

gains tax. I happen to believe that we need a reduction in marginal rates across the board.

The important thing to note is it is not just a simple choice between what we are discussing in terms of tax cuts for the American people, and none at all on the other side and what the White House is saying, we are talking about saving Social Security, strengthening Social Security, and tax cuts as opposed to more spending and higher taxes. That is what we are hearing from the other side.

I think the more the American people look at the details of what the Republican Congress is doing, what it has done up until now when given the ability to do so, despite the rhetoric, despite the fear, despite the sky is going to fall from the other side, ultimately, at the end of the day, the American people are going to place their trust in the people who are true to them.

I want to congratulate all my colleagues again.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I just want to bring up one more point, and that is the question that I get asked in a lot of my town hall meetings. What if these surpluses never materialize? What if the money does not come? We have to do everything to assure that it does materialize.

But by creating 120 new government programs in Washington, that can become and will become tomorrow's tax increases above and beyond the \$176 billion of tax increases in the President's current budget. That becomes tomorrow's debt increases.

One thing that is very important that we need to keep in mind as we look at these budgets is we need these surpluses to materialize so we can pay off these obligations, so we can get ready for the baby boom generation on Social Security, so the money is there in the Trust Fund to pay out benefits when the baby boomers begin to retire, when younger generations begin to retire.

The best thing that we can do to assure strong economic growth which gives us more jobs, produces more taxpayers paying more taxes, giving us the surpluses that they are projecting is to reduce the burden of taxation on the working families of Wisconsin, Colorado, New York, South Dakota, and Illinois.

The best thing that we can do, in addition to keeping our interest rates low by reducing our national debt, which we are doing, is to let people keep more of their own money time after time. Every time we have done that in this century, cut tax rates under Hoover, under Kennedy, under Reagan, we increased economic growth.

We actually increased revenues from those taxes which are going to help us keep the economy growing, produce more jobs in this country, keep these surpluses coming in, so we can pay off our debt, so we can fix Social Security. Because if these surpluses do not mate-

rialize, if we go into a recession, all bets are off, and we are stuck with these new government programs. So that is why it is so important to make sure that we pay these obligations down and let people keep more of their money.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, in the remaining 2 minutes that are left, I yield half of that to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) to wrap things up for us.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, let me first salute my colleagues here for talking about an important subject tonight, and that is what are we going to do this year in the budget? How are we going to save Social Security? How are we going to lower the tax burden? How are we going to meet our financial obligations and pay off the debt?

The President says that extra money that is burning a hole in Washington's pocket, that \$2.6 trillion surplus, he wants to spend it on new government programs and raid Social Security to the tune of \$250 billion over the next 10 years.

We have a different approach. The Republican Congress says, look, we are going to stop something that has gone on in Washington for 30 years. We are going to stop the raid on the Social Security Trust Fund and end that practice that President Clinton wants to continue.

We are going to lower the tax burden by eliminating the marriage tax penalty. We are going to pay down the national debt. That is our goals.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I want to thank the Speaker for recognizing a representative sample of the Republican majority here in Congress during this special order.

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In Fort Collins, CO, a woman writes, "Although our family is not wealthy, it makes sense to me to give the extra money back to the people who paid it." That is the operative sentiment that drives us here in Congress.

We, as a Republican majority, ultimately believe that any surplus that this government manages to acquire is better reinvested back into the people who earn that money in the first place. That is a far more profitable prospect than what the Democrats prefer, which is to invest other people's cash into the government charity of the Democrats choice. We stand for something very different. We stand for all these constituents who believe that they should come first; that people should come before bureaucracy.

THE REPUBLICAN AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I represent a pretty diverse district. I rep-

resent the south side of Chicago and the south suburbs in Cook and Will Counties, bedroom communities like the town of Morris, where I live, as well as a lot of corn fields and farm towns. Representing such a diverse district, city and suburbs and country, I have learned to listen, and to listen for the common concerns that the people ask their elected representatives to look out for.

