

they cannot say that his particular license is not acceptable. They also cannot discriminate because of the location of the physician or the patient base of the physician.

With regard to payment of claims under our bill, health plans should operate efficiently and pay providers in a timely manner. The bill would require that claims be paid in accordance with Medicare guidelines for prompt payment, because what we have found is a lot of the HMOs do not pay the physicians. They delay payment in order to save money, or to save the interest rate.

We also have a provision for paperwork simplification in order to minimize the confusion and complicated paperwork that providers physicians face. This bill would require that the HMO industry develop a standard form for physicians to use in submitting a claim.

The last thing I wanted to mention this evening is this whole issue of accountability. The main thing that the bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights does is to provide accountability if you have been denied care. I talked about the internal and external review, that it has to be done by a group that is not beholden to the HMO.

But I think that beyond that, there has to be the ability to go to court and sue for damages if all else has failed. I think many people realize, although a lot of my constituents still do not realize it, that under existing Federal law called ERISA, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, State laws are basically preempted. So, therefore, if you are in an ERISA plan, which is basically a plan where your employer is self-insured, any kind of self-insured plan, which millions and millions of Americans particularly in large companies fall under these types of self-insured plans, because that is what larger employers tend to do, they fall under ERISA and Federal preemption, which means that the HMO cannot be sued.

That makes no sense. The HMOs, as we discussed this evening, are basically making medical decisions. If they make a decision about what kind of care you can receive or how long you can stay in a hospital, for example, and they make the wrong decision, then they should be held accountable. You should be able to sue them.

Our bipartisan bill would remove the ERISA preemption and allow patients to hold health plans accountable according to State laws, so if the State law allows it you would be able to sue and you are not preempted by the Federal law.

The one thing that we did do, and this was I think important and makes sense, is that the new bipartisan bill says that if a plan, if a health insurance, if an HMO complies with an external reviewer's decision, they cannot be held liable for punitive damages. So if when you go to an administrative review the decision is to deny you care

and then you appeal and you go to court, the court decides that the independent review was wrong, you cannot receive punitive damages, because in that case the HMO did in fact act in good faith and go to the external review process.

□ 2130

The other thing I wanted to mention because I know that part of the criticism, if you will, that the insurance companies are making in their advertisement about the Patients' Bill of Rights, they say that employers can be sued, and that because employers can be sued, then a lot of employers will simply not cover their employees; and the number of people who have health insurance will decline because of the Patients' Bill of Rights.

Well, I want to explain and emphatically state that the Patients' Bill of Rights, the bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights, which I have been discussing tonight, does not in any way create liability for the employer.

In the bill, we have a provision that protects employers from liability when they were not involved in the treatment decision. It explicitly states that discretionary authority does not include a decision about what benefits to include in the plan, a decision not to address a case while an external appeal is pending, or a decision to provide an extra contractual benefit.

What that essentially translates to mean is that there is nothing in our bill that would in any way extend the liability of the employer and allow them to be sued because of the denial of care other than whatever the existing law is right now.

I wanted to mention one more thing before I close, and that is what we constantly get from the Republican leadership in opposing the Patients' Bill of Rights, the bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights, and what we constantly get from the insurance companies and the HMOs in their attacks and their ads and their multimillion dollar campaign against the Patients' Bill of Rights, I think could be basically summed up in what the Health Insurance Association of America put in sort of the fine print in this ad that was in Congress Daily that I mentioned before.

It says that "the Patients' Bill of Rights currently being considered will cause us a lot of unpleasant side effects, more red tape and more regulations that the patients can expect, and patients will end up paying the bill. Health care costs would increase."

They basically stress the fact that what we will see with this Patients' Bill of Rights is a huge increase of costs and that that will make it more difficult for both individual as well as employers to provide health insurance. Nothing can be further from the truth.

The reality is probably best summed up by making reference to the State of Texas. About 2 years ago, the State of Texas passed a law that has been in effect, I should say, for about 2 years,

which is very similar to the bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights that I have been advocating tonight.

As a result of that Texas law which allowed people to bring suit, the number of lawsuits that have actually been brought within the last month, over that 2-year period, only two lawsuits have been brought because of the change in the Texas law that provides patient protections.

In addition to that, it was estimated that the premiums have gone up about 30 cents a month during the 2-year period that the Texas patient protections have been in effect. That 30-cent increase could have occurred because of inflation or whatever, but the bottom line is it is insignificant. Any consumer, any constituent of mine would gladly pay an extra 30 cents a month to have the kind of protections that are in place here.

I think that in their advertising campaign the HMOs said that health care costs could increase as much as \$200 per family, forcing small employers to drop their health insurance all together. The Texas experience shows very emphatically that that is simply not true. There really is not any significant added cost, because what the Patients' Bill of Rights does is to provide for prevention.

Now that the HMOs cannot allow the kind of abuses now that they are threatened with the right to sue and the external review, they take the proper precautions; and lawsuits don't occur, and costs really do not go up significantly.

So I am going to end this evening, Mr. Speaker, but I wanted to point out that the new session has begun. The fall session has begun. Those of us who advocate the Patients' Bill of Rights are going to be out there on a daily basis saying that we want the Republican leadership to bring this bill to the floor.

