time we gave the American people some well-deserved tax relief. It is time we return their power, that we return their influence, that we return their own earnings over to them and their futures. And it is time we, once again, encouraged economic growth, encouraged opportunity, encouraged wages, encouraged savings, and returned that hope and that optimism that is so characteristic of the American people.

Mr. President, Government and bureaucracies did not make America great. People made America great, people who worked hard, who saved for the future, who saved and invested for their children, who made the world a better place for that next generation, for their children, for their grandchildren. That is what made America great.

Our goal, the Republican goal, is to end the tax trap. Our goal is to help Americans not only earn more money but keep more of what they earn, so they can do more for themselves, do more for their families, do more for their communities, so they can save more for their children and their future, and so they can give more to that collection box on Sunday.

Yes, that is the legacy our parents and grandparents left to us. It is the legacy that all Americans inherited from our Founding Fathers. Let us not be the first generation who fails to pass that legacy on.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of the Senator from Tennessee. He is on target, as usual.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, let me just say that, again, I want to close by talking about the fact that this Congress, the 104th, the Senate and House, has done remarkable work in bringing to the country some relief in the insurance marketplace for health insurance.

We heard, in the last Congress, about the large number of people who are disadvantaged in the insurance marketplace and that they lose their insurance if they change jobs. The costs are too high. A lot of young people do not have insurance, or somebody who has had a medical problem has difficulty getting insurance. We oppose vehemently the idea of a new massive Government takeover to run every aspect of everybody's decisions—families and persons.

Well, the principal advocates for a Government takeover of health care are now telling us that it is simply unacceptable that they are going to use medical savings accounts, which is a new opportunity in the marketplace. The President and the Senator from Massachusetts have keyed in on that and said, no, that cannot be in the marketplace. They are so opposed to this concept that they are going to block everything, leave the uninsured uninsured, leave the person who cannot move from one job to another unable to do that, let the person sitting out here—I met one of them just last week—who cannot get insurance because of a preexisting condition. Too bad. Let the self-employed, who cannot deduct their cost for insurance—they cannot deduct it like somebody who works for a company—too bad, we do not like medical savings accounts, even though the vast number of Americans do. So we are going to block it all, we are going to filibuster this election of conferees to bring a reasonable health care solution to the country to the table. No, America, you cannot have it because the new leadership and Senator Dole on our side wants this new product called medical savings accounts. So if it cannot be their way, it will not be any way.

If you really want to get to the bottom line, I think that they would be just as fine to let it go, not let this come into place, so we can come back with a new match of Government proposal after the next election.

Mr. President, what do folks think about these medical savings accounts? Here is a quote: "Today I would like to appeal to President Clinton to please support the MSA issue. Nearly 3 years ago, we went to an MSA plan, and it has been very helpful to us."

Is this one of those rich people they talk about? No, it is Penny Blubaugh, secretary and part-time bus driver for the Danville, OH, local school district. She is asking the Senator from Massachusetts and the President to let this go through, saying that it has been helpful to her. She would like others to take advantage of it.

Here is another one: "An amendment to the health care package has been offered to add a medical savings account provision. The United Mine Workers have a similar provision in our current contract that is anticipated to produce a significant savings to our previous insurance." This is a quote from a letter to PAUL SIMON of Illinois from Dan Reitz, political director of United Mine Workers' State chapter in Illinois. That does not quite fit the picture of this so-called rich beneficiary.

"Mr. President, we believe MSA's will be a huge benefit to the American public. MSA's are not a partisan issue. Democrats supported MSA's in the 102d and 103d Congress, and we support them in this Congress because they are a good idea. That increases access, controls costs, and offers options." That is in a letter to President Clinton from

Democrat Congressman BOB TORRICELLI and ANDY JACOBS of New Jersey and Indiana.

