

reduction of the tax base for Las Animas County. By reducing the tax base this could have a major economic impact on the schools and the community. The County like other Counties in the state is struggling with revenues and this expansion could do more harm.

The Board of Alamosa County Commissioners is respectfully asking that you support Las Animas County in prohibiting the expansion of Pinon Canyon Maneuver site.

Sincerely,

DARIUS ALLEN,  
*Chairman.*

Mr. SALAZAR. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON of Florida pertaining to the introduction of S. 2024 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont.

#### AMENDMENT TO H.R. 2642

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, later on this morning, I will be offering an amendment which, frankly, in terms of dollars, is not one of the big amendments as part of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs bill, which is over \$100 billion. This amendment is only \$20 million. But while it is small in the amount of money it deals with, it is enormously significant to the millions of men and women who have served our country in war, and it is especially relevant to disabled veterans, those people who have given as much as anyone can expect defending their country—the people without arms, the people without legs, the people in wheelchairs. It is for them I am offering this amendment, and I am very pleased that this amendment has the support of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and AMVETS.

The amendment I am offering addresses an ongoing and an emotional concern within the veterans community. It is the concern that we in the U.S. Government are nickel and diming veterans in an absolutely shameful way through the so-called rounding-down process in terms of the checks that go to disabled veterans. Some years ago, as a temporary budget Band-Aid, the Congress initiated the so-called rounding down of veterans disability benefits and a few other categories of benefits that affect veterans, their spouses, and their children. Under this rounding-down process, every year when we calculate the new disability benefits veterans will receive as a result of their COLAs, the resulting amount is rounded down to the whole dollar.

Let me give an example of what I mean. A veteran receives a check, or should receive a check, every month for hypothetically \$200.99. What we have done is say to that veteran: We are taking away, every month, that 99

cents, and you are going to get a check for \$200.

Now, somebody here may say: Hey, 99 cents is not a lot of money. Multiplied by 12 months a year, you are talking about less than \$12 a year. What is the problem? Well, the problem is, if you are a low-income veteran, it does matter. But I think even more significantly than the dollars, what we are saying to that veteran who opens that check, sitting in a wheelchair, we are saving 99 cents a month on you. But by the way, we are giving no-bid contracts out in Iraq which cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, or perhaps billions of dollars, and we are going to balance the budget on your 99 cents per month.

So the amount of money we are talking about here is not a whole lot, but symbolically, to thousands of disabled veterans, it says something about how we in the Congress feel about them. We are saving 99 cents a month. Well, I think we can afford to give that 99 cents to those guys in the wheelchairs, the people without one arm, the people who are blind, the people who can't hear, the people coming home from Iraq with traumatic brain injury. I think we can afford to give them that 99 cents, and that is what this amendment is about. This amendment is going to cost all of \$20 million—\$20 million in a bill which is over \$100 billion.

Let me quote from the Independent Budget. I think many Members of the Senate know that the Independent Budget is the budget brought together by all of the major veterans groups, and this is what they say when they describe this process:

Disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation rates have historically been increased each year to keep these benefits even with the cost of living. However, as a temporary measure to reduce the budget deficit,—

A temporary measure.

Congress enacted legislation to require monthly payments, after adjustment for increases in the cost of living, to be rounded down to the nearest whole dollar amount.

And let's remind ourselves what kind of benefits we are talking about. Disability compensation benefits are benefits that veterans receive if they have a service-related disability and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Furthermore, this rounding down applies to what is known as the clothing allowance. When veterans have prosthetics or orthopedic appliances such as a wheelchair, they understandably have a high chance of wearing down or tearing clothing at a faster rate than the average person. In other words, you are in a wheelchair, it rubs, your clothing gets worn out. You get help with that. We are rounding down those checks.

This is not a complicated piece of legislation. This is legislation that says to people who have done as much as a human being can do for this country that we are no longer going to con-

tinue to nickel-and-dime you. I hope very much the Members of the Senate will join me and the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Disabled American Veterans, and AMVETS in supporting this legislation.