We have a majority of Members of the House that now support us. Most of the Democrats. At least 20 Republicans. I think the number of Republicans are going to continue to rise, because they realize, Members of this House realize in a bipartisan basis that this kind of reform is needed.

I am just calling again on the Republican leadership and will continue to call on them to allow this bill to come to the floor. If it does, we will pass it overwhelmingly, and we will finally see protections within the context of HMOs that Americans are crying out for.

TRIBUTE TO THE HEROES OF THE GRAND JUNCTION SHOOTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. McINNIS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, as many of you know, my district is in the

State of Colorado. I represent the Third Congressional District of the State of Colorado, which is essentially the mountains of Colorado. My home is Grand Junction, Colorado.

Over the weekend, my home in Grand Junction Colorado got a very, very special gift, a gift of heroes. Over the weekend, we had two of our citizens who lost their lives in an unfortunate failed attempt to save another person's life.

These two individuals, Hobert Franklin, Jr. and David Gilcrease, both were individuals of normal working people. Nothing really set them out from the crowd until that moment of the call for courage. At that moment, both of these individuals stepped forward at the expense of their lives to try and save this other life.

The incident was a very violent incident. It was a domestic dispute. It took place in a grocery store in Grand Junction, in fact, the grocery store that my wife shops in, a grocery store that a lot of my neighbors shop in.

A man went in and grabbed a woman by her hair, dragged her out of the store, he had a gun in his hand, took her into the parking lot. When Hobert Franklin saw that happening, he ran out of the store to go to her aid.

Now, what we need to keep in mind with both of these individuals is that they had a very clear choice to make. There were lots of directions they could run. There were lots of directions that they could go away from the assailant. But Hobert decided not to do that. Hobert ran at the assailant to help the victim, and the assailant shot him dead.

David in the meantime saw what happened to Hobert. So he then knew that this guy was going to kill somebody. He just did kill somebody, in fact. He had an opportunity as well to go a different direction. Nobody could criticize the people that went different directions. This was a very terrifying incident.

But at that special moment, David decided that he had to intercede and stop this event from occurring. He ran towards the fellow, the assailant. The assailant raised the weapon at him. David puts his hands up. The assailant put his hand down. David backed off. He went back around the van.

I have got tell my colleagues about David. Do my colleagues know how much David weighed? David weighed 90 pounds. Ninety pounds. Think about it. Ninety pounds.

He came back around the van, and he tackled the assailant. Now, he is a tough guy, David, but he was not that tough. He was not that strong to take the assailant and knock him out of commission, so to speak. So the assailant knocked David off his back, and he turned around, and he killed David in cold blood.

Now, what is special about these two people is that David who was a father, by the way, of two young boys, terrific young children, and his wife Kim, his

last words from David, as witnessed by the people who were trying to save his life was, "Yes, Jesus is my savior."

He was a small man, but as they said at his service yesterday, he was a giant when it comes to heart and to will. This small-framed man, and I am quoting from Bob Carter who read a poem in David's memory, "This small-framed man was the biggest man my heart has been blessed with knowing."

David was a wonderful guy. He blessed Grand Junction with his gift of heroism this last weekend.

Hobert, they talk about he is 50 years old. They said his half a century of life really boiled down to one defining moment; that is what his nephew told people at the service on Wednesday. "No matter what he did, he will be remembered most for what he did in the last few moments of his life," Travis Coley told the gathering at the service.

Coley is in the seminary or just graduated from the seminary. Hobert was his uncle, and this is the first funeral service that Pastor Coley was to give.

Franklin had two sons, John and T.J. I got to meet both John and T.J. My colleagues would be very proud of these young men. They are very proud of their father because they knew, at that last defining moment, their father made a decision, a decision to try and save somebody else's life even though it probably meant imminent death for him.

Franklin is also survived by his wife Judy, his father and his brother and his sister. Franklin, too, blessed Grand Junction with that gift of heroism.

So as we go about in our every day lives, I just ask, because throughout our country we have a lot of good people out there, we have a lot of people of strong character, we have a lot of people that are the core of what makes this country great, and these are two of those individuals, and tonight in front of all of my colleagues and in front of all of the people of the United States of America, this country pays its due respect.

ISSUES FACING AMERICA

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I have a number of different topics that I would like to cover this evening. I think probably one of them that is at the heart of a lot of debate that has been taking place here regards taxes. The gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) is here to comment on that.

I yield to the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE).

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Colorado for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that I think probably that the character of a lot of the people in his Congressional District is much like that of those that I represent in the State of South Dakota. Understanding that his district is very much like mine, very rural, and the gentlemen that he described this evening I think probably my colleagues would find them walking down the main streets in many places across

South Dakota as well. It is a great privilege and honor to represent people with that kind of character.

I presume that, during the course of the August break, the gentleman from Colorado, like I did, had the opportunity to travel across his district. I had the opportunity to visit, on one particular trip, 36 counties across my State culminating with almost a week at the South Dakota State fair.

During the course of those travels, I heard about a lot of topics, one of which, of course, in my State is agriculture which is in desperate straits. I hope that this institution will, the Congress, come together on a solution for that problem to address many of the concerns, many of the very serious problems structurally that are occurring in agriculture today.

I hope that before the session is out that we will pass disaster relief assistance, and market loss assistance, that we will pass mandatory price reporting, Federal legislation to that effect, that we will pass crop insurance reform, which is desperately needed to make sure that producers have the risk management tools that will allow them to succeed in the current market place, and other issues that I think will come up, one of which is market concentration.

