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Senate

The Senate met at 9:15 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Gracious Father, You have all authority in Heaven and on Earth. You are sovereign Lord of our lives and of our Nation. We submit to Your authority. Bless the Senators as they serve You together in this Senate Chamber and as they recommit to You all that they do and say this day. Make it a productive day. Give them positive attitudes that exude hope. In each difficult impasse, help them to seek Your guidance. Draw them closer to You in whose presence they will discover that, in spite of differences in particulars, they are here to serve You and our beloved Nation together. Gracious Lord, You have made this Senate a family, and we care for each other. Together we intercede for the needs of our friend, PAUL COVERDELL, and ask You to guide and keep him this day. All praise and glory and honor be to You, Gracious Lord. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable GEORGE V. VOINOVICH, a Senator from the State of Ohio, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished Senator from Ohio is recognized.

PROGRAM

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, today the Senate will immediately re-

sume debate on the Interior appropriations bill with Senators FEINGOLD and BINGAMAN in control of 15 minutes each to offer and debate their amendments. Following that debate, at approximately 9:45, the Senate will proceed to rollcall votes on the remaining amendments to the Interior appropriations bill, as well as on the final passage. Following the disposition of the Interior appropriations bill, the Senate will begin the final four votes on the reconciliation bill. Therefore, Senators should be prepared to stay in the Chamber for up to 12 votes with all votes after the first limited to 10 minutes in length.

As a reminder, the Senate will recess for the weekly party conferences from 12:30 to 2:15 p.m.

For the remainder of the day, it is expected that the Senate will begin consideration of the Agriculture appropriations bill.

I thank my colleagues for their cooperation.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 4578, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4578) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reed amendment No. 3798, to increase funding for weatherization assistance grants, with an offset.

Bryan/Fitzgerald amendment No. 3883, to reduce the Forest Service timber sale budget by \$30,000,000 and increase the wildland fire management budget by \$15,000,000.

Lieberman modified amendment No. 3811, to provide funding for maintenance of a Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve, with an offset.

Nickles amendment No. 3884, to defend the Constitutional system of checks and balances between the Legislative and Executive branches.

Reid (for Boxer) amendment No. 3885, to provide that none of the funds appropriated under this Act may be used for the preventive application of a pesticide containing a known or probable carcinogen, a category I or II acute nerve toxin or a pesticide of the organophosphate, carbamate, or organochlorine class as identified by the Environmental Protection Agency in National Parks in any area where children may be present.

Gorton (for Bond) amendment No. 3886, to prohibit use of funds for application of unapproved pesticides in certain areas that may be used by children.

Reid (for Bingaman) amendment No. 3887, to express the sense of the Senate regarding the protection of Indian program monies from judgement fund claims.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. It is my understanding we have until 9:45 in morning business, and then votes will be taken, is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico controls 15 minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to speak as in morning business.

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

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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TAX CODE CHANGES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, those who have followed the proceedings of the Senate over the last 2 weeks understand we have been debating changes in the Tax Code. The two changes we have focused on are changes in the estate tax and changes in what is known as the marriage penalty. These are two very interesting proposals that have been before the Senate but they really tell the story about the priorities of the Senate when it comes to dealing with the economy and helping families across America.

The estate tax, which we have considered and passed in a version last week to ultimately repeal it, is a tax which affects a very small percentage of Americans. In fact, fewer than 2 percent of American families will pay the estate tax. Those who end up paying it are the wealthiest people in America.

It is curious to me that when we established our list of priorities in this Congress as to tax relief, the first people in line were the wealthiest people in America. That is not to say we should not consider tax relief that involves them, but I think everyone understands that average families, smaller businesses, and family farms have priorities, too, when it comes to tax relief.

Take a look at what the Republican proposals under the estate tax, as well as the so-called marriage penalty tax, would do in terms of the people in America and their income groups.

For the 20 percent of American families lowest in income, the Republican proposals, two of them—the estate tax as well as the marriage penalty—result in tax breaks of \$24 a year. Then, as you start moving up in income, you see that not until you get up to the level of the next 15 percent here, of the top wage earners in America, do you find people even seeing a tax break of about \$900 a year—about \$75 or \$80 a month.

Now look at what happens when you go to the top 1 percent of wage earners in America, the wealthiest people in America: \$23,000 in tax breaks coming from this Republican-led Senate under these two bills, estate tax reform and marriage penalty.

So if you happen to be in a working family, down here, you are not going to notice what has been going on in the Senate because, frankly, the tax relief they are sending your way hardly pays for a magazine. But look what happens at the highest income levels: \$24 for the lowest wage earners, the people struggling to survive in America; \$23,000 for the wealthiest people in this country. Time and time and time again, the Republican leadership, given a chance to deal with tax equity in America, decides the best thing that can be done is to give to the wealthiest Americans more tax breaks.