I yield my time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, are we in morning business now?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate is in morning business.

#### REAGAN'S ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, an interesting economic trend is sweeping through countries around the globe. It is one that started right here in the United States, and it would be wise for us to consider some of the amazing results that are being documented internationally.

More than 25 years ago, Ronald Reagan took the helm of an economy that was tanking quickly and bringing American families down with it. The economy was shrinking; inflation was in double digits; more than 7 million Americans were unemployed; and the prime interest rate was through the roof.

Ronald Reagan fought for an aggressive plan to rein in non-defense government spending, provide tax relief, and eliminate unnecessary government regulation. There were many critics who argued that Reagan's plan would create greater inflation. They cried that tax relief would be paid for out of entitlements and leave the elderly and needy worse off. However, John F. Kennedy's assertion that a rising tide lifts all boats was true.

As Reagan prepared to leave the presidency, spending was down, as were tax rates and inflation. Employment had climbed to record heights—there more jobs and better, higher paying jobs. Family income had been on the rise for 4 straight years. America's poor were able to climb out of poverty at the fastest rate in 10 years. It marked the longest economic peacetime expansion in history.

In his farewell address to the nation in 1989, Reagan stated: Common sense told us that when you put a big tax on something, the people will produce less of it. So, we cut the people's tax rates, and the people produced more than ever before. The economy bloomed like a plant that had been cut back and could now grow quicker and stronger.

Among the loudest critics of Reagan's philosophy of lower taxes and less government regulation were European countries that taxed high to offer more social services to their citizens.

The tide has changed all right. Countries around the world, including those in Europe, are racing to cut their taxes. France, Spain, Italy, Sweden,

Russia, Germany, Poland, Ireland, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Hong Kong.

They are cutting business taxes or capital gains taxes or turning to a flat tax in the name of economic growth. A study of 86 countries last year by KPMG International showed that tax cuts attracted business investment with minimal loss of old revenue. And that loss was offset by new revenue from increased hiring and spending.

Does that sound familiar? It is the economic plan that in the 1980s helped raise our Nation out of one of our worst economic situations and reach new, undiscovered heights. But instead of maintaining a tried and true economic path, the party in power is proposing to do just the opposite and raise taxes. The rest of the world is competing to lower their tax rates the fastest in order to attract businesses, jobs, investment, and wealth. But here, in the United States, Democrats want to spend more than \$1 billion of the Social Security surplus, increase the national debt by \$2 trillion, and raise taxes by an estimated \$900 billion—the largest tax hike ever. And their plans contain no proposals to cut or eliminate wasteful spending.

In a Nation where we have always thrived when given the opportunity to grow, the Democrats' plan just doesn't make sense. We need to return to the principles of Ronald Reagan—we need to trust the American people with their hard-earned money. Let them keep more of it so that they can provide for their families, save and invest for their futures, and maybe even take a chance on a business they have been dreaming about.

We also need to give businesses the tools to compete in this very global economy. When countries around the world are lowering their tax rates to attract businesses, it puts us in a difficult position. Companies flock to the best environment, so higher tax rates clearly put American businesses that want to grow here at a disadvantage. It also puts our workers at a disadvantage when competing against workers all over the world.

Taxing, spending and stifling opportunity have never been the answers to our economic woes. Presently, our economy is healthy and strong because of tax relief that the Republican Congress provided.

But that is the past. The question now becomes, what are we going to do today? The corporate income tax rate in America is the second highest in the industrialized world. Instead of looking at ways to raise taxes, I believe this Congress should be looking at ways to make us more competitive by lowering taxes. That is the big challenge that is before us today: to keep the economy strong, to provide better-paying jobs to America. Do we raise taxes, or do we keep taxes low? Do we try to lower those taxes that are too high?