One of the things that I heard repeatedly in my travels across South Dakota is this increasing concentration in the agricultural industry. We are seeing it, whether it is grain buyers, whether it is livestock packers, whether it is soybean crushers, flour mills, you name it, there are fewer and fewer buyers of raw agricultural products in this country. It is having a profound and very serious effect on producers across South Dakota and I think across this entire country, and it is an issue which needs the attention of the United States Congress.

The other thing that I heard, like a lot of people, I think, traveling across this country and traveling across my State and others who traveled in their districts, was this surplus and talking about how do we deal with what is this \$3 trillion plus projected surplus. I am sure the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. McINNIS) has heard a lot of about that as well. As I was traveling across South Dakota, it was an issue that came up frequently. We had an opportunity to talk about how do we do it.

First of all, I think a lot of people are very skeptical that there is a surplus in the first place. Frankly, they ought to be.

□ 2145

I think that myself. I have a hard time dealing with trillions of dollars, billions of dollars, even millions of dollars. So we have to break it down into terms I think that all of us can understand.

But the reality is that for a lot of reasons we are projecting over the course of the next 10 years about \$3.1 trillion in surpluses. And everybody

says, well, what caused that. I think it was a lot of things. I think it was the fact that, before I arrived on the scene, think the Republican Congress passed welfare reform; that there are 3.3 million more Americans working today and paying taxes; the fact that we were able to enact tax relief legislation in 1997, which I think has increased government revenues and lowering the capital gains rate. People took realizations, paid taxes on those realizations and increased government revenues.

I also think that control over federal spending has something to do with it. Since we assumed power here in the Congress, we have gotten tighter control over federal spending. And I think that fiscal responsibility has helped generate some of the surpluses. And, obviously, monetary management at the Federal Reserve. But in the end it is the hard work of the American people that has generated these surpluses. And so when we have this debate about how to best use these surpluses, we have to remember that it is their money we are talking about.

Again, trying to break this down into denominations that people can understand, \$3 trillion is a lot. But if we broke it down into, say \$4, and there has been a lot of discussion about how to do this, but what our plan does, and frankly this has been misrepresented and confused, and the other side has tried I think in many respects to mislead people about what this is all about, but, frankly, if the surplus was \$4, we are taking \$3 out of the \$4 and setting it aside for Social Security and Medicare and to pay down the federal debt.

One of the things I heard in South Dakota over and over again is why do we not just pay down the federal debt. I think that is an admirable quality and one, I think, that speaks well of the people of South Dakota that they are interested in fiscal responsibility and making good on their debts. The reality is that \$3 out of the \$4, if we think of the surplus as being \$4, 3 of the 4 goes to Social Security, Medicare and to pay down the federal debt. What we are talking about in terms of the tax bill is this last dollar. And the reality is, whether we like it or not, I do not believe that this last dollar is going to get used to pay down the federal debt.

Now, in a perfect world, that would be great. But we all know we do not live in a perfect world. We live in Washington, D.C., which is anything but a perfect world. Now, if this was done in South Dakota, we might be able to do this. But the reality is, whether it is Republicans or Democrats, this is a Washington problem. Politicians spend money. The only question on this final dollar, and if we think of this as being the payroll tax, that FICA tax, Social Security and Medicare, that is \$3, and the last dollar is the income tax surplus. When those income tax surpluses start rolling in here to Washington, there are going to be a lot of designs on how to spend it.

What we have said as a matter of policy is that we believe the American people can spend this last dollar better than can Washington, D.C. So we went ahead and designed a tax package which I think strikes at the very heart and the very soul of what makes America tick. Everybody says, well, this is tax cuts for the rich. Well, in South Dakota we have a lot of farmers and ranchers and small business people. And when I ask them if they like the death tax, they say no. The death tax punishes people for saving for their kids and grandkids. We ought to get rid of it. Not only that, it is an inefficient tax. Sixty-five cents out of every dollar that is collected on the death tax goes to the cost of collecting the tax. It is an inefficient tax.

When I ask constituents whether they like the marriage penalty; do they like the fact that we penalize people and that they pay higher taxes for the privilege of being married, they say, no, we do not like that. That is a policy change that this bill makes. It is long overdue. We ought not penalize people in this country for being married. We ought to encourage that.

When I ask if they think we should tax capital gains on inflation, well, no, they do not think that sounds like a very good idea. Well, we make a change and index inflation in this bill so that it is not subject to a capital gains tax.

I have also asked if farmers, ranchers, and small business people ought to be able to deduct health insurance premiums. And that too, again, I think strikes at the very heart of those who are contributing to this society, helping generate this surplus and, frankly, in many cases, at least in my State, are very hard pressed. Farmers, ranchers, and small business people are trying to make ends meet in what is a very, very difficult agricultural economy.

These are policy changes which I think are very positive and they are long overdue. They are things that the American people could benefit from. And the alternative, as I said, is that this dollar gets spent in Washington. That is just reality. And I think we have to say honestly to the American people that all this talk and propaganda coming out of the White House and this administration about, boy, if they cut taxes it is going to cut farmers, it is going to cut veterans, it is going to cut water projects, it is going to cut education, I do not know where that comes from, because we are talking about surplus dollars.

