

A variety of specific cases illustrate the fairness and simplicity of this flat tax:

Case #1—Married couple with two children, rents home, yearly income \$40,000

Under Current Law:

Income	\$40,000
Four personal exemptions	13,200
Standard deduction	10,300
Taxable income	16,500
Tax due under current rates	\$1,717
Marginal rate	10.4%
Effective tax rate	4.3%

Under Flat Tax:

Personal allowance	\$25,000
Two dependents	12,500
Taxable income	2,500
Tax due under flat tax	\$500
Effective tax rate	1.3%

Decrease of \$1,217

Case #2—Single individual, rents home, yearly income \$50,000

Under Current Law:

Income	\$50,000
One personal exemption	3,300
Standard deduction	5,150
Taxable income	41,550
Tax due under current rates	\$6,939
Marginal rate	16.7%

Effective rate	13.9%
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Under Flat Tax:

Personal allowance	\$12,500
Taxable income	37,500
Tax due under flat tax	\$7,500
Effective rate	15.0%

Increase of \$561

Case #3—Married couple with no children, \$150,000 mortgage at 9%, yearly income \$75,000

Under Current Law:

Income	\$75,000
Two personal exemptions	\$6,600
Home mortgage deduction	13,500
State & local taxes	3,000
Charitable deduction	1,500
Taxable income	50,400
Tax due under current rates	\$6,809
Marginal rate	13.5%
Effective tax rate	9.1%

Under Flat Tax:

Personal allowance	\$25,000
Home mortgage deduction	11,250
Charitable deduction	1,500
Taxable income	37,250

Tax due under flat tax	\$7,450
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Effective tax rate

Effective tax rate	9.9%
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Increase of \$641

Case #4—Married couple with three children, \$250,000 mortgage at 9%, yearly income \$125,000

Under Current Law:

Income	\$125,000
Five personal exemptions	16,500
Home mortgage deduction	22,500
State & local taxes	5,000
Retirement fund deductions	6,000
Charitable deductions	2,500
Taxable income	72,500
Tax due under current rates	\$11,234
Marginal rate	15.5%
Effective tax rate	9.0%

Under Flat Tax:

Personal allowance	\$25,000
Three dependents	18,750
Home mortgage deduction	11,250
Charitable deduction	2,500
Taxable income	67,500
Tax due under flat tax	\$13,500
Effective tax rate	10.8%

Increase of \$2,266

ANNUAL TAXES UNDER 20 PERCENT FLAT TAX FOR MARRIED COUPLE WITH TWO CHILDREN FILING JOINTLY

Income	Home mortgage*	Deductible mtg interest	Charitable contribution*	Personal allowance (w/ children)	Taxable income	Effective tax rate (per cent)	Taxes owed
<37,500					0	0	—
37,500	75,000	6,750	750	37,500	0	0	—
40,000	80,000	7,200	800	37,500	0	0	—
50,000	100,000	9,000	1,000	37,500	2,500	1	500
60,000	120,000	10,800	1,200	37,500	10,500	3.5	2,100
70,000	140,000	11,250	1,400	37,500	19,850	5.7	3,970
80,000	160,000	11,250	1,600	37,500	29,650	7.4	5,930
90,000	180,000	11,250	1,800	37,500	39,450	8.8	7,890
100,000	200,000	11,250	2,000	37,500	49,250	9.9	9,850
125,000	250,000	11,250	2,500	37,500	73,750	11.8	14,750
150,000	300,000	11,250	3,000	37,500	98,250	13.1	19,650
200,000	400,000	11,250	3,125	37,500	148,125	14.8	29,625
250,000	500,000	11,250	3,125	30,000	198,125	15.9	39,625
500,000	1,000,000	11,250	3,125	37,500	448,125	17.9	89,625
1,000,000	2,000,000	11,250	3,125	37,500	948,125	19.0	189,625

* Assumes home mortgage of twice annual income at a rate of 9 percent and charitable contributions up to 2 percent of annual income.

HOMEOWNERS' INSURANCE NONDISCLOSURE ACT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I have introduced a bill requiring insurance companies to provide a written "plain English" explanation on the front page of each new homeowner's policy. It is a commonsense, customer-friendly service that could benefit insurers, consumers, and taxpayers.