Well, the list goes on and on, Mr. President. They have talked about—the Senator from Massachusetts and the White House—that it only benefits the wealthy and the healthy. But in truth, regarding the experience of 2,000 companies with MSA's, a recent study by the Rand Corp. shows that MSA's appeal to those of all income levels and would attract those of all health conditions, including the chronically ill. In fact, I was at a press conference and a press interview, and one of the persons there supporting this had fought off what might have been a terminal illness. So it is just inappropriate to characterize this as just serving the wealthy and the healthy.

Mr. President, I see the hour of time which I control has expired. I will just close by saying I hope that the White House will implore the Senator from Massachusetts to allow us to proceed with the health care reform that helps bring insurance to small businesses, to small farmers, people looking for some relief, people who are looking for a friendlier work environment in order to obtain health insurance. The Senator from Massachusetts has it all bottled up. The Senator from Massachusetts has it all bottled up, and that means millions of Americans are bottled up. It is time to bring this to an end and let these reforms become part of the American workplace.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I wish the Chair a good morning, and my colleague from Georgia. I enjoyed his reflection on health care.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT TIMBER CONTRACT EXTENSION ACT OF 1996

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am going to speak on another subject but it is equally important to my State, and that the introduction by myself along with Senator STEVENS and Congressman YOUNG of a piece of legislation known as the Environmental Improvement Timber Contract Extension Act of 1996. I introduced the bill late yesterday, and I did not have an opportunity to speak on it.

This particular piece of legislation would provide for timber contract extension. The bill would extend for 15 years the long-term timber sale contract on the Tongass National Forest between the Forest Service and the Ketchikan Pulp Corp. which is a subsidiary of Louisiana Pacific. This extension would provide Ketchikan Pulp with a stable timber supply over a sufficient length of time to amortize the cost of a new environmentally improved pulp mill. Improvements and energy efficiency equipment would be

installed at a cost of somewhere between \$150 million and \$200 million.

It is interesting to reflect that when this mill was first built back in the mid-fifties the total cost of the mill was somewhere in the area of \$55 million. In any event, Ketchikan Pulp Corp.'s situation is extremely unique because all of its timber comes from the national forest. In my State of Alaska there is no State forest of any consequence in southeastern Alaska, and the only private timber that is available is owned by the Native regional corporations.

We also have a unique difference in that we have in the Tongass people who live in the forest in the towns of Ketchikan, Juneau, Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka, Haines, Skagway are all in the forest, and were in the forest before the forest was created. And the theory was when the Nation's largest national forest was created there would be sufficient timber set aside for the modest industry that was in existence. We have seen some changes in that policy.

So I am introducing this bill as a result of, first, the important role that Ketchikan Pulp plays in the social, economic, and environmental vitality of southeastern Alaska; two, the strong bipartisan support within our State for this action; three, the record from the two field hearings which I held last month in southeastern Alaska in Juneau and Ketchikan which overwhelmingly supports the introduction of this legislation; fourth, the realization that the performance of the Forest Service strongly indicates that without some congressional intervention the Ketchikan Pulp mill will not survive without an adequate supply of timber.

Let me elaborate on each of these factors because they are important.

Let me describe the nature of the southeast forest in the Tongass. Thirty percent of our timber is dead or dying. It is old growth, virgin timber. But as with any living thing there is a process of growing, maturing, and then the death of the trees begin. The theory of utilizing these trees which have reached their maturity and are in the process of dying is the forest process of evolution which is associated with timber development. So what we have is a product that is only suitable for wood fiber, and as a consequence there is a justification for the pulp mill. Without the pulp mill, the lumber mill would be less profitable and the pulp would have to be exported creating virtually no jobs in my State.

So let me share with you what the forest told us about the evolution and the importance of the contract with southeastern Alaska as of May 28 at the oversight hearing in Ketchikan:

The long-term contracts in Alaska which required the construction and operation of manufacturing facilities such as sawmills and pulp mills facilitated the establishment of a timber industry in Southeast Alaska.

Prior to the 1950's, economic conditions in Southeast Alaska were characterized as boom-bust. Federal government employment, mining and salmon processing were