We all agreed in 1997 to a balanced budget agreement which spends at a certain rate through the year 2002, and we assume beyond that, for the balance of this agreement, certain inflationary increases in spending. How they can argue that somehow this is going to rob or cut all these programs is beyond me. We are talking about surplus dollars. And I think the American people need to understand clearly what this argument is about. It is about the fact

that we are using \$3 out of \$4, if we can put this in small terms again, \$3 out of \$4 to preserve and protect Social Security and Medicare and to pay down the federal debt.

And the debate we are having in America today is about whether Washington spends this last buck or whether the American family spends it on things that they need; whether it is education, college education for their children, whether it is on mortgage payments, whether it is on school supplies or Christmas presents, whatever. We believe as a matter of principle and as a matter of policy that the American people are in a better position to make that decision about their futures and how best to use this last dollar.

I think it is important in the course of this debate and discussion that we debunk a lot of the myths that are being propagated by the other side. There is a lot of propaganda, a lot of rhetoric and demagoguery, as there always is in scare tactics that are used, because, again, the reality is in Washington, if we take this away from the politicians, it is money they cannot spend. And that is why they are trying so desperately to hang on to it. We believe, again as a matter of principle, as a matter of policy and practice, that this dollar is better spent by the American people, by the American family.

So I thank the gentleman from Colorado for yielding this evening to me. I think we probably concur because I believe his district is very much like mine; that those he represents are very much like those I represent. They are hard working people. They understand that this, the dollars they pay the Federal Government, is their money. We understand it is their money. We want them to keep more of it. That is what this debate is about. And I hope as it continues that we are able to convince the American people. And as they understand more clearly what we are talking about, I believe there will be a huge groundswell of support for what we are trying to accomplish here, which is to give them more power.

I believe when the American people have more in their pocket, they have the power. When Washington has the money, Washington has the power. We want the American people to have more power and more control over their future.

So I appreciate very much the gentleman from Colorado yielding some of his time this evening. I know he would like to talk some more about this issue and I would certainly yield back to him.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I want to add to the gentleman's comments.

That dollar that the administration says ought to stay in Washington, D.C. does one simple thing, it grows the size of the Government. There has never been a time in the history of politics, because of the human demands upon the politicians, that a pool of money can be left sitting in the Capital of a

State or in Washington, D.C. and think that the politicians are going to keep their hands off that and use that for some future reduction of the federal debt. It is not going to happen.

I think what else is important to my colleague, as he mentioned, is that there are some myths out there that need to be debunked. The Republicans said, look, we can take care of Social Security, we can take care of Medicare, and we need to do something with education, we need to do something with the military, we have to increase our spending with regard to the military, and we need to reduce the federal debt. We think that we can do all five of those things and still take that dollar, which is a small part of the \$4 that the gentleman had there, take that dollar and give it back to the taxpayers.

Now, our proposal to do that alarmed the administration. The President decided he could not let the Republicans get credit for giving back the people their money that came from them. He had to come up with a proposal. And he did come up with a proposal. And when it was scored by the Congressional Budget Office, it actually resulted in a tax increase. If we want to look at a bill that really reduces the debt, look at the history of the two parties and which party is carrying the bill that is really going to reduce that debt. We had 40 years of Democratic control in the United States Congress. Forty years the Democrats were in control. In that period of time I think they had one 2-year period where they had a balance.

What is the history of this? The Republicans' bill, and I am not trying to be partisan here, but we need to draw the lines where the lines have been drawn in these chambers, the Republican bill does more to reduce the federal debt than any other bill out there, period. Now, take a look historically. We have had the Democrats in control and ran deficits for 38 out of the 40 years. The Republicans took control just 5 years ago, and since then they brought up the balanced budget amendment. It was a Republican bill. Welfare reform; it was a Republican bill.

Now, how many of the Democrats, even the most liberal Democrats in this country, are complaining about the tax cut we gave 2 years ago? As the gentleman from the Dakotas knows, 2 years ago we went out to homeowners, homeowners regardless of their income, all they had to do was own a home, in the gentleman's district or in my district or in Mississippi or Massachusetts or in Florida or in Texas. We went out to the homeowners in this country, and we used the same argument and we got the same kind of disagreement from the Democrat leadership. Not all Democrats, because there are a lot of conservative Democrats who understand where this money comes from. But the Democrat leadership and the administration fought us on this homeowner deal.

What did we do with the homeowners? We went to every homeowner

in this country and told them that from this point on when they sell their home, and if they sell their home for a profit, not net equity but actually net profit, they get to take that, up to \$250,000 per person, \$500,000 per couple, they get to take that money, tax free, regardless of their age, and put it in their pockets.

So those Americans out there who have heard some of this bunk about Republicans and their tax plans, they should not forget that when they sell that home that they live in right now, thanks to the Republican leadership, they are going to get, with some rare exceptions, for instance, if an individual is very, very wealthy and they sell it for more than \$500,000 profit, otherwise anybody that sells it for a dollar profit up to \$500,000 profit per couple puts that money in their pocket. And it is money they will spend in their community. They will donate some to the church, they will go out and buy a new car, maybe buy another house. That money recirculates in the communities, not back here in the Washington, DC community.