This tells the story as well. I will not go through it in all detail, but the top 1 percent of wage earners in this country, people making over \$300,000 a year—those folks are going to see a tax

break of \$23,000; 43 percent of all the tax relief coming in these two Republican bills goes to people making over \$300,000 a year.

There are people who will say perhaps they need it. I am not one of them. Frankly, I can tell you who needs it, as far as I am concerned. A working family trying to figure out how they are going to pay for their kid's college education expenses, those are the folks who need a tax break. When we put on the floor a measure sponsored by my seatmate here, Senator Charles SCHUMER of New York, to allow people to deduct \$12,000 a year in college education expenses instead of giving tax breaks to the wealthy, it was rejected by the Republican majority. A \$12,000 deduction for college education expenses was rejected while we give a \$23,000-a-year tax break to the wealthiest among us.

Then Senator DODD of Connecticut, who has been a leader in child care, stood up and said we have a lot of people going to work in America every day worried about the safety and quality of child care; let's give them a tax break so they can pay for good, professional, safe child care and have peace of mind while at work that their kids are in good hands. It was rejected by the Republican majority. The idea of helping working families take care of their kids was rejected.

Then Senator KENNEDY and others offered a prescription drug benefit for seniors and the disabled under Medicare, struggling to pay for their drug bills. We said we think that is a higher priority than a \$23,000 tax break for the wealthiest people in America. The Republican majority said no, it is not a higher priority; it is a much higher priority to keep in the front of the line at all times the wealthiest people in America. That is what this debate is all about.

The question is, Whom do we stand for? Do we stand for working families in this country or do we stand for the financially articulate who, frankly, lord over this political process with their representatives who come in expensive suits, well dressed, standing in the corridors here saying we have to help the wealthy of America.

For good Heaven's sake, for the last 8 years this economy has been on such a roll, the wealthiest in America have done very, very well. I don't begrudge them that. But when we talk about helping people in this country, why don't we remember the folks who get up and go to work every single day, who worry about their kids' education expenses, who are concerned about day care where they can leave their kids safely, who want to make certain their parents can afford the prescription drugs they need to stay healthy?

That is not a priority among the Republican leadership here. They don't want to talk about it. They want to go to their convention in Philadelphia in 2 weeks and talk about how they have worked so hard for tax cuts and Presi-

dent Clinton and the Democrats have stopped them. Don't forget to ask them the question, Who are the winners under your tax cuts? The winners are those who turn out always to win when the Republicans are in control. The wealthiest win again and again in America.

I see Senator HARKIN. Senator HARKIN came in with his own proposal, trying to help those concerned about tax equity. I am happy to yield to him at this point.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I thank my friend for his very eloquent and decisive statement. I think my friend has really put his finger on it.

I would add one other thing to what we attempted to do here with the future surpluses the Senator was mentioning, the various things we wanted to do to try to help average working people. I had offered an amendment a couple of weeks ago to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act so we could help the States help families with children with disabilities to send them to school to get them the best possible education. We were stymied by the Republicans. Most of them voted against it.

Yet they find it within themselves to give, as the Senator pointed out, to the top 1 percent of this country 43 percent of the tax breaks. The surplus we have coming in the next 10 years is being used up by these tax breaks. I might ask the Senator if that is not so. It is my information, just this year, up until right now, this Senate, under Republican leadership, has passed something over \$1.3 trillion in tax cuts. Am I in the ballpark, I ask the Senator?

Mr. DURBIN. The Senator from Iowa is correct. As these charts indicate, those tax breaks are going to the wealthiest people in America. I think the Senator from Iowa, from my neighboring State, believes as I do: Hard-working people in this country are not looking for a handout; they are looking for an opportunity. Give them a chance to pay for their kids' college education; give them a chance to pay for prescription drugs; give them a chance to pay for day care. And the Republicans say consistently: That is not a priority. That is not important.

Mr. HARKIN. I see my distinguished colleague from Massachusetts. The other day, Senator KENNEDY was pointing out that the Republicans have passed \$1.3 trillion in tax cuts. Yet we have not purchased one book; we have not reduced the size of one class, we have not hired one new teacher, modernized one school, brought one prescription drug for the elderly. Yet they spend \$1.3 trillion of the surplus that is there because of hard-working Americans the Senator from Illinois is talking about.

Mr. DURBIN. I might say in response to the Senator from Iowa, to think we live in a nation where 30 percent of our population cannot read any higher than a fifth-grade level, this is a waste of resources in our country. We will