

In the 15-percent tax bracket, for a married couple filing, we double the income amount. Currently, a single taxpayer, hits the top of the 15-percent bracket when they make over \$26,250. If it is a couple, they hit the top when they earn \$43,850. We say that is not fair. If it is two people, it should be double what it is for one, so we move it up to \$52,500.

Those are the two main features of this bill. That is the big end of the bill. It is taking a standard deduction from \$4,400 for a single and that is now \$7,350 for a married couple and saying we will make it \$8,800. We are saying on the 15-percent bracket, which is the one we hit here, we are saying right now that if you are a couple, that you hit the top of that bracket at \$43,850, even though it is \$26,250 for a single person. We are saying if you are a married couple, we will move it up to \$52,500. That is the guts of the bill.

Then on the earned-income tax credit, we increase the phaseout by \$2,000 for a married couple so that low-income individuals don't hit that same marriage penalty.

Those are the three main features. That is what was passed. That is what 60 Senators and 63 percent of the House voted for. That is now what is in front of the President.

Some people say it costs too much—\$89 billion. This is a 5-year tax bill. It sunsets after 5 years—\$89 billion. It is 5 percent of the on-budget surplus. Setting the Social Security surplus aside, just leaving what is still the on-budget surplus, it is only 5 percent. That is all it is. Some people say we should be using it for debt reduction. This year, we will pay down the national debt—the debt, not the deficit—we will pay down the national debt about \$200 billion. We will buy down the national debt this year by \$200 billion, probably the most in the history of the United States. I haven't looked up the actual number, but it is probably the most in real terms, \$200 billion of debt buy-down.

The simple point here is there are no excuses remaining for the President not to sign this into law. There is no excuse on debt reduction. There is no excuse that it is too expensive. There is no excuse that it is just for the wealthy. All of those are false statements. There is just no substance to them. There is no excuse for him to deny 25 million American families this tax cut. I wouldn't even call it a tax cut. I think the Senator from Texas has it right. It is a tax correction.

Should we tax marriage more than we are taxing single people, when we are having so much trouble with the family in the country? We ought to give them a bonus to encourage family values.

This is a big day for this body. This is a major piece of legislation. It has cleared Congress. It has cleared through the House; it has cleared through the Senate. It now sits on the desk of the President; for the President

and Vice President of the United States to decide. They can be heroes. They can sign this bill into law or they can say, no, we are going to veto this piece of legislation.

I hope they will say, no, we don't want to send a signal to the married people of America that we think they ought to be taxed.

Democrats offered an alternative. It was a fine alternative, but it created a homemaker penalty that if you had one wage earner, but a second spouse who decided to stay home to take care of older parents and children, it actually taxed them more. So you had a homemaker penalty that was put into the Democratic alternative. It had a number of positive things about it, but the last thing we want to do is to say to people: Well, we really don't value somebody who stays at home to take care of family members, young or old, or other friends.

I think we ought to say this is a critical thing. We don't want to send the signal that we are going to tax in that situation. That is why we have worked out over the years all the problems in this bill.

I don't know what the President will come up with in vetoing it, but it has been a great bipartisan majority that has passed this bill; sixty votes, a number of our Democratic colleagues joining us on this bill that has now passed. It just awaits the signature of the person who sits in the Presidency of the United States. I hope he and Vice President AL GORE will decide: They have met most of the charges in the concerns we had and we are going to sign it into law.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

#### REMEMBERING SENATOR PAUL COVERDELL

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues in honoring the memory of our dear friend and colleague, Senator Paul Coverdell. My deepest condolences and prayers go out to Nancy, his family, staff, and the people of Georgia.

Paul Coverdell's career in public service as a state senator in Georgia, as Director of the United States Peace Corps, and as a U.S. Senator stand as an enduring tribute to his fine character, many talents, and boundless energy and commitment for his work. They also serve to remind us how one individual, working quietly and resourcefully, can accomplish so much in an all too brief period of time.