So I appreciate and invite the gentleman to continue participating if he wishes, but I think the gentleman's example is right on point. I am glad he showed that dollar bill, because that dollar bill is right now in Washington, DC. What the gentleman has proposed and our colleagues have proposed is taking that dollar bill and putting it back in the local community. Because we think a dollar bill in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, or in the Dakotas, up there somewhere in the Dakotas, or in Miami, Florida, or in Los Angeles or in Seattle, Washington, or Salt Lake City, we think putting that dollar back into the local community is going to have a much more efficient use, be much more productive, be much more helpful for capital, much more helpful for the communities and the nonprofits and the schools than taking that dollar and keeping it right here in these House Chambers and sending it out to the Federal agencies. That is what the gentleman is saying and the gentleman is right, and I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. THUNE. Well, I thank the gentleman for continuing to yield. As I have tried to present this, I have asked the people of South Dakota one basic question, and that is this question: Do you think that the Federal Government in Washington is too small? Do you think that the Federal Government in Washington is too small?

Now, if the answer is yes to that question, obviously that person is going to like the President's plan to grow the size of government by spending the surplus. But I would suspect that most people, in fact when I ask this question across my State, I do not see any hands get raised. I am guessing if the gentleman asks that question in his district in Colorado he would get the same response. Most people in this country understand the Federal Government is big enough.

In fact, we believe, and I think most people believe, that we ought to continue this process that we have begun of shifting power out of Washington and back to those communities that the gentleman talked about, back to school districts, back to families, back to individuals so they can do more for their communities. We need for Washington to do less and the American people to do more.

Again, it does come back, and I want to say this so the American people do not miss this as we have this debate, what we are talking about, if we were to take that surplus and put it into small terms that people understand, \$3 goes to Social Security, to Medicare, and to pay down the Federal debt, and \$1, we think, basically 25 percent of the surplus, goes back to the American people. It is their money. And it is a ludicrous notion to think that if this money comes to Washington it is not going to get spent.

Mr. MCINNIS. And reclaiming my time once again, that \$1 that the gentleman held up, we hear from the Democratic leadership, through the propaganda going across this country, that that dollar is going to be used to reduce the Federal debt. What the gentleman said, and he is absolutely correct, if we leave that \$1 here in Washington, DC, it will not go for reducing the national debt; it will go for new programs and for new spending.

When we leave money around here, the new spending is a temptation. I am sure the gentleman knows this, at least as it applies to me, when I have people come into my office asking for new spending, these usually are not bad programs. They usually sound great.

□ 2200

But the question is, can we afford them? So the temptation to spend those dollars will fall on Republicans and Democrats back here. It is a strong temptation. We have a lot of our constituents out there who, if that dollar stays here, they say the dollar is going to stay in Washington, let us spend it for this program or let us spend it for that program. We all know that if we leave that dollar here it will grow the size of the Government.

What the Republicans are pushing for, and we are having a tough time getting our message across because it is very easy to spend it in 15 seconds, what the gentleman from the Dakotas and myself are trying to explain in 30 minutes, but the fact is if we leave that dollar in your pocket, in your community, it would work much better.

The only way that theory would not work is if when keeping that dollar in your community, in your pocket, you went out and buried it in the ground, literally put it in the ground other than it is either going to a bank, which will loan it back out to the community, it is going to be spent for goods and services, which circulate in the community.

Do my colleagues know what they should do? Sometimes some of these

companies have to pay taxes. They should pay their employees in \$2 bills, we still have a \$2 bill out there, pay in \$2 bills and see how often and how many places those \$2 bills show up in your community and how many weeks those \$2 bills are showing up in stores and all kinds of different places in your community versus coming back here to Washington.

I hope the gentleman stays. I want to point out a couple of other things on taxes we have just gotten from the Tax Foundation, and the Tax Foundation has a lot of credibility back here. It is a nonpartisan organization. We have just received in 1999 what Americans per capita will spend on things such as food, clothing, and shelter.

I want to show my colleagues some very stunning numbers. I will write them here very quickly for you.

On food in 1999, \$2,693. That is what the average per capita expenditure in the United States will be for food. For clothes, that will be \$1,404. So for food per capita, we are going to spend \$2,693. For clothes, we are going to spend \$1,404. And for shelter, we will spend \$5,833.

Now, if we add that up, assuming my math is right, that is \$9,930 per capita. So food is \$2,693. Clothes are \$1,404. And shelter is \$5,833. That is what you spend for those priority items in your family.

Guess what you will pay for taxes? \$10,298. In other words, the per capita expenditure per family in this country you will pay more for taxes than you do for your food, your clothes, and your shelter combined. Again, let me repeat that. We will all pay more in taxes than we will pay for our food, our clothes, and our shelter.

Now, we will also, another interesting thing, when you look at these numbers put out by the tax group, on Federal taxes alone, we will spend more than any other major budget item.

I want to put some examples out here. For housing, we will spend the \$5,833; for health care, \$3,829; for food, \$2,693; for transportation, \$2,568; for recreation, \$1,922; for clothing, \$1,404. For Federal taxes alone, just for Federal taxes, here is what we spend for Federal taxes: \$7,000.

