

have to build sort of a network of health care for small towns. One of the things that has been most difficult to provide in those rural areas is mental health in small towns where kids need some counseling, and where there are real problems with no one there who is a specialist in mental health.

This Rural Mental Health Accessibility Act reflects on those unique needs and provides States and local communities flexibility.

The Federal programs that assist in health care needs in Wyoming are different than they are in Pennsylvania, or in Rhode Island. We need to have flexibility in all cases, particularly in the case of mental health which is more of a speciality.

This act provides for creative and collaborative provider education to help provide education for the mental health provider so they can come to those rural areas and give some assistance in education.

It increases access to mental services to vulnerable children and seniors in unserved rural areas throughout these States.

Certainly the circumstances are unique. With the stigma associated with mental illness, people do not seek the services. They are not handled there, and it cannot be done easily.

Seventy-five percent of the 518 nationally designated mental health professional shortage areas are located in rural areas, which, I guess, is not hard to understand.

One-fifth of all rural communities have no mental health services of any kind.

Frontier communities have even more drastic numbers. Ninety-five percent have no psychiatrists. Sixty-eight percent have no psychologists. Seventy-eight percent have no social workers.

You can see that it is really necessary to have a network where people can move around to provide the services that the communities do not have.

Suicide rates among rural children and adolescents are higher in urban areas. That is a very surprising statistic. We don't think of it that way. In fact, it is true.

Twenty percent of the Nation's elderly population lives in rural areas. Only 9 percent of our Nation's physicians practice in rural areas.

Often the primary care physicians are the only ones who are the source of treatment in these particular areas.

Primary care physicians do not necessarily have the specialized training in terms of mental health.

To address these issues, this bill does the following: Create the Mental Health Community Education Grant Program; States and communities to conduct targeted public education campaigns focused on mental illness, focused on suicide, and focused on substance abuse. These are things that all communities to some extent are trying to keep out of the public eye, kind of acting as if it really isn't true. But, in-

deed, we know that it is, and especially in rural communities.

I must tell you, frankly, that I am surprised at the suicide rate in a rural State such as Wyoming, which is higher than most places. It really points out the need for the kind of health services that we are hoping to provide.

It creates an Interdisciplinary Grant Program; permits universities and other entities to establish interdisciplinary training programs so they can provide, hopefully, training for these kinds of health providers.

Mental health and primary care providers are taught side by side in the classroom, so that with clinical training in rural areas we can help provide for all of these kinds of needs that exist. We encourage more collaboration, certainly, amongst providers, so we can have this network we talk about.

It actually authorizes \$30 million for 20 mental telehealth demonstration projects. And it is equally divided. I think as we get more and more into high-tech telemedicine, it will be even more important. Of course, to do that you have to have equipment, you have to have people on both ends who have some training to provide these kinds of services.

It provides mental health services to children and elderly residents at long-term care facilities located in mental health shortage areas.

Projects also provide mental illness education and targeted instruction on coping and dealing with the stressful experiences of childhood, adolescence and aging. One might even think it is appropriate where we have some of the kinds of problems we have in public schools. There is often the necessity to have help in these stressful experiences.

It requires a study. The Director of the National Institute of Mental Health of the Office of Rural Health Policy will report to Congress on the efficacy and effectiveness of mental telemedicine.

So I think it is something that is very much needed, something we can help provide in communities where it does not now exist. Frankly, without some special assistance, it probably will not exist in the foreseeable future.

There are a number of supporting organizations. The Rural Mental Health Accessibility Act is strongly supported by the National Rural Health Association, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association.

So I believe it is critically important that we consider this legislation as we talk about health care. Again, I cannot overemphasize the need for flexibility and taking a look at all the areas to be served. It is one thing to serve in a downtown metropolitan center—and they have their difficulties, of course—but it is also difficult to serve in Medicine Bow, WY, where you have to reach out from somewhere else to bring in

people to provide these kinds of services.

So, first of all, I thank the Presiding Officer for being a sponsor, but also I thank him for the time and the support he has given to helping those in need of health care and mental health care.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I believe we are in an hour of time allocated to the Senator from Wyoming.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2 p.m. is under the control of the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS, or his designee.

TAXES

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I rise to talk, again, about taxes.