One clear message that I have heard over the last 4 years that I have had the privilege of serving in this House of Representatives is that the folks back home want us to work together, they want us to get things done, and they want us to come up with real solutions, solutions that meet the challenges that we face. I am pretty proud that we have met that request.

When I was first elected in 1994, I was told it would be too difficult to balance the budget, and surely we could not cut taxes, let alone reform welfare or tame the IRS. I am proud to say in the last 4 years we did just that. By working together, by staying focused, by keeping our eye on the ball and working hard, we balanced the budget for the first time in 28 years, we cut taxes for the middle class for the first time in 16 years, we reformed welfare for the first time in a generation, and we tamed the tax collector, reforming the IRS. That is pretty good. Those are real accomplishments, major changes in how Washington works.

When I am back home in Illinois folks say, that is pretty good, but what is the Congress going to do next; what is the challenge? When I listen to the concerns back home, I hear several things. The folks back home in Illinois tell me they want low taxes and good schools and they want a secure retirement, and that is the Republican agenda this year.

We want to ensure that our local public schools and private schools are strong, and that our public schools are run by locally elected school boards and local teachers and local parents and local school administrators, and that dollars we provide actually reach the classroom to help kids learn.

We also want to save Social Security by walling off the Social Security Trust Fund and ensuring that 100 percent of Social Security dollars go for Social Security. And we want to lower taxes.

Now, that also means we have some big challenges ahead of us. How are we going to accomplish that? There is a big challenge and an opportunity, and my colleagues and I have participated just in the last hour talking about some of those challenges, but the biggest opportunity and challenge is what are we going to do with the so-called surplus, \$2.8 trillion in extra tax revenue, most of which is Social Security?

Well, the President says we should take 62 percent of it for Social Security and spend the rest. Republicans say we want to do it differently; we want to ensure that 100 percent of Social Security dollars go for Social Security, and

what is left over, the incomes tax revenue surplus, we want to use to lower the tax burden on working families and pay down the national debt. That is a big challenge.

Our goal this year is to do something that has not been done for a generation. We are going to stop a practice that began with President Johnson, back in the 1960s, when he was looking for a way to finance the Vietnam War and to finance the great society programs and grow government. President Johnson and the Congress in the late 1960's began the practice of raiding the Social Security Trust Fund. Our number one goal this year, as we work to save Social Security is to put a stop to that, to stop the raids on Social Security.

Let me point out something here. This coming year there will be about \$137 billion in surplus Social Security revenues. Republicans say let us give 100 percent of that to Social Security. The President, because he only wants to take 62 percent of the surplus, wants to spend a big portion of the Social Security Trust Fund. In fact, he wants to spend about \$52 billion of the Social Security Trust Fund revenues this coming year. Over 5 years that is \$250 billion raided from the Social Security Trust Fund. We want to put a stop to that.

While we put a stop to the raid on the Social Security Trust Fund, we also want to pay down the national debt. And with money that is left over, after we protect the Social Security Trust Fund dollars, when it comes to those income tax revenues, the extra tax revenue that comes from the income tax, the real surplus beyond Social Security, we want to use that to give back to the people who sent it here.

Some ask, well, how will we lower the tax burden? Taxes are at their highest level in history. Twenty-one percent of our gross domestic product today goes to the Federal Government. The average Illinois family sends 40 percent of their income to local, State, and Federal Government. Clearly, that tax burden is too high. Well, I suggest, as we look for ways of lowering the tax burden on working middle class families, that we work to simplify the Tax Code; to address the fairness issues in the tax codes.

When I am back home, whether at a union hall or the VFW, clearly they identify the need to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, the need to eliminate the death tax and to eliminate the earnings limit. We can save Social Security. Let us wall off the Social Security Trust Fund and bring fairness to the Tax Code.

COUNTRY FACES EDUCATION EMERGENCY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, several of the previous speakers have mentioned education, and today's agenda in the Congress focused primarily on education.