In his public life, Paul Coverdell was a vigorous and congenial advocate for initiatives and issues he cared deeply about and an effective leader in the Senate and for his party. While I did not have many opportunities to work closely with Senator Coverdell, we share a commitment to quality education for our Nation's young people and appreciation for the importance of agriculture to our respective States'

economies. Peanut farmers and sugar growers are frequent allies when commodity issues came before the Senate, and Senator Coverdell was a strong voice for Georgia farmers and his State's agricultural interests. On educational initiatives, Paul Coverdell and I rarely agreed; but he was never disagreeable. I admired his passion and tenacity on education issues, and appreciated the courtesy and humanity that characterized his work here in the Senate.

Paul Coverdell has left a mark for the better in the lives of millions of people, in America and around the world. He served his country and constituents conscientiously, earning our respect, admiration, and affection. We grieve for his passing from this life. I am reassured that we will find comfort in his splendid legacy of public service and the knowledge that death is a transition to life eternal and he is now with God. As we bid our dear friend and colleague one last fond farewell, I am reminded of the passage from Scriptures, from Matthew, 25:23:

His Master said unto him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been good and faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Now enter into the joy of your Master."

May God bless Nancy, the Coverdell family and staff.

Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

#### PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that during the consideration of H.R. 4733, the energy and water development appropriations bill, Mr. Roger Cockrell, a detailee from the U.S. Corps of Engineers, serving with the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee, be granted floor privileges.

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

The Senator from Missouri.

#### ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I am delighted the acting minority leader has brought up the energy and water measure because I have just received some very disturbing news, that the minority leader has indicated we can't bring up the energy and water bill unless a provision that was in the bill signed last year, that was in the bill signed the year before, that was in the bill signed the year before that and the year before that—he now finds it objectionable, and he will not let this bill be brought up unless we strike it out.

This provision deals with the spring rise on the Missouri River that Fish and Wildlife thinks is a good idea. But all of the people downstream know it would cause flooding, hardship, damage, property loss, and loss of lives from floods.

This is a serious matter. It also threatens commerce and transportation, not just on the Missouri River but on the Mississippi River, because in dry years, 65 percent of the flow of the Mississippi at St. Louis comes from the Missouri River. If they have a spring rise, there isn't water to maintain river transportation during the summer and the fall.

I had understood, from the minority leader's staff, that he wanted a time agreement so he could move to strike it. I think this matter needs to be aired. We are willing to enter into a time agreement, so on Monday or Tuesday—whenever he wants—we can talk about the reason that this was included in the bill last year, the year before, the year before, and the year before that, because it is of vital importance to our State and to other States on both the Missouri and the Mississippi Rivers.

We have a way of doing business around here and that is, the committee acts and they report out a bill; the bill comes to the floor. If somebody does not like a provision in the bill, they have a right to move to strike it. That right is totally protected. We are trying to get appropriations bills passed.

Frankly, I do not want to be held hostage by an idea that the minority leader has, that all of a sudden we can't put a provision in this year's bill that was in last year's bill and the bill the year before that.

I call on the minority leader to follow through with the commitment to have a time agreement. If he wants to move to strike it, fine. We have a lot of good reasons, and we want to let our colleagues know why that provision needs to be kept.

I do not want to be held hostage by the minority leader saying, we are going to stop the appropriations process unless you take it out of the bill—a measure that is vitally important to the State of Missouri, to the States of Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Louisiana. I am ready to talk about and argue against the minority leader's motion to strike. But to say that we can't even bring up the bill with that provision in it is, I think, inappropriate, unwise, and unprecedented.

So I am here. I will be back here on Monday or Tuesday to do business. I just ask that the minority leader let us bring up the bill. This is an unbelievable effort to hold a bill hostage because of a particular interest he may have in that bill. He can deal with it by an amendment to strike, a motion to strike—whatever he wants. But let us bring the bill up because there is too much that is important in it to have it be held hostage by an effort to say what can be in the bill, approved by the committee, where somebody does not like something in the bill.

