

Real disposable personal income—meaning how much money families and individuals have—is up. Household wealth is at an all-time high. Home ownership is at a record high. Consumer confidence is up. The stock market has risen from 7,000 to 10,000. Business confidence is higher than it has been in 20 years, and business spending and investing is booming.

Four years ago, President Bush inherited an economy that was in recession. Now because of his firm fiscal and tax leadership, the economy is booming. American families feel better off today because they are better off today.

The optimism shows up in national polls. A Harris poll released this week finds a clear majority of Americans feel their situation has improved since the last administration left office. Over two-thirds expect their personal situation to improve over the next 5 years. African Americans and Hispanics are particularly hopeful. A remarkable 86 percent in each group expect their lives to improve in the next 5 years.

It is imperative we keep up the pace. We can only do that by making the tax cuts permanent. My constituents have written to me again and again pleading to preserve the tax cuts. Yet there are some who would like for those tax cuts to expire. Worse yet, others are calling for immediate repeal. Not only would that be the largest tax hike in history, it would cut short America's new economic recovery.

The tax cuts are working. We need more, not less. We need to keep America moving forward, and we need to keep passing appropriate legislation that stokes the fires of the world's largest and most dynamic economy.

I urge my colleagues to continue to support these progrowth, projob policies that create opportunity for every American. Everyone who wants a job should be able to find one.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time which has not been used is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee, and the second half of the time under the control of the minority leader or his designee.

Who yields time? The Senator from Kentucky.

#### ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this week marks the 1-year anniversary of the Jobs and Growth Act of 2003, a bill

signed into law on May 28 last year. And now, a year later, we see by every conceivable economic measure of prosperity and well-being the Bush recovery is roaring ahead.

The Bush recovery has American families on the right course. The Bush recovery has American businesses, services, manufacturing, and exports all moving ahead at full steam.

The Bush recovery has workers' income rising, their job opportunities expanding, and their take-home pay increasing. A record number of workers are working. The Bush recovery is broad, it is growing, it is substantial, and it is a record of achievement of which any President would be justly proud. But the remarkable aspect of the Bush recovery is not what it has obtained but what it has overcome.

Go back to January 2000, when President Bush was still Governor Bush. The Dow Jones industrial average peaked at 11,723. That was the peak in January of 2000. The Dow Jones industrial average peaked at 11,723. Two months later, it lost one-fifth of its total value. A couple of months later, in March of that year, Nasdaq peaked. But by the end of 2000, tech stocks had lost more than half of their value. By the fall of 2000, the economy had slipped into recession.

Again, this all occurred while President Bush was still Governor Bush of Texas.

President Bush took office with an economy already stalled, a stock market tanking, and 8 months later America suffered an unprecedented terrorist attack, on September 11. We are all aware of the toll of lives from that tragic day, but few appreciate the full effect on our freedom and on our prosperity. Planes were grounded for days, and new, expensive security measures were imposed. Business in America came to a screeching halt, each one collectively seeking to reassess the risk and the opportunity of all their endeavors, not only here but overseas. Average Americans took stock of the threats and warnings out there and acted cautiously for the sake of their loved ones.

As our freedom to act without fear was diminished, so, too, was the economic activity that is a reflection of that freedom. A new world of uncertainty was created by 9/11, and while many have completely forgotten the attacks even occurred, their full ramifications are felt today, not only militarily and politically but economically as well.

Despite all that, America is back and stronger than ever, and much of that strength can be traced back to the Jobs and Growth Act of 2003. By letting workers, families, and businesses keep more of their own money, that legislation, along with the President's 2001 tax relief, laid the foundation for economic growth and job creation, not only now but for years to come.

Mr. President, 111 million individuals and families will receive an average

tax cut of \$1,586; 49 million married couples will have an average tax cut of \$2,602; 43 million families with children will receive an average tax cut of \$2,090; 14 million elderly individuals will see their taxes fall on average by \$1,883, and 25 million small business owners will receive an average tax cut of \$3,001.

