

American people create a system that promotes fairness and economic prosperity by treating everyone the same, regardless of income or occupation, and removing special preferences and disincentives for economic growth that characterize our current IRS Tax Code? They also ask, when will it be time to eliminate our current code's bias against savings and investment?

Currently interest rates are at historic lows. It is hard enough to convince people to put money in a savings account, because it doesn't pay very much, and, on top of that, you pay at the highest rate on the money you earn on that savings account, certainly a disincentive for savings. When savings are no longer taxed twice, I believe people will save and invest more, leading to higher productivity and greater take-home pay.

Mr. Speaker, a year ago, my third month in Congress, I introduced a bill, H.R. 1783, called The Freedom Flat Tax Act. The Freedom Flat Tax Act allows people to opt into a pro-growth tax system that restores fairness, simplicity and efficiency to our current Tax Code. It replaces our current costly tax system with a single-rate system that, most importantly, only taxes income one time.

This flat tax could be phased in over a 3-year period, with a 19 percent rate for the first 2 years, with a 17 percent rate in subsequent years. There would be no deductions or loopholes. It will allow some personal exemptions, including \$5,500 for each dependent.

The key is this flat tax was a little different from other flat taxes that have been introduced in this Congress. The most important difference is that this fundamental change in tax structure is actually within our reach. It is within our reach this year, if we were to choose to do it.

It is optional. If a family has constructed their savings or their life so that they do well under the IRS code, they are welcome to stay in the IRS code. But if they find that they would like simplicity and efficiency in their life, they are allowed the option to elect into a simple, fairer system; a simple, fairer, single-rate system. There would be no ability to move in between the two systems once the election has been made. It would be permanent.

Mr. Speaker, back in my district in Dallas, there is a financial columnist who writes an article for the Dallas Morning News named Scott Burns. He is certainly no great friend of the Republican Party. He has been critical of us on several occasions. But he wrote an article that dealt with home ownership and the home mortgage deduction, and you do get a lot of concern from people who say, gosh, I get my home mortgage deduction now, and I would hate to give that up.

But Mr. BURNS' study showed across the country, the amount that you are able to save off your income taxes varies greatly depending upon where you

live. Around Dallas, Texas, the average homeowner's savings over 3 years' time is about \$1,000. Down in San Antonio, Texas, it is even less. It is about \$100. In Santa Barbara, California, it is \$42,000, so clearly a resident of Santa Barbara, California, would probably like to stay in the current IRS code, but my constituents around Dallas should be given the option of a code that makes more sense for them.

It would be enormously easier to figure current tax bill under a single-rate system. Simply subtract and pay 17 percent of your wages after the personal exemptions.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for us in this body to take the concept of fundamental fairness in the Tax Code to the next level. I know there are others on my side of the aisle who argue for a Federal retail sales tax. I can tell you there are parts of that that seem agreeable to me as well, but the reality is the implementation of that type of tax would be costly, and it would be disruptive in the economy.

Our current situation, people who fill out the 1040-EZ form spend 3½ hours to do their taxes; The regular form, they will spend 13½ hours doing their taxes. Billions of hours are spent complying with Tax Code forms instead of being with your family.

The current Tax Code is expensive. The average household pays \$2,000 a year in compliance costs. For the year 2001 alone, Americans lost \$183 billion in opportunity costs instead of working on money-producing activity for themselves or their families.

As I stated before, the current Tax Code punishes hard work and doubly punishes savings. We pay the government to take our hard-earned money off our hands just so they can punish us for job-creating behavior.

Mr. Speaker, the time is now, the power is within our grasp. I urge my colleagues to take a look at H.R. 1783, and let us see if we cannot make that a reality for the American people next year.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFazio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SAVE THE HUBBLE SPACE TELESCOPE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to deliver the thoughtful opinions about the Hubble Space Telescope from the fifth grade math class at Island Park Elementary School. All 25 students unanimously believe that the Hubble Space Telescope should be saved.