There is a remedy: A motion to strike or a motion to amend. We will be here to do business Monday, Tues-

day—whenever the minority leader wants.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I say to the Senator from Kansas, if I could just have 2 minutes to respond to my friend, because I have a dual role as not only whip but also I am ranking member on the subcommittee, I say to my friend, I think the proposal the minority leader has made is eminently fair: This provision should be taken out, that there will not be an amendment offered on the floor, and whatever took place in conference he would be willing to live with.

I am not going to go through the merits of the case. I think there is significant merit on the side of the minority leader. Basically, sure, this provision has been in the appropriations bill before, but it has had no impact on the upper basin States. Now it does, because the Corps of Engineers is at a point where they want to change the manual to determine how the river is going to operate.

What this bill says is there can be no funds spent to change the manual. That is how the flow of the river is going to be impacted. We should leave this to bureaucrats. It should not be done, preventing money from going to change how the river is operated.

This is something that, as indicated by my friend from Missouri, we can debate at a subsequent time. But the bill will not be brought up until this provision is out of the bill.

We can, during the process of the bill, and before it gets to conference, decide what to do with it. This provision is unfair to the upper basin States. There should not be a provision preventing administrative agencies of this Government from spending money as to how that river system should be operated.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask my friend from Nevada, if we pass a bill out of committee, what is the precedent for saying, oh, we have to change it before you even bring the bill to the floor, the measure that is reported out of the committee?

We have a process around here. There are many things that come out of committees that we disagree with. We have the option to change it on the floor. We need to move forward. Energy and water is vitally important.

I appreciate the excellent work my colleague from Nevada does on this and other measures. But why, for Heaven's sake, are we supposed to hold an entire bill hostage because a single Senator wants to strike something out of a measure that has been adopted at the subcommittee and full committee level? I just do not understand why we can't do this in the normal course of business.

Mr. REID. I made my remarks very short because my friend from Kansas yielded to me. So I will make this response very short.

We are following what takes place in the Senate every week. A person has the right to stop a bill from going forward. The rules of this Senate have been in effect for many years. I will insert in the RECORD today why the provision in the bill is so unfair to the upper basin States.

I won't take the time of my friend from Kansas. There are many reasons this provision is unfair that will be inserted in the RECORD today.

I say to my friend from Missouri that the procedure that is being exercised by the minority in this instance—the minority leader and others who are affected; the minority leader is not the only one who is exercising his rights—are rights that are exercised every day in the Senate. The procedures of the Senate may seem burdensome and cumbersome, but they have always been here to make sure the minority's interests are protected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ASHCROFT). The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is the order of business.

#### CHECHNYA

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I rise today to once again draw attention to the continuing war in Chechnya. This war has raged for too long. The war in Chechnya from 1994-1996 left over 80,000 civilians dead, and the Foreign Relations Committee has received credible evidence that the current war has again resulted in the death of thousands of innocent civilians and the displacement of well over 250,000 others. The committee also received credible evidence of widespread looting, summary executions, detentions, denial of safe passage to fleeing civilians, torture and rape, committed by Russian soldiers. Colleagues, regardless of the politics of this war, this kind of behavior is unacceptable. War has rules, and the evidence and testimony the Foreign Relations Committee received raises serious doubts as to whether or not the Russian Federation is playing by those rules. Much of the evidence we received showed clear violations of international humanitarian law, including the well-established Geneva Convention.

The President must use this opportunity to relay our serious concerns with the actions of the Russian Government in Chechnya. Let's remember, what was the Group of Seven and became the G-8 with the inclusion of the Russian Federation, is an association of democratic societies with advanced economies. Although Russia is not yet a liberal democracy or an advanced economy, it was invited to take part in this group to encourage its democratic evolution. Today as I watch Russia refuse to initiate a political dialogue