The legislation now before the Senate includes education, which we will be debating this afternoon and which we will be working on until the tax bill comes from the committee, and taxes—probably two of the most important issues the Senate will address this year. Certainly everyone is most interested in education, and there are a number of broad topics within education that are legitimate to discuss. One of them is the role of the Federal Government in financing education.

Most would agree that the basic responsibility for elementary and secondary education lies with local government and State government. Traditionally, the Federal Government has provided about 7 percent of the total financing for education. It is an important contribution but certainly a relatively small one in terms of the total cost.

One of the other issues will be that of deciding how much flexibility there will be in terms of expending Federal moneys made available, whether or not, as was the case in the last administration, where the dollars which were allocated to education were generally assigned to the purpose for which they were allocated, either for smaller classrooms or for building improvements, new buildings, in reality, the real decision as to how moneys are used by local districts ought to be what the way local leaders believe they should be.

The needs are quite different in one place or another. I come from a State of small communities. The needs there are quite different often than they would be in downtown Pittsburgh, PA. We need flexibility.

There will also be and there have been, in fact, great discussions about the amount of money that ought to be

spent and, more importantly, how we are able to have accountability in terms of the dollars that are spent to see, in fact, if those dollars that are being spent are creating a better education opportunity for children. We will be back on that later. We should be.

Of course, with any program we discuss comes the question of taxes. We find ourselves in an interesting position, a somewhat enviable position of having a projected surplus over time, a substantial surplus over the next 10 years, a surplus each year during that time. There is some question if that can be counted on. Whenever you project into the future, there is always an element of uncertainty. Nevertheless, we have to make decisions in the future. Whether one is in business, whether it is a family, whatever, we have to make decisions for the future. Sometimes they are not exactly the same, but I feel confident, as do the people who make the projections, that this is a fairly modest projection in terms of the surplus over time.

There are broad issues involved, and great detail in taxes, obviously, but there are also some concepts that ought to be debated: What kind of taxing limits should be placed on people; should we have taxes that offset what we believe are the fundamental costs, the necessary activities of the Federal Government? To be sure, not everyone would agree on what those necessary activities are. Nevertheless, if you have a surplus in Washington, beyond the needs the Congress has adjudicated to these items, you can bet your life it will be spent. Then you ask: What should be the concept? Where do we want to be down the road? Do we want more and more Federal Government? Do we want to spend on all the programs? Do we want to be somewhat conservative and try to make a decision as to which programs are best done at the Federal level and which decisions are best left to local governments and people and taxpayers themselves?

These are some of the philosophical issues that lie behind the debate. We argue all the time as to whether or not it will be \$20 million or \$50 million or \$1 billion for this. Before that, we ought to establish in our own minds what the role of taxation is at the Federal level. Are we there to support the needed programs? If not, there is no end to the amount of money that can be spent.

Then there is the question of simplification, particularly around April 15. How can we make tax laws more simplified; how can we make it easier; how can we get away from all of the pages of activities taxpayers have to go through? But at the same time we talk about that, we will have 20 or 30 different ideas on this floor during the next couple of weeks as to how we ought to have a tax break for this or a tax incentive for that, to the point where we almost become more involved

in using taxes as a method of impacting behavior and directing behavior than we do to using it as an income source to pay for basic services.

Again, there is a difference of view about that. We will see a great deal of that.

The other area, of course, is, as we look into tax reductions and surpluses, we have to ask: What are the things we really need to be careful about? One, obviously, is to have the money to fund those programs that are decided to be essential programs: defense, education, and all of those.

Recall that almost two-thirds of the budget is nondiscretionary. Almost two-thirds of the budget is already predetermined. It is Social Security, health care; it is Medicare. It is those things for which there are not alternatives to be decided each year. Out of a \$1.9 trillion budget, we make determinations for about \$661 billion. So there are some basic things we talk about.

The President has put forth a plan. He has, obviously, indicated the two areas of his highest priority: education and tax reductions, with the general concept that taxpayers ought not to send more of their money to Washington than is necessary to carry out the functions of the Government.

His plan is to give a tax cut to every family that pays income taxes. He replaces the current tax brackets by reducing them to lower rates: 39 to 33, 15 to 10, and so on, so everyone who pays taxes would have a tax reduction. He doubles the child credit to a \$1,000 and reduces the marriage penalty. That is really a fairness issue.

The idea that a man and a woman who are single have two jobs, earn X amount of dollars, pay X amount of taxes, they are married, they continue to make the same amount of money, but they pay more taxes, is a fairness issue and one that needs to be dealt with.

