

States, has used U.S. taxpayer money in turn to encourage and support higher taxes on U.S. taxpayers.

Now, keep in mind, this is something we are supporting, to encourage increasing U.S. taxes. For these reasons, I had the following language included in the Foreign Operations appropriations bill:

None of the funds made available in this act may be used to fund activities or projects undertaken by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development that are designed to hinder the flow of capital and jobs from high-tax jurisdictions to low-tax jurisdictions, or to infringe on the sovereign right of jurisdictions to determine their own domestic policies.

Of course, we know what has happened to the appropriations bills currently. It is very simple and straightforward. If you want to advocate for higher taxes and global taxes on U.S. taxpayers, U.S. taxpayers would not be forced to foot the bill.

Let's quickly look at some of the reasons for this language and the case against the OECD. The OECD has endorsed and encouraged higher taxes, new taxes, and global taxes no fewer than 24 times in reports with titles such as "Toward Global Tax Cooperation" in which the OECD identifies 35 nations guilty of harmful tax competition. I am quoting there: "Guilty of harmful tax competition."

In other words, they want us to have taxes as high as any of the other countries have.

They have advocated that the U.S. adopt a costly and bureaucratic value added tax, a 40-cent increase in the gas tax, a carbon tax, a fertilizer tax, ending the deductibility of state and local taxes from federal taxes, new taxes at the state level, and a host of other new and innovative taxes on U.S. citizens.

It's not only the recommending of higher taxes which concerns us; the ultimate concern is the movement towards undermining U.S. sovereignty. Ecogroups such as the Friends of the Earth want the OECD to declare that dam building for flood control and electronic power is unacceptable as sustainable energy. In May 2005, the OECD ministers endorsed a proposal at the UN to create a system of global taxes.

The OECD has stated explicitly that low-tax policies unfairly erode the tax bases of other countries and distort the location of capital and services.

What we have here are Paris-based bureaucrats seeking to protect high tax welfare states from the free market.

That's why the OECD goes on to say that free-market tax competition may hamper the application of progressive tax rates and the achievement of redistributive goals. Clearly, free market tax competition makes it harder to implement socialistic welfare states. The free market evidently hasn't been fair to socialistic welfare states. Well, it is a good thing that they have the OECD and nearly \$100 million in U.S. taxpayer money to protect them.

Noted economist Walter Williams clearly sees the direction in which this

is headed when he says that the bottom line agenda for the OECD is to establish a tax cartel where nations get together and collude on taxes.

Treasury secretary Paul O'Neill seconded that when he said that he was troubled by the underlying premise that low tax rates are somehow suspect and by the notion that any country . . . should interfere in any other country's tax policy.

And John Bolton argued that the OECD represents a kind of worldwide centralization of governments and interest groups. Who do you think bears the costs for all this? Mr. Bolton answers and you probably guessed it—the United States.

America's proud history of independence was driven in no small part by the desire for sovereignty over taxation powers. In this context, it makes no sense to relegate our sovereignty over tax policy, in any way, to international bureaucrats.

It's very simple. U.S. taxpayers are being forced to fund a bunch of international bureaucrats who write, speak, organize, and advocate in support of higher taxes, global taxes, and the gradual erosion of American sovereignty over its domestic fiscal policies.

If individual Americans want to give their money to an organization which is dedicated to raising taxes, they can. It is called the Democratic Party. But most Americans would be outraged to learn that they are forced to subsidize these types of activities with their tax dollars.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). The Senator from Montana.

HONORING LES SKRAMSTAD

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a Montanan who died Saturday night at his home in Libby, MT. Libby is a small town up in the northwest corner of my State.

Les Skramstad was not only an outspoken advocate for his town, which was horribly wronged at the hands of W.R. Grace, but he was also my friend.

I first met Les in Libby in the year 2000, shortly after news reports attributed hundreds of deaths to asbestos exposure from decades of vermiculite mining there.

We sat down in Gayla Benefield's living room. There were about 25 people who were very ill. Over huckleberry pie and coffee, the group explained to me the horrific legacy Grace had left behind. And although I had read the reports and briefing papers on the situation, that was the first time I had seen asbestos exposure up close. And, it was gut wrenching. I will never forget it—as long as I live.

They opened their hearts and poured out unimaginable stories of suffering and tragedy. I was absolutely stunned. It was at that moment that I vowed to myself that I'll do whatever it takes to help Libby become whole again.

Entire families—fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, sons and daughters are all sick. Hundreds are dead.

They are bound together by one thing: their exposure to tremolite asbestos, mined by W.R. Grace.

That night at Gayla's, when I first met Les, he watched me closely all evening. He was wary and came up to me after his friends and neighbors had finished speaking.

Les said to me, "Senator, a lot of people have come to Libby and told us they would help, then they leave and we never hear from them again."

"Max," he said, "please, as a man like me—as someone's father too, as someone's husband, as someone's son, help me. Help us. Help us make this town safe for Libby's sons and daughters not even born yet."

Les worked at the vermiculite mine starting in 1959. He told me about the dust he swept every day—off of three separate floors at the mine. And although company officials said the dust was harmless, that's what ultimately took his life. And that dust is what has made his wife and children sick, too.

You see, that dust was laden with tremolite asbestos fibers. When he got home, he would hug his wife. His kids would jump up in his lap.

I think he was less worried about his own fate. It was as if Les had accepted that he was going to die. But the thing that got to him most was that he brought that dust home with him. He wanted justice for his family and friends. That night I told him I would do all that I could. That I wouldn't back down. That I wouldn't give up.

Les accepted my offer and then pointed his finger and said to me, "I'll be watching Senator."