So think about your budget, think about what you are spending in your family budget. These are roughly the figures that you will come up with: Housing \$5,833. You spend more in taxes than you do in housing for your family. Health care for your family, you will spend about \$3,829. This is per capita. You will spend a little over twice that for taxes, not quite twice, \$7,026. For food to feed the family, per capita, \$2,693 compared to what you are going to have to pay in taxes, \$7,026. For recreation, \$1,922 compared to the \$7,000 you are going to pay in taxes. For clothing, \$1,404 to clothe your family per capita, and you are going to spend over \$7,000 in taxes.

My point is this: There has been a lot of rhetoric lately about if we do not

provide some kind of tax relief for the American people then we hear from the Democratic party leadership that the Federal debt will only increase and they all of a sudden, the Democrat leadership, after 40 years of running deficits in this country, now, some of my colleagues do not like to hear partisanship and I am not trying to be partisan, but the fact is the Republicans did not run this House for 40 years, they have run it for 5 years; and we have had surpluses on almost all of those years.

We have had welfare reform. We had the tax cut I spoke about earlier. But the reality, what people do not want you to hear is that, guess what, when we reduce your taxes, when we allow you to keep those dollars in your pockets, guess what happens? The economy improves.

Take a look at any major tax relief or tax reduction in this century or in the century before it but since income tax came in this century, take a look at any one of them. Immediately after a tax reduction, the economy improved. When those dollars, again, unless you bury your dollars in the ground and you never see them again or you hide them and do not circulate them in your community, then in any other circumstance that will, one, keep down the size of government and, two, bring up the health of the economy.

Now, we have got a pretty good economy. Not everybody. My good friend from the Dakotas talks about the agriculture and the suffering, and they are suffering out in the farm belt. But there are a lot of people who are enjoying the healthiest, many of them, they will ever experience in their entire life. So they do not worry so much about taxes. Well, you pay a little tax here, you pay a little tax here.

Let me tell you what is happening while some of you are asleep. The governments, whether it is a local government, whether it is a local district, whether it is a State government, or whether it is the Federal Government, is sneaking into your house while you are asleep and those taxes are going up.

Most of the increase that you have seen in your taxes, the total tax package, has occurred since 1981. Most of that increase, 45 percent, 45 percent of the taxes that you pay are as a result of tax increases since 1981. All we are saying here is let us not fall asleep while the tax man sneaks in behind us.

Now, are taxes necessary? Of course they are necessary. We have certain responsibilities that belong to the Federal Government, a strong military. I think we have a fundamental obligation for good education in this country. We do have some health care obligations. We have transportation obligations for the interstate highways, interstate commerce. We have a justice system that has to be maintained.

So there are some fundamental obligations that the Federal Government must maintain. There are certainly obligations that the State government

must maintain. We agree with those. Our local districts, our school districts have a very heavy burden in providing what we want and that is quality education. Those dollars have to go in.

But it does not mean we should overpay and it does not mean when we pay our tax we should not ask our elected officials, am I paying too much? Am I getting a fair shake for my dollar? Am I getting efficient use out of that dollar? Is that dollar more productive in Washington, D.C., or is it more productive in my home State of Santa Clara, California, or Salt Lake City, Utah, or Kansas City, Kansas, or Carbondale, Colorado? Is this where those dollars are most efficient?

So, my colleagues, I am just trying to say to my colleagues here as this rhetoric goes on about the tax cut and how it is going to add to the Federal debt, take a look at the details. Read the fine print.

When you read the fine print, you are going to find out, frankly, really there are two choices. One, continue to grow the Government or, two, give back a portion of the surplus, not all of the surplus, but give back a portion of the surplus to the people who earned it.

Tax dollars are taxed to spend. That is the only reason we get taxed. It is the only reason our constituents out there get taxed. The only reason you are being taxed is so that some governmental body can spend that money. And as we said earlier, some of those expenses are justified. Some of them are necessary. But if you tend to allow accountability to become lax or the old saying that "when the cat is away, the mice will play," if you do not keep the cat in the barn, the mice pretty soon get out of control.

What we are saying here is let us exercise prudent financial management and let us tell our clients, the constituents, the taxpayers, you overpaid for this product. You deserve a little of it back. We still want to give you a fine product. You deserve it from the Government. But at this point you have overpaid a little, not a lot. The tax decrease we are talking about does not do a lot but it still keeps a few of those dollars in your pocket.

I have had a recent opportunity about 3 years ago, and this is exciting regardless of what party you are in regardless of your bent toward partisan politics, I have got something that I hope all of my colleagues take a very careful look at. It has been a tremendously successful program in my district, and I would like to explain it to my colleagues. It is called the S.E.E.D.S. program.

I actually started that program in the Third Congressional District of Colorado with the help of a lot of people Susan Smith, the City of Pueblo, County of Pueblo, several school districts, Pueblo Community College, Roger Gomez, a number of different people.

We all got together; and we found out that under the Federal regulations,

you can ask Federal agencies for their excess computer equipment. In other words, we have, for example, the Department of Energy who has been very cooperative with us. They have excess computer equipment. Some of this equipment is almost brand new.

Now, this is not state-of-the-art computer equipment. But most schools in our country do not have state-of-the-art computer equipment. In fact, in my district there were a number of schools that did not have really any computer equipment.

So what we did on our drive to cut down Government waste is we went to these different agencies and we said we would like you to ship those computers to a warehouse, which, by the way, was donated to our cause in Pueblo, Colorado, send them to our warehouse. We got students from Pueblo Community College to come in and help us put part A of the computer with part B, so on and so forth.