I believe the answer is simple. It has been proven by history. It has been

proven by John F. Kennedy and has been proven by Ronald Reagan and has been proven by George W. Bush. We need to take those lessons of history, learn from them, and expand our economic opportunities, the opportunities for jobs in America.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

#### IRAQ

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, as we approach the sixth anniversary of September 11, 2001, we are reminded of the consequences of ignoring the threat al-Qaida and other “mufsidoon” terrorists pose to our Nation. Al-Qaida and radical extremists declared war, or “Hirabah,” on this Nation in the early 1990s, and not until 2001 did we finally take that threat seriously. While some in our own country refuse to believe this reality, that terrorists—Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri—agree that Iraq is the central front in the war on terror, our entire intelligence community testified in open session before the Senate Intelligence Committee last January that to retreat from Iraq prematurely on a political timetable would invite disaster. They testified that a precipitous withdrawal of American forces would lead to chaos, regional sectarian conflict, Shias and Sunnis killing each other. It would create a safe haven from which al-Qaida could launch further and much more robust attacks on America, and it could lead to the possible deployment of troops, this time not to a fledgling democracy but to prevent the spread of a radical Islamic Caliphate, with a capital in Baghdad and borders reaching from Spain to Indonesia. A precipitous withdrawal would also send a message to the enemies of freedom all over the world that the American people lack the resolve to win; that while our brave military cannot be defeated, politicians in Washington can; that when the going gets tough, America gets going—home.

Next week, General Petraeus will deliver a progress report on the new strategy in Iraq. I expect this report to show that finally we are seeing real progress in the security situation in several key areas. This issue should not be a political one, but unfortunately there are those who are politicizing our fight there. This battle is too important to be used by those who want to declare defeat in Iraq for their own short-term political gains in 2008, claims such as, “the war is lost,” and claims that the success of the surge “misses the point” are troubling at best and dangerous at the worst.

Sadly, there are some in this body who are vested politically in defeat. I find it disappointing that some in Congress would now say they will refuse even to believe General Petraeus, despite the fact Democrats and Republicans unanimously approved his appointment in February.

General Petraeus takes his responsibility for our troops on the front line seriously. He is highly respected, has an outstanding military career, and should be listened to. I am confident he will deliver a report based on facts on the ground and not political conditions at home.

I hope more of my colleagues will listen to our military leaders when they deliver Iraq's progress report. The worst case scenario would be for a majority in Congress to ignore our military leaders and continue to demand timetables, withdrawal dates, and attempts to control troop movements. Military decisions must be made by our military commanders on the ground, not micromanaged by Congress in our wonderful air-conditioned hall, thousands of miles away.

We have seen what has happened in the past when politicians have tried to run a war—from Vietnam to the Iranian hostage crisis.

On the political front, I agree that Prime Minister Maliki is not getting the job done, at least not getting the job done on the timetable that we have artificially set, but that much more work needs to be done. However, as we have seen for months now, progress is occurring from the bottom up at the local level. Our military, our leaders, and our troops in the field tell us that they are being successful. They are making progress. This is no time to quit.

The Al Anbar Province, where I and several Intelligence Committee members visited a few months ago, has been demonstrating tremendous signs of progress, even back then. This was the area controlled by al-Qaida just a year ago, where al-Qaida said they were going to establish the headquarters of their evil empire, the Caliphate.

In fact, today, General Jim Jones will be releasing his report that reached the same conclusion I did after my visit. You saw different headlines in the paper today about that report—not surprising. They wanted to focus on other sites. But today's Washington Post reported:

U.S. and Iraqi alliances with Sunni tribal forces in Anbar province have produced “real and encouraging” military progress and intelligence cooperation, and there are promising signs they can be replicated elsewhere.

It is here, where local tribal leaders and sheiks are cooperating with American and Iraqi Army commanders to take their neighborhoods back from al-Qaida. As a result, we have seen a decrease in sectarian violence, an increase in weapons cache discoveries, and some relative stability.

This is a classic example of how General Petraeus's counterinsurgency strategy, or COIN strategy, is working.

We should have had this policy 2 or 3 years ago. But General Petraeus has written a book, the Army and Marine field manual. When he talks about dealing with the counterinsurgency, you go in, you clear, you hold, you work with local forces, and you help