I recently visited Thelma Ritchie's class as a part of Hubble Awareness Day. It is a program I started to listen directly to the American people about the future of the Hubble Space Telescope. According to the Administrator of NASA, the Hubble has no future. Mr. O'Keefe may be the only person in America who actually believes that, but he certainly is one person who can kill the Hubble if he wants to.

Students at Island Park Elementary believe Hubble should have a future. So do I. So do millions of other students and scientists and ordinary people across America.

Thelma Ritchie's students recently spent the entire week working on Hubble-related activities. The day I was there, students were using Hubble images and math to learn how to accurately estimate the billions of stars visible without counting all of them.

The classroom fueled inspiration amid the wonder of scientific discovery. Hubble pictures were everywhere. You could see the excitement and wonder in the eyes of very young students. Some had crafted Hubble models. Others had drawings. Many of them were totally engaged in the pursuit of scientific discovery inspired by the Hubble Telescope.

Thelma's classroom, like every math and science classroom in America, is an incubator for future scientists, astronauts and astronomers, and one tool at their disposal will be lost if we do not act and save the Hubble.

Before I arrived, Ms. Ritchie had given her young scientists an assignment: Read the House Resolution that 47 colleagues and I have sponsored to save the Hubble and tell us what to do. Here is what the students said.

From Claire and Juliana: "Without the Hubble, space would be a half-solved code for us to crack."

Byron said: "In my opinion, NASA should go and fix the Hubble, since it has been giving tons of information."

Matt said: "I think NASA should keep Hubble up there," and Charlotte added, "because then younger kids can get more interested in science."

Shoshana offered this: "Advice for NASA would be pretty much to listen to the public and scientists and do what is best for us all."

Sidney said: "Not only does it give scientists answers, but it teaches kids way more about space."

Alyssa was even more direct: "I disagree with NASA and I think they should keep the Hubble."

NASA's Administrator claimed that safety is the reason for letting the Hubble die, that it would be too risky to send the space shuttle to service the Hubble, as it has in the past.

Let us be clear: Space flight is risky, and safety must be paramount. But it is hard to follow the Administrator's logic on safety at the same time the administration wants to go to Mars. I think Mr. O'Keefe is seeing red, partly over the criticism of Hubble, but mostly because the President wants to go to

Mars. Personally, I wish he would, but that is a different discussion.

Hubble's mission is not over. Hundreds of millions of dollars in new Hubble equipment, some of it designed with the help of University of Washington astronomers, is built, paid for and ready for deployment. Tens of millions of dollars of equipment is already built.

Hubble's mission is not over. There are new worlds to discover, new images to take us even closer to the moment of creation and more children across America to inspire.

The Hubble Space Telescope has produced great advancements in science, yet Hubble's most important contribution may be its inspiration. It is the cheapest ad ever produced to encourage young children to become scientists. If anyone needs reassurance that America can compete globally in math and science, they should visit Thelma Ritchie's fifth grade class at the Island Park School. You know how to do math, and so do they. Here is their answer: Two plus two equals save the Hubble.

COMMISSIONER GORELICK MUST STEP DOWN FROM 9/11 COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today seeking answers to very tough questions. Like many Americans, I have been following the 9/11 Commission hearings with very keen interest. As an American, I want to know how the terrorists infiltrated our borders without detection, and, as a Congresswoman, I have a responsibility to implement policies that protect our country. I view this duty as one of my most urgent and most sacred obligations.

At the outset, let me be clear: I do not seek to blame anyone for 9/11, not anyone but the terrorists and their evil supporters. However, I do want to know what happened and what our government can do to make sure that attacks like those on 9/11 never happen again. Therefore, like millions of others, I am eagerly awaiting the report from the 9/11 Commission.

Unfortunately, and to my disappointment, during the hearings last week it became clear that Americans may not be able to get the complete and honest picture that we deserve. Let me explain what I mean.

Last week, under oath, Attorney General John Ashcroft introduced a recently declassified memo by Commissioner Jamie Gorelick regarding the now familiar wall separating the Federal agencies from intelligence agencies. For her part, Ms. Gorelick responded to these charges in an editorial in the Washington Post. However, many tough questions still re-

main. Ms. Gorelick highlighted why her testimony is so crucial, if not critical, to understanding why our government failed in detecting these attacks.