I cosponsored a similar measure during the last Congress. The changes from last Congress are minimal. The new bill, called the Homeowners' Insurance Nondisclosure Act, deals exclusively with homeowners' policies, the area where most insurance coverage disputes arose following Hurricane Katrina.

Homeowners' policies are notoriously long, complicated, and written in legalese. Even for homeowners who are familiar with legal documents like mortgages and deeds, insurance policies are hard to understand.

That is because these policies are a contract between two parties, defined in precise legal terms. In the case of homeowners' policies, most consumers depend heavily on their agents for a good-faith explanation.

Yet, unlike a mortgage or deed, insurance policies are a competitive product purchased by consumers. While

we can't erase complex legalese from an insurance document, I do think it is reasonable for insurers to provide their paying customers with a simple, concise explanation of their policy.

If passed, this bill would require insurers to place a basic description of what the policy will not cover in a "noncoverage box," stating in bold letters, twice the size of the body of the policy text, all conditions, exclusions, and limitations pertaining to the individual policy's coverage.

Consumer groups like this proposal, and insurers should, too. It requires nothing of insurance companies except a little extra ink, but it could save insurers, their customers, and taxpayers much more.

One consumer group contends that had there been a plain English explanation of homeowners' policies before Katrina, American homeowners could have saved up to \$65 billion in lost claims. Insurers and taxpayers could save an untold amount of time and money in averted negotiations and court costs associated with disputes.

Using existing laws that govern unfair or deceptive practices, my bill would require the Federal Trade Commission, FTC, to enforce penalties against insurers who fail to comply with the noncoverage disclosure.

Predictably, some big insurance companies are already criticizing this bill, so expect some in the insurance industry to show resistance even in the face of this commonsense, cost-effective, consumer-friendly requirement. Their reaction is typical of some in the insurance industry's overall response since Hurricane Katrina—to delay, distract, and distort, saying "no" even to the most simple, sincere solutions.

That is what prompted lawmakers like U.S. Representative GENE TAYLOR and me to initiate this legislation and other major insurance reforms aimed at making insurance more dependable for the consumers who must buy it.

I hope insurance companies will play by significantly different rules when the next Katrina-like disaster hits America—rules which better protect consumers. And for homeowners, some of those rules will be clearly displayed on the first page of every new homeowner's policy, written in plain English.

ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, this month's elections in Nigeria mark an important moment for Africa's most populous country. Free, fair, and peaceful elections would allow Nigeria

to consolidate its young democracy and to set an example for other developing countries in the region and around the world. Last November, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution I introduced that called upon the Government of Nigeria and the Independent National Electoral Commission to demonstrate a commitment to successful democratic elections and promised continued U.S. and international support for this effort. With the first set of votes just days away, I am disheartened by the poor performance of these individuals and institutions in the leadup to these historic polls.

Since GEN Olusegun Obasanjo took the helm of Nigeria's first civilian government in 15 years in 1999, the United States and the wider international community have made significant investments in assisting Nigeria's democratic transition in recognition of the country's strategic and symbolic importance. If this month's polls do not produce a legitimate, fairly elected government, however, the United States and our allies will need to reconsider our political and material support to Nigeria.

Following a violently contested election in 2003, President Obasanjo declared that his "initial assignment as President is trying to heal the wounds from the elections." Instead, in the runup to this month's polls, he has sparked fresh outrage by using the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, to limit competition, not promote it; by repressing dissent rather than encouraging free speech; by harassing domestic observers and obstructing the free and fair participation of opposition candidates. These abuses reveal the need for substantial electoral reform if Nigeria is to continue becoming a role model of democracy in Africa and around the world.

By almost all accounts, Nigeria is simply not ready to conduct this election, and the President and the Chairman of INEC should be held accountable for that failure. There is still time, however, to demonstrate a commitment to the democratic process by accrediting and facilitating the work of domestic and foreign election observers, approving and publicizing election procedures and polling places, and posting voter lists at each polling location. Transparent conduct of the polls to be held on April 14 and 21, including unrestricted access to polling places for election monitors, will bolster the credibility of President Obasanjo's government and INEC, which have been damaged by slow and incomplete preparations in past months.