Under his plan, one in five taxpaying families with children would no longer pay any income tax at all, completely removing 6 million Americans from the tax rolls. Remember that there is a large percentage of Americans who don't pay Federal income tax. Families of four making \$35,000 would have a 100-percent tax reduction in what they pay, and on up. So, of course, the more taxes that are paid, logically the reduction would accommodate more reduction in dollars. That is the case.

We need tax reductions, obviously, because our taxes are the highest we have paid as a percentage of gross national product since even in World War II—higher than that now. Obviously, we have asked taxpayers to send more of their money into Washington than is necessary to provide the essential functions. And therefore, a tax reduction is legitimate—not only legitimate now, of course, but also even more needed because of the economy turndown, the economy stabilization, whichever it is, the lack of growth that we have had,

and certainly having less taxes paid and more money available to be used by the taxpayers themselves—their money. It will help that economic turndown.

It also deals with debt reduction. We have a very large debt, of course—about \$2.5 trillion in publicly held debt as opposed to Social Security. It is debt that has been placed because of you, me, and all of us who are now adults. If we don't do something, it will have to be paid for by young people who are beginning to have their first paychecks; 12½ percent of their earnings will be withheld to pay for a debt we helped to create.

Over this 10-year period, about \$1.5 trillion of that would be reduced, leaving about \$800 million. That is a tremendously large number. But, as a matter of fact, that is about all that is eligible to be removed over that time because it is held and secured. So we would have debt reduction in this plan. The debt reduction now held in private hands is \$2.4 trillion, reduced to \$800 billion. That is a pretty good reduction. We would have relief for every taxpayer—\$1.35 trillion over 11 years would be reduced in terms of taxpayers having to send their money to the Federal Government.

In addition to that, there would be an immediate surplus this year of about \$100 billion—for the next 2 years—that could be used to get it back to taxpayers more quickly so it could be put back into the private sector and help strengthen the economy. At the same time, we have commitments to protect seniors for today and tomorrow—the \$2.5 trillion of Social Security. That portion of Social Security that comes in during this time would be set aside for Social Security so that we would be able to meet our obligations there. And, of course, there are some discussions going on about some changes in Social Security, to increase the amount of moneys that would be there. The budget includes \$300 billion for a reserve fund for reforming Medicare, which needs to be done, of course, and to have an opportunity to make Medicare more useful, make Medicare more easily useful and accessible. One of the issues would be to create a prescription drug benefit. Hopefully, that would be done, as well, at the same time some changes are made in Medicare so that it would fit together.

At the same time, there would be sufficient spending increases. Discretionary spending in this year's budget would be 5 percent. Somebody on the news said today that was below inflation, which isn't the case. Five percent is inflationary growth—in fact, beyond that. It would boost the veterans fund over 10 years, veterans hospitals, for veterans retirement, for doing those kinds of things. It raises defense spending, which I think is needed. Certainly, if we are going to have a voluntary military, the payments to those folks, the payrolls need to be competitive somewhat to what you could do in the

private sector. This is needed so that people don't get trained in the military for a specialized job and then leave for more pay in the private sector. So defense spending would be increased.

It provides for \$80 billion over 10 years for assistance to farmers and ranchers. We are in the process, during the next year, of coming up with a new farm bill before the one now in place runs out. There will be something to replace that. Hopefully, an effort will continue to move toward a marketplace in agriculture but also to provide some kind of a safety net so we don't go through the sort of trauma that we have over the last several years.

It also expands child tax credits and earned income tax credits—an \$18 billion increase over that time. So there are a lot of great details that could be talked about, obviously, and will be talked about, and indeed should be talked about.

The real question is, If you have a surplus, what should you do with it? You should certainly accommodate those things that are high necessities and priorities in the budget, and then you ought to return that money to the taxpayers, the people who paid it in. That is the way it ought to be. We ought to be able to understand that it is really the responsibility of the Federal Government to provide these programs but not to excessively spend the money that could very well be either spent by the taxpayer or, indeed, if there are special programs that need to be done, we would make an opportunity for the States and local governments to make the taxation they need so the things could be done there.

Mr. President, we are going to enter into a very lively debate. I suppose taxes and budgets probably personify as well as any other thing the differences in view about how people would approach governance. That is perfectly legitimate. That is what this place is for, to talk about differences in view. There are those who think that we ought to be spending much more on the Federal Government; the Federal Government ought to be funding every need that exists; and the Federal Government ought to grow and have more expansion into people's lives.