This tax relief has prompted the growth of a surging, vital economy. Since the President signed that bill, the stock market is up 18 percent, increasing America's capital base by more than \$2 trillion. Real business investment in equipment and software is up 14 percent annually, the fastest third-quarter increase since the late 1990s. More manufacturers have been reporting increased activities and new orders than any other time in the last 20 years, and real GDP grew at a 5.6-percent annual rate, the fastest in nearly 20 years.

As tax relief has prompted a surging economy, families have benefited in the last year. Real disposable personal income rose at an average annual rate of 3.9 percent, household wealth hit a record high of \$44 trillion, and home ownership has risen .4 percentage points to a record high of 68.6 percent.

With families stronger and businesses growing, the Bush recovery is building strong momentum in the jobs market. In just the last year, over 1 million new jobs have been created for America's workers. The unemployment rate fell from 6.1 percent to 5.6 percent. That is lower than the average unemployment rates in the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. If that were not enough, State unemployment rates fell in 47 out of 50 States.

America is headed in the right direction. Looking at this chart, since President Bush signed the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Act last May, the 5.6-percent increase in GDP is the best in 20 years; 1.1 million new jobs since last May; 800,000 new jobs this calendar year alone; the stock market rebound, up 18 percent since the President signed the tax relief bill. Home ownership is up to 68.6 percent, an alltime high since the President signed the tax bill. Disposable income is up 3.9 percent—more take-home pay. All of this has occurred since President Bush signed the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Act last May.

We have had an extraordinary period of economic growth. Some say the economy should be growing faster, but their solution is to lock up the brakes and whip a u-turn. That is what an agenda of more taxes, more regulation, and more Government spending would do.

Under President Bush's leadership, America is finally headed in the right direction. The economy is picking up steam, and families, businesses, and workers across America are reaping the benefits. This is not the time to turn backward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). The minority leader is recognized.

#### EDUCATION OF INDIAN CHILDREN

Mr. DASCHLE. I will use my leader time this morning.

This is the cover of a recent *Parade* magazine. The man in this photograph is the great-great-grandson of Sitting Bull, one of the most extraordinary leaders America has ever produced.

His name is Ron. His horse is Thunder. He is part of the new generation of American Indian leaders. He is a lawyer by training, but education is his life's work. He is president of the Sitting Bull College in Fort Yates, ND, on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, and chairman of the President's Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and Universities.

The subtitle of this article expresses a fundamental truth that Sitting Bull taught and that people I talk with throughout Indian Country still believe today: Education is the key to a better future for the American Indian people. Education, more than anything else, gives a person the power to determine his or her own destiny. It is the most effective tool there is to relieve the grinding poverty that exists today in too many tribal communities throughout America.

When Native Americans surrendered their lands more than a century and a quarter ago, the United States Government promised to provide the descendants of Sitting Bull and all Native Americans, free education, health care and other basic necessities of life, forever. That is one reason I am disturbed by the results of two new audits by the Interior Department's inspector general.

The first audit reveals that, over a 3-year period, the BIA's Office of Indian Education Programs used at least \$5 million from a contingency fund for non-emergency purposes, including staff retreats, bean bag chairs, televisions and puppets. This misuse of contingency funds shortchanged Indian schools of money they need for emergencies.

The second audit, which concerns the BIA school construction program, also documents numerous examples of poor management and lack of accountability. It found that Indian children are being forced to try to learn, and their teachers are trying to teach, in schools that put them at undue risk of injury because "no one in BIA ensures that school buildings are not occupied" until hazards are corrected. That is shameful.

This second report also found that 30 percent of the school construction and repair projects it reviewed failed to meet the BIA's own goal of completing design and construction within 3 years.

The IG made nine recommendations that it said could strengthen the BIA school construction program and in-

crease the program's benefits for Native Americans. Those nine recommendations were included in a draft copy of the report the IG gave to BIA officials for comment.

Incredibly, despite being given an extended deadline, Bureau officials failed to respond to the draft. As a result, when the report was released publicly, it noted that "all nine recommendations are considered unresolved."