We had before us the bill which is commonly known as the Ed-Flex bill, H.R. 800, and the rule for that bill allowed for only 5 hours of debate. We need some additional time to discuss it. Why, when the American people have stated that education is one of the highest priorities, do we have only 5 hours in the United States Congress to discuss an important education bill?

It must be important, if it is the first bill that the majority has seen fit to bring to the floor. It is important to them. It is an important proposal that they are making. Some of us contend that what they are doing should not be done in this fashion; that we should have this particular proposal about flexibility considered at the time of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Assistance Act.

We reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Assistance Act every 5 years, and it is up for reauthorization this year. So if we are doing that, why not consider these very important components of that bill all at once?

They are taking a part of the bill, a part of the funds that go into that bill related to Title I, and proposing that a greater portion of it be used in an experiment which grants greater flexibility to the States and localities as to how they spend the money. They are rushing to do that. Already it is suspect, that kind of action. Why are we being stamped into a consideration of one particular aspect of the Elementary and Secondary Education Assistance Act? What is the hurry?

Why, if we are going to treat education as an emergency, why not bring the entire Elementary and Secondary Education Assistance Act to the floor earlier this year instead of waiting until later? Why not bring it all together instead of Balkanizing it, fragmenting it, as the Republican majority expects to do? The education emergency faced in this country deserves a serious response from Congress. The emergency is real, and we should go forward in a very serious way to deal with that emergency.

One of the things we should do is to listen to what my Republican colleagues were saying a few minutes ago; that the money that is in the Federal Treasury does not belong to the Federal Government. It does not belong to the Congress, it does not belong to the White House, it belongs to the people. It is the taxpayers' money.

All taxes are local. Tip O'Neill used to say all politics are local. Well, all taxes are local. They come from the pockets of all taxpayers. The biggest tax, of course, is the income tax. It is not only local, it is right into the family, right into the individual's pocket. It is taxpayers' money. If it is taxpayers' money, why can we not match

the money up with the priorities the public has set?

In poll after poll we keep hearing that, after Social Security, education is the number one priority. There was a time when education was just one of the top five. There were other things that people wanted done. Crime was a big concern, and it competed with education as one of those top priorities. But it is clear now in all the polls that education is the number one priority, after taking care of Social Security.

If education is the number one priority, then the proposals that the President has made in his budget that he submitted to Congress ought to reflect that priority. The proposals that the Republican majority is making ought to reflect the concern of the public.

We all look at the same kinds of polls. We had a Democratic retreat, we went away and we spent days, and a large part of the time was examining polls, public opinion polls and studies of the voters' attitudes. I am certain that in the Republican Caucus retreat they did the same thing. There is going to be a bipartisan retreat next week. They will probably spend some time with some polls also. The polls repeatedly say the same thing. Pollsters are very good. They take a very scientific approach to things and they do a basically good job. They all come up with the same answers; that, clearly, education is the number one priority of the American people, the American voters.

Why do we not respond? I do not think a single poll has shown that one of the top priorities for consideration by the American voters is defense. The American voters may be concerned about defense, as they should be, but it is not one of their top priorities. It is nowhere near education as a priority. There are a lot of other things that take priority over defense.

The common sense of the American people is amazing. While we stumble around and make problems and create needs to expend greater amounts of money on defense here in Washington, they clearly see that we have other priorities that ought to be taken care of. They see that there is no more Cold War. There is no more nuclear threat from another superpower. They clearly see that we have the most modernized armed forces anywhere in the world. They clearly see we are big enough to handle most real threats to our national security.

So they have the common sense, the people's wisdom to say, look, education is what we are concerned about. They may even be far ahead of the military strategists, because they recognize what military strategists know when questioned closely; that more than a need for weapon systems, more than a need for additional military hardware, we have a need for manpower capable of operating the modern weapon systems that we have now.

We have systems that are very complicated. We have systems that require