We got citizens to help us haul away the trash. We got citizens to help come down and do the mechanical work. We got citizens to volunteer and come down and help us match up the computers with schools that needed these computers. And before you know it, our program was off and running.

What were the results of our program? In our program in Colorado now, we are up to 200 sets of computers a week that we give to local schools, not just public schools, private schools, home schoolers, senior citizens. It is an exciting project. It provides a need for education which we think is very important.

Nobody disagrees that education is not important. And it takes away budget waste, Government waste, wasteful spending, which I think most of us would agree is not necessary. We take that waste, and we convert it to a good, positive use. It is called the S.E.E.D.S. program.

I am here this evening to tell my constituents, to tell my colleagues here on the House floor this is a program you should adopt, you should take a look at.

□ 2215

I would like to cover another area tonight. There has been some recent press, publicity, about a stand I have taken in regards to our military academies.

Let me precede my comments on the academies with the statement about the military. We need in this country the strongest military second to none in the world. Do not let people kid you. It would be a very terrible mistake for us to allow our military to fall into shambles and to become the second toughest kid on the block. You cannot be the second toughest kid on the block. You cannot be the third toughest kid on the block. You have got to be the toughest kid on the block.

It does not mean you go pick fights, but it does mean you will be in less fights because people will not want to

fight you. It also means that you can go out and help those people that are less fortunate because of your strength.

I believe in a strong military, and all of us should believe in a strong military. For too many years, the military has not received the kind of priority that is necessary, although the military for too many years has been called to different missions all over the world. I think right now we are stationed in 164 different locations.

So I have great respect for the military, but I also believe that the military has accountability.

I want to talk for a couple of minutes about our service academies. It is a great honor to be selected to go to the United States service academies, West Point, the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy, the U.S. Coast Guard. The students that go there are not the cream of the crop. I repeat that. They are not the cream of the crop. They are the cream of the cream of the crop.

We take our very best students, and when we focus in on the students that we want to send to those military academies, I think there are a lot of things we need to look at and list in order of priority. Leadership skills, obviously intelligence capabilities, and maybe somewhere on the list, further down on the list, there are sports abilities or their celebrity status on sports.

Here is what is happening. This is my point that I disagreed very strongly with on some of the academies. When someone enters, say, the Air Force Academy, you make a commitment to the United States of America. You sign a deal with them. It is fully disclosed. There is nothing hidden about it. You tell the United States, in this case Air Force Academy, I will serve so many years in exchange for those 4 years of college education that the American people are giving me as a privilege, and it is a privilege. We pick great young men and women to be in the service, but you sign this commitment and just to be sure you fully understand that commitment, after 2 years of being in, say the U.S. Air Force Academy, we say to the students, look, you can walk away, no strings attached or we want you to make sure that you make an informed decision that if you continue at the Air Force Academy and complete your 4 years' education, you will have a commitment of service, you will have an obligation, you will have a duty. These students, by the way, live under an ethical code or a military code or an academy code that says, service to the Nation over self.

Well, what I have discovered is happening is, if you are in a very special class of people at the Air Force Academy, for example, you get treated differently than the other cadets. What am I talking about? If everyone was listening to me earlier this evening, I talked about heroes. We had two heroes in Grand Junction, Colorado. They lost their lives. I like sports. I enjoy the Broncos. I am a fan of the Broncos, but

even my favorite sports person, to me, is a celebrity, not a hero. But what happens at the academies, if you are a celebrity sports person, for example, an outstanding football player who has an opportunity to be drafted by the pros, you are going to get special treatment or some of them have received special treatment by the Air Force Academy, for example, that lets them walk away from their service commitment.

Now, they have to serve some time in the reserves, but they are not treated like every other cadet out there. Now, some people say, well, it is good publicity for us. It is necessary that we allow these academy graduates to walk away or be waivered, that is the keyword, that is the buzz word, be waivered from their duty and their service so that we get publicity in the pro football circuit.

My comment to that was, well, if we need publicity, why do we not just go ahead and let United Airlines, for example, or any airline, I fly United a lot, let any airline go to the Air Force Academy and say we would like your top pilots, go ahead and waive their service, we will pay them money, even though these athletes are not having to pay their \$120,000 which is the payback financially to the Government, we will go ahead, we like your top pilots. Do you think the Air Force Academy would release those pilots? Not on your life.

If Dow Chemical Corporation or some other chemical company, and I like Dow Chemical, if they went to the Air Force Academy and said we would like your top chemists, give us your top chemist students, do you think they would waive those students out of there? Not on your life.

Let me read from an editorial, Rocky Mountain News. A Perk for Military Athletes. "Roger Staubach graduated from the Naval Academy, served his obligatory 4 years on active duty, and still enjoyed an 11-year career with the Dallas Cowboys that put him in the pro football Hall of Fame.

"Times have changed. Beau Morgan, the Air Force Academy's star quarterback from the class of 1997, was let out of what is now a 5-year commitment after only 2 years so he could try out with the Dallas Cowboys this summer.

"It is part of a trend that apparently began in 1989 when the Naval Academy graduate David Robinson was released after just 2 years' active duty, enabling him to play with the NBA's San Antonio Spurs. Now an angry U.S. Representative Scott McInnis, Republican of Colorado, is threatening to introduce legislation that would put an end to this practice. 'When these kids go to the academy, we try and teach them that you put your Nation above yourself, but that is not what is occurring here.'