I do not know why the BIA failed to even acknowledge those nine recommendations for improving the Indian school construction program; I do not know if it was arrogance, indifference, incompetence or simply a result of being overwhelmed. But I know that it is unacceptable.

The BIA operates or funds 187 schools in 23 States, including South Dakota. Most of these schools were built in the 1940s or 1950s. Many are decades older than that. Few are equipped to support computer labs or other sorts of modern equipment that are now considered essential in most school districts.

I have visited BIA schools where children had to place trash cans beneath the holes in the roofs to catch the rain. I have been to BIA schools in which cold winds whipped through broken windows. I visited a school, which has since been replaced, in which neither the furnace nor the bathroom plumbing worked. That is not keeping our promise to educate Indian children. That is a disgrace.

The Cheyenne Eagle Butte School and dormitories on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota were built by the BIA around 1960. The floor tiles in both the school and the dormitory contain asbestos, a known cause of lung cancer and emphysema.

To date, the BIA's remediation efforts consist of recommending that the school "keep the boiler room door shut" and keep the floors waxed so the tiles will not chip and flake.

Three years ago, the Cheyenne Eagle Butte School was first on the BIA's priority list for school replacement. Then the BIA changed its criteria, and the school dropped down on the list. Today, the tribe has no idea when the school will be replaced.

Several weeks ago, I spoke on this floor about the Crow Creek Tribal Schools in Stephan, SD.

Two years ago, Crow Creek's middle school was condemned and replaced with modular trailers. The elementary school and high school still need to be replaced. Throughout the high school, crumbling walls are supported by steel braces; one can see exposed electrical wires.

The Crow Creek Council has been lobbying for money to fix the schools on the reservation for 25 years. Recently, the Crow Creek school superintendent received this letter from the South Dakota state fire marshal. I have had it reprinted and enlarged here. I will quote:

[T]he buildings are dangerous and represent a threat to life.

The State fire marshal "strongly recommends discontinued use of both" the elementary and high schools.

Two weekends ago was graduation weekend at Crow Creek Tribal Schools. The school had originally planned to hold the graduation ceremony outside because the gym has been condemned—but it rained on graduation day. So 1,500 people—the graduates, their families and friends—crowded into a condemned gymnasium that threatened to fall down around them.

I ask you, what other group of children would we allow to be treated this way?

The BIA has committed to replace the Crow Creek gym—but it is unclear when. Tribal officials had thought students would be playing basketball in the new gym this fall, but the construction funds have once again been delayed.

In the last several months, Crow Creek schools have experienced a crisis of suicides among students. Mental health experts call such episodes "cluster suicides." Six young people on the Crow Creek Reservation have killed themselves in the last 6 months—and many more have tried. In April, there were 21 suicide attempts; the month before, 28. Last month, a 14-year-old girl tried to hang herself behind the elementary school. She was discovered and cut down just in time. The most recent suicide was a 19-year-old young man who had dropped out of school. Had he stayed, he would have graduated last month.

Clearly, the suicide crisis at Crow Creek schools is not caused only by crumbling schools. This is a complex crisis with very deep roots. It involves public health issues and myriad other issues.

But what message does it send to young people when they are forced to try to learn in a condemned building?

There are school buildings like the Crow Creek Tribal Schools throughout the BIA system. All told, the BIA school construction backlog is estimated at \$1 billion. At the current funding levels, it would take decades to get through that backlog.

In 2000, when he was running for President, then-Governor Bush met with tribal leaders in New Mexico and promised to invest \$1 billion to fix crumbling BIA schools. Yet, the President's proposed budget for next year cuts funding for Indian school replacement for the second year in a row. That is wrong.

America's commitment to build new schools for children in Iraq and Afghanistan is admirable, but it does not erase our treaty obligations to provide good schools for Indian children in this country.

The JOBS bill the Senate just passed last month includes a promising program that was first suggested by tribal educators in my State. The program would allow tribal governments to issue school construction bonds; the Federal Government would pay the interest and the principal on the bonds.