I knew Les would. I also knew he didn't have to because I had already vowed to myself I would do all I could, even without Les' encouragement.

Over the years Les and I worked together to help Libby. We became friends in the process. I counted on seeing him every time I went to Libby. I have been up to Libby almost 20 times since then. I talked to Les on the phone. I visited him in the hospital.

Les is my inspiration in the fight to get Libby a clean bill of health and justice for its residents. He is the face of hundreds and thousands of sick and exposed folks in this tiny Montana community.

Les—working with others in the community—became an outspoken advocate for Libby. He put a personal face on asbestos contamination. He provided a straightforward look into the lives of people hurt by Grace and the poisonous asbestos fibers they left behind. Les was a true Western gentleman. And he was very effective.

It has been 8 years since this tragedy first came to light. We have made a lot of progress in Libby.

We launched the Center for Asbestos Related Diseases, which has screened and provided health care to thousands of Libby residents.

We kicked the EPA into gear and got Libby listed as a national Superfund site.

We secured millions for cleanup, health care, and economic development in Libby.

But sadly, there is still much more to do. Much more. Libby residents deserve compensation for their injuries. They deserve health care. They deserve to see those responsible go to prison for what they did. They deserve to know that their town is clean of asbestos.

What I knew about Les makes this news very sad to me, personally. I am sad for his family. I am sad for his friends. I am sad for Libby.

I am also angry at W.R. Grace, which knowingly poisoned its workers. I am angry that justice still has not been done in Libby. I am angry that we haven't been able to do more.

But we won't give up. We will keep fighting for Les and Libby. Les' passing only furthers my resolve to try harder. To do more. We won't let up. We will not stop.

When I get tired, I think of Les. And I can't shake what he asked me to do.

In all of my years as an elected official, helping Libby is among the most personally compelling things I have ever been called on to do.

I will keep the promise I made to Les that night at Gayla's house.

Les was a fighter to the end. He recently minced no words about his feelings towards Grace.

He told the Missoulian newspaper, quote: "There's not a doubt in my mind that [they] are guilty of murder."

"I started in 1959 and I was as healthy as a horse," he said. "I knew all the guys that worked there, 135 employees when I was there. And there's five of us left alive. Five. The rest of them are gone."

Now, sadly, so is Les.

The Book of Proverbs says: "righteousness delivers from death." And if that is true, then Les will certainly be delivered.

My prayers are with Les' wife Norita, his family and friends, and the people of Libby.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 2 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will proceed

to the consideration of H.R. 2, which the clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 100

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I send a substitute to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID], for Mr. BAUCUS, proposes an amendment numbered 100.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. REID. Mr. President, that amendment is on behalf of Senator BAUCUS. I failed to mention that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 101 TO AMENDMENT NO. 100

(Purpose: To provide Congress a second look at wasteful spending by establishing enhanced rescission authority under fast-track procedures)

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I believe there is an amendment of Senator GREGG's at the desk. I call it up for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL], for Mr. GREGG, for himself, Mr. DEMINT, Mr. McCONNELL, Mr. LOTT, Mr. KYL, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. BUNNING, Mr. VITTER, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. THOMAS, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. BURR, Mr. McCAIN, Mr. SUNUNU, Mr. ENZI, Mr. MARTINEZ, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. VOINOVICH, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. COBURN, Mr. ENSIGN, and Mr. THUNE, proposes an amendment numbered 101 to amendment No. 100.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I send to the desk a motion to invoke cloture.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the pending Gregg amendment No. 101 to the substitute amendment to H.R. 2, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to pro-

vide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage.

Harry Reid, Mitch McConnell, Judd Gregg, Craig Thomas, John E. Sununu, James Inhofe, Jon Kyl, Johnny Isakson, Tom Coburn, Mike Crapo, Wayne Allard, Lamar Alexander, John Corry, Jim Bunning, John Ensign, David Vitter, Bob Corker.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, let me say briefly, we are now at the point where we said we would be last week. Again, I have said on a number of occasions that I appreciate the courtesy of the Senator from New Hampshire. This is an issue which he believes in very strongly. I just finished a conversation with Senator BYRD in his office a short time ago, and he does not believe in it. This is what legislation is all about, and we look forward to voting on this amendment. We will vote on it Wednesday, or we will, as I said, meet with the distinguished Republican leader later today and we will decide if we need to vote on it more quickly or we need to take all that time—whatever the rules call for, unless we are able to work with Senator GREGG and Senator McCONNELL to move that more quickly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Yes. Let me indicate my admiration for Senator GREGG in persisting in offering this very important amendment.

I thank the majority leader for working with us to get consideration of this extremely important measure, and we look forward to beginning the debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, if the leaders have completed their statements, I would ask for recognition.

Mr. President, first, let me begin by thanking the majority leader and the Republican leader for their efforts here in allowing me to bring forward this amendment at this time. As we know, 2 weeks ago I offered this amendment. At the time, I offered it because I felt it was appropriate to the lobbying reform vehicle, as the lobbying reform vehicle had been greatly involved in the issue of what is known as earmarks. Earmarks are where certain Senators put specific language into a bill which allows spending to occur for a specific item.

I am not inherently opposed to earmarks. Many are very genuinely of good purpose. And I have used it in cases to benefit programs which I thought were appropriate. In fact, I think the legislative branch has a right to direct spending. If you do not direct spending as a legislative branch, then the executive branch has the authority to direct spending, and the practical effect of that is the legislative branch is giving up one of its key powers, which is the power over spending.

However, there have, over the years, been abuses of the earmark process. We all know that. We have seen it. And there have actually been abuses which have been unethical. We have seen that