I am one of the others who believe there ought to be a limitation on the role of the Federal Government, that governance closer to the people is the kind of governance that is best, and we ought to tax to the extent necessary to pay for those functions. But when it is beyond that, we ought to do something about leaving taxpayers' money in the taxpayers' pockets.

Those are the decisions that are before us. Those are the decisions that we will be dealing with, hopefully this week, certainly next week, and they are tough. I just hope that we have an opportunity. We have a 50/50 Senate now, which is an unusual division of parties, and somewhat of an unusual division philosophically. Yet our challenge is to come together with some-

thing that is good for the country. Nobody would argue with that. But everybody has a different view of what is good.

I hear people say you need to do it "the right way." I don't know of anybody who wants to do it the wrong way.

There are differing views and there should be. The President has laid out a program that is quite good. There are those who would like to discredit the President's program, of course, in order to create their political ideas. But that is not why we are here. We are here to resolve problems that exist. We are here to govern. That is our job. We need to move forward. We have been a little slow. I think we have to really come to grips with the fact that we are here to make decisions, to move forward, to do something with education, to do something with taxes, and we are here to take on many of the other issues. That is our task.

Mr. President, I think there will be others joining me in a few moments. In the meantime, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, it is my understanding we are in a period for morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

TAX RELIEF

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, today I join with several of my colleagues to talk about an issue that has dominated the Senate and the Congress of the United States for many months. That dominance, I think, has been shared in most of the minds of our American citizens as we have worked to complete a budget for fiscal year 2002. Tax relief is an important component of that budget and an important issue to the American people.

As a matter of fundamental fairness, the most heavily taxed generation in America's history, in my opinion, deserves tax relief. There is plenty of room in this budget for tax relief. Listening to some of the speeches in this Chamber last week, one would assume we were dramatically cutting the budget of the American people in order to give some of that money back. That is simply not true.

The budget resolution increases overall spending by about 5 percent. Important national needs will be met. We are taking less than a third of the total surplus—surplus tax dollars—to provide tax relief. Without question, there is room in this budget to provide tax relief to that overtaxed American consumer taxpayer and to adequately fund a budget for America's citizens.

According to the Tax Foundation, May 3 was tax freedom day this year. In other words, the average working American had worked from January 1 through May 3 just to pay his or her taxes. Said another way, on May 3, the American worker finally was beginning to put money in his or her pocket and provide money for the breakfast table of his or her family.

The average American works the first 123 days—the first one-third of the year—to support the appetite of Government, and still we heard in this Chamber this past week the siren song saying that appetite was not big enough, that somehow it needed to grow ever increasingly larger.

May 3 is the latest tax freedom day in the history of this country. Tax Freedom Day occurred as early as April 18 in 1992, before the record tax hike enacted in 1993. But from 1992 to now, another half-month has been added to the amount of time the average worker is required to work just to meet his or her tax obligation.

May 3 is actually a national average because, because it brings in the State and local tax burdens. In Idaho, for example, at least that burden is less than in other States, and Idaho's Tax Freedom Day fell on April 25, making its citizens the tenth least taxed group of citizens of any State in the Nation. There is no wonder Idaho is a fast-growing State. Somehow the word is out that if you live and work in Idaho, because of our attitudes about government and the way we manage our government in Idaho, and thanks to my colleague, our Governor, Dirk Kempthorne, who once served with us in the Senate, we tax citizens less, even though we provide adequate government for their needs.

Americans have never been more heavily taxed than they are now. The average American family pays 37 percent of its income in all taxes at all levels, half again as much as our parents paid in the 1950s.

Stop and think about that. Compare the wages, compare the cost of living, compare everything else then relative to now, and yet today taxes have dramatically increased, by about half, compared to our parents' generation.

No wonder the personal average savings rate in America is now a negative 1 percent. Government is taking away what the people otherwise would save—what they would save for their retirement, for their children's education, for their parents' care, or to build a better standard of living. Oftentimes we hear economists analyze the negative savings rate in our country compared with other nations of the world, and they say: It is a matter of culture. Certain nations have a culture of savings.

My suggestion to our citizens is this: If you were granted the opportunity or the incentive, my guess is you would be saving a great deal more than you are saving now. When you are paying 37 percent of your income for taxes at all