Disrespect for the principles and processes of democracy threaten the gains that President Obasanjo's government has overseen in the past 8 years. Nigeria's recent economic growth, domestic security, and international reputation are all at stake because development, stability, and credibility cannot be sustained in a

dysfunctional political system. Regardless of the outcome of this month's elections, I urge all political leaders and their supporters to respect the rule of law, preserve the democratic process, and renounce violence.

This is a critical moment for Nigeria and for Africa. If problems related to this month's elections lead to unrest and instability in Nigeria, the impact could unsettle the region, indirectly by example and directly by weakening one of the most important forces for peace and progress on the continent. Under President Obasanjo's leadership, Nigeria has defended democracy throughout Africa by working with allies to reverse coups and efforts to undermine constitutional processes. Now the President has put his own democracy at risk, and the world is watching. Corruption, violence, repression, and obstruction of transparent, legitimate elections will not be tolerated by the international community, and Nigeria and its leaders will be judged accordingly.

RETIREMENT OF ROBERT D. EVANS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I welcome this opportunity to pay tribute to Robert D. Evans, who retired on February 28, after 35 years of distinguished service with the American Bar Association, including services as director of the ABA's Governmental Affairs Office.

Born in Vermont, Bob received his B.A. from Yale University in 1966 and his law degree from the University of Michigan in 1969. He began his legal career at the Chicago firm known today as Sachnoff & Weaver, practicing corporate and commercial law. When an opportunity to work on public policy issues arose, he joined the ABA Chicago staff in 1972, and soon found himself working in the ABA's Washington, DC, office. Since 1982, Bob has served as director of the Governmental Affairs Office, providing strong leadership on many issues, including judicial independence, tax reform, the PATRIOT Act, and numerous anticrime and anti-terrorism bills. Perhaps what people will remember most is Bob's career-long effort to guarantee access to justice for all through the development and preservation of the Legal Services Corporation, which funds local legal aid programs to help low-income individuals and families deal with basic legal problems that affect day-to-day living.

Bob is listed in "Who's Who in America" and "Who's Who in American Law." He has received numerous awards and commendations for his dedicated and tireless work in seeking equal justice for America's poor, including recognition from the National Legal Aid and Defender Association and the National Clients Council.

Bob has also made outstanding contributions to Washington-area communities. He has served Washington

Grove, MD, as mayor and town council member, and currently sits on the Washington Grove Planning Commission. Bob has also chaired the Associations Division of the National Capital Area United Way Campaign, and has helped to raise millions of dollars for DC area charities to support those in need. He also was president of Project Northstar, a homeless children's tutoring program for homeless children in the District of Columbia.

With his dedication to the rule of law, his professionalism, his expertise and his unflinching good humor, Bob has fulfilled the highest ideals and goals of the legal profession. He has improved the administration of justice, and brought greater access to legal representation and American justice for all persons, regardless of their economic or social condition. Bob will be greatly missed. I join his many colleagues and friends in wishing Bob, his wife Kathie, and their daughter Sarah much happiness in the years to come.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS STEPHEN K. RICHARDSON

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to humbly honor a Bridgeport, CT, soldier who lost his life in the service of our country: Private First Class Stephen K. Richardson.

On Tuesday, March 20, the 22-year-old Private First Class Richardson and another soldier were killed when a roadside bomb exploded near their vehicle in Baghdad. Now Stephen is being remembered for his spirit of service, for his devotion to his country, and for his love of his family.

Stephen served with the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, which has been charged with securing Baghdad. Private First Class Richardson took on that mission willingly: "He wanted to be part of America's protection," said his grandmother, Ina Jackson. "He wanted to help resolve the problems in Iraq." Like nearly every other soldier who has enlisted since the start of the Iraq war, Private First Class Richardson knew exactly where he was going and exactly what risks he'd be facing which makes his sacrifice all the more admirable.

Those who were close to Stephen know just what a fine young life has been cut off. Edward Geist, a professor at the University of Bridgeport, remembers teaching him. "He was older than my other students he took the work more seriously," said Professor Geist. He still remembers an essay Private First Class Richardson wrote about his future plans returning to his family's home in Jamaica and starting a business to help improve living conditions. "It was much more reflective and serious than what we normally get," Stephen's professor said. I think that seriousness of purpose was exactly what drove Private First Class Richardson to serve his country and a glimpse of the bright future he might have had in store.