"There are a number of other examples. Steve Russ, a line backer with the Denver Broncos, was released from his military commitment in 1997, 2 years after his Air Force Academy graduation. Air Force Academy grad Dan

Palmer also got an early out to try out with the Chicago Bears as an offensive lineman.

"For 2 years, McInnis has been trying to use the Freedom of Information Act to get a complete list of those who received waivers from service academies for athletic purposes, but he is having a hard time of it."

"It is easy to understand why the military schools might be tempted to fudge the rules in order to entice more athletes. For decades they played at the top levels of intercollegiate athletics, but that is no longer true. A military career is just not as attractive to top athletes as it once was. Frustrated academy graduates who are now generals and admirals want to do what they can to slow or reverse the trend. The military tries to justify the current policy by saying that their star athletes serve effectively as academy recruiters upon their early release, but we suspect the kids they mainly recruit are other outstanding athletes who will also expect early releases.

"Those who get releases, after signing pro contracts, do not have to repay the \$120,000 cost of their education and they do not have to go back to active duty even if they are later cut by their teams. Their only obligation is to spend 6 years in the Reserves.

"If pro athletes serve as effective recruiters, says McInnis, why not let United Airlines recruit the top pilots from the Air Force Academy, so long as they say on the airplane, 'You are being flown by an Air Force Academy graduate.'

"McInnis dismisses the suggestion that early releases might be all right if the graduate or his employer simply repays the Government the cost of his or her education. The economics of professional athletes are such that \$120,000 is merely, quote, what professional teams spend on refreshments at weekend resorts, unquote."

"The point, says McInnis, is that academy athletes deserve no privileges that other graduates cannot get. 'It is just wrong,' he says, of the early-release policy. 'It makes me mad.'

"Considering the athletes the major state universities recruit, how little some of them study and how few of them ultimately graduate, the service academies should not be ashamed that their cadets can no longer compete at that level. If they have to play smaller schools, it is no disgrace.

"But the early-out policy for their athletes is a disgrace, and should be stopped."

Folks, my point is very clear. We are proud of these academies. The Air Force Academy and West Point and the Coast Guard and the Naval Academy have served this country very well. Our great military leaders, some of our presidents, many of our great leaders in this country have come from those academies. Why? Because when you go to an academy, it is a pretty special place. It has the highest of standards, and it has the highest of ethical codes.

I think we are diluting that. I think we are diluting the reputation of all the preceding graduates of these academies for the entire history of those academies by taking a special class of athletes and treating them differently, by letting them out of their obligations early. Again, remember, we do not do it for any other class of Air Force or Naval or West Point or Coast Guard Academy graduate. It is wrong. We should stand up and say to the American people, you can expect more from our academies.

I want to mention a couple of other things in conclusion this evening. First of all, as I said earlier, I come from the third district of Colorado. This is a very special season coming up in Colorado so I am going to do a little promotion. I hope all of my colleagues have an opportunity to go out and see our colors in the Aspen trees. The district I represent is the highest district in the United States. They have a lot of beautiful communities, a lot of great ski resorts, Aspen, Sonoma, Steamboat, Telluride. I will get in trouble because I do not name them all, but virtually every ski resort in Colorado is in that district.

So if my colleagues get an opportunity, we invite them to come out to Colorado. Come and visit us. Come and see what beauty we have out there. But I also want to point out something else. When my colleagues head out of this city, take a look at how important it is that we allow the average working Joe and the average working Jane in this country to be promised and to expect fair treatment by their Government when it comes to taxes.

Every Government leader out there should understand that they have a fiduciary duty, an obligation, to try and deliver the most efficient services the Government can at the least amount of cost, and every Government official out there has an obligation to you, the working Joe and the working Jane, the people that provide these dollars, there is an obligation on behalf of every elected or every Government employee or every Government official to make sure that you are not being overcharged.

There is an obligation by every one of us in these chambers to look at that taxpayer and we ought to say thank you to them. We ought to say thank you to the working people of this country, because if it were not for the 8 or 12 or 14 hours they work every day 5 or 6 or 7 days a week, that money to provide for the programs that we run out of these chambers would not be here. We owe them a big thank you, and we also owe them the duty to make sure that when we spend those dollars we spend them effectively, that we are fair to the taxpayer.

Our system needs taxes. It has to operate with taxes, but our system has a fundamental requirement of fairness and openness to the people that send that money to Washington. And when we have an opportunity to send that

money and put it back in the pocketbooks of those hard working Americans that provide those dollars, we should take it.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. TOWNS (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today before 6 p.m. on account of personal business.

Mr. CROWLEY (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today after 2 p.m. on account of official business.

Mr. ROGAN (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today and the balance of the week on account of a death in the family.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. SCOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. RUSH, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BEREUTER) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin, for 5 minutes, September 16.

Mr. BEREUTER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. METCALF, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 1076. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance programs providing health care and other benefits for veterans, to authorize major medical facility projects, to reform eligibility for burial in Arlington National Cemetery, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Mr. THOMAS, from the Committee on House Administration, reported that that committee had examined and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 457. An act to amend title 5, United States Code, to increase the amount of leave time available to a Federal employee in any year in connection with serving as an organ donor, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 30 minutes