At the closing of her editorial, Ms. Gorelick says she made all relevant opinions and briefs available to the Commission. However, the Commission would not accept this reply from National Security Director Condoleezza Rice, and they most definitely should not accept this excuse from one of their own members.

Now, I am not in a position right now to judge the validity of these competing claims. Most of us are not in a position to say whether Attorney General Ashcroft is right or wrong. I do not know if, in fact, Ms. Gorelick's policies prevented us from catching the terrorists. I do not know if the current administration could have done more to tear down this wall. But I do know that we need to have, and Americans deserve, the full and complete answer to these questions.

Never mind that resolving the dispute between Attorney General Ashcroft and Commissioner Gorelick is the essence of this Commission's charge. Never mind that Condoleezza Rice was subject to intense criticism for refusing to testify under oath, which, by the way, she finally did. Never mind the fact that Dr. Kissinger was widely criticized and stepped down for far less of an appearance of conflict of interest than Ms. Gorelick has. Never mind that the Gorelick memo is the biggest news out of the hearings thus far. And, obviously, we must keep in mind the glaring self-interests of this Commissioner.

We believe that the Commission's charge is that all witnesses with essential information, particularly with the ability to clarify policies, must testify. Why is Ms. Gorelick above the standard? The American people, the victims' families and the Commission have a right to hear from Ms. Gorelick in public under oath.

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Simple logic tells us that simply recusing herself from her activities will not suffice. Ms. Gorelick must step down.

She must submit her actions and the actions of her Justice Department to the same scrutiny that Dr. Rice and the current administration faces.

How can she claim impartial judgment on policies she so obviously disagrees with?

How can she comment on the failings of our intelligence and law enforcement communities if her policies actually influence those failings?

In short, how can she be on both sides of the witness table?

We created this commission to assess our weaknesses and to make recommendations. To that end, we need to continue the tough, honest questionings that have been the hallmark of these hearings. If Ms. Gorelick refuses to step aside and submit herself

under oath to questioning, then the outcome of this commission must be looked at in an entirely different and very tainted light.

We would have to ask ourselves what we do not know from what now seems to be destined to be an incomplete record. Knowing what we know about Ms. Gorelick's policies, we must demand she answer for them if only to clear up the charges brought by Attorney General Ashcroft that her policies were to blame.

There are many questions to be answered. And obviously Ms. Gorelick must step down and testify under oath.

THE FAILED ECONOMIC POLICIES OF THIS ADMINISTRATION

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, prior to our recess, the House voted on a \$2.3 trillion budget with a \$521 billion deficit, showing that it is impossible to finance three wars with three tax cuts.

This budget, the budget by the President and Republican majority, repeats the same mistakes that have resulted in a jobless economy and a health care and wage recession with the lowest growth in wages in the period of economic growth in the last 30 years.

We have 2.5 million Americans that have lost their jobs in the last 3 years, 43 million Americans without health care, 2 million Americans who were once in the middle class and now in poverty, 1.6 percent job wage growth in the areas of salaries, and \$1 trillion in corporate and individual foreclosures and bankruptcies. That is the economic record of this administration as embodied by the budget the President submitted.

During the 2000 Presidential election, President Bush declared that he was opposed to nation-building. Who knew it was America he was talking about when he said he was opposed to nation-building. This budget and the President's economic vision is really a tale of two budgets. We look at his vision for the United States, and we look at his vision for Iraq. We spent more than \$100 billion in Iraq on the occupation, but without promising the same promise and same future here at home to the American people.

I am not opposed to rebuilding in Iraq, but I am opposed to making the investments at home while we are making the same investments in Iraq.

Let us take a look at it. Today we provide universal health care coverage in Iraq as one of our goals. 44 million Americans are without health insurance; 33 million Americans work full time with no health care.

There is universal job training in Iraq, and yet in the President's own budget we have cut back on the funds for job training. In health, 2,200 Iraqis health professionals and 8,000 volunteers are receiving free training. In