

Democrats believe in cutting taxes—not for chief executive officers of these big companies, not for oil men, but for middle-class families who need help the most.

Mr. President, I have already talked about the two men who are going to manage this bill: Chairman CONRAD and ranking member JUDD GREGG. They really do good work. Now it is up to the full Senate to follow Senator CONRAD's lead, and that of Senator JUDD GREGG, to move forward and get a budget that can be the blueprint for what we do the rest of this Congress.

I look forward to an open, productive budget debate this week. I hope that with the kind of steely resolve President Roosevelt showed, we can put the failed Bush economic policies behind us and pass a fair, responsible budget that makes America stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

#### PEACE CORPS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I had the good fortune to meet earlier today with the head of the Peace Corps. His name is Ron Tschetter—a wonderful man who was approved overwhelmingly not that long ago by the full Senate.

The Peace Corps is one of the programs that is so good for this country and the world. We have a little over 8,000 Peace Corps volunteers. We should have twice as many. The President said a couple years ago he was going to double the Peace Corps from 7,000 to 14,000. That has not happened. He has increased it by a few hundred, and that is very, very important. From Nevada, we have 22 Peace Corps volunteers out of the 8,000. They are from all over the world.

As I have had the good fortune of being able to travel as a representative of our country around the world over the last several decades, every place I go, I visit with Peace Corps volunteers because there is no group of individuals that does more for our country in setting good, high-quality standards than the Peace Corps volunteers. They do great work, and I am very proud of them.

These Peace Corps volunteers, when they are interviewed, are not Democrats or Republicans, they are Americans, and they do great public service. They are true public servants, and I am very proud of the work they have done and will continue to do throughout the world on behalf of America.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### BUDGET WEEK

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week our friends on the other side pulled back the curtain on their budget

proposal, and taxpayers all across America groaned. It really was not very pretty. The Democrats propose to increase discretionary spending above the \$1 trillion mark for the first time ever. To pay for it, they want to increase taxes by a lot—the largest tax hike in history.

The timing, of course, could not be worse. At a time when Americans are seeing record gas prices, falling home values, and higher health care and tuition costs, the other side sees higher taxes and more spending. Rather than offer a plan to address the concerns of the day, they offer a plan to make those costs harder to meet inside the limits of a family budget. At a time of heightened economic worry, our friends' plan for America is for families to keep less of their money and they insist that Government spend more.

The effect of all this on U.S. families would be crushing. Under the Democratic budget, the average American family would see their annual tax bill go up by \$2,300 a year. Nearly 20 million seniors would see their taxes go up by more than \$2,000 a year. And 8 million low-income workers would be added to the tax roles.

At a time of increased economic concern, Democrats want the average American family to have \$2,300 less for the family budget under their plan. That is enough money to pay for an entire year's worth of gas for two cars. It is about what the average American family with two kids spends on health care in 9 months. It is also enough to buy 8 months' worth of groceries.

The average American family would suffer a lot under this plan. Consider a family in Kentucky that is just starting to think about college for a new baby. If that family took the \$2,300 Democrats are asking for in new taxes and invested it each year in a tax-free college savings account, they would have nearly \$75,000 for college by the time that child was ready to attend school.

This budget is not the answer Americans have been looking for. It is a cliché. When faced with a challenge, Democrats always answer with a simple three-word response: tax and spend. And this year is certainly no different.

American families and their children are the ones who will lose out under this tax-and-spend plan. Democrats promise to pay for everything but make families pay instead. They promised middle-class tax relief last year but did nothing to enact it. They promise to reduce the debt but increase it instead. And they promise to address long-term entitlement spending but only make the problem worse with higher taxes and more spending.

Over the last 25 years, Republican economic policies have lifted tens of millions of working families into the middle class. We did it through lower taxes, controlled spending, and keeping our defenses strong. Democrats know these policies worked. That is why, as we began this Congress, many Demo-

crats assured voters they would not raise taxes on working-class and middle-class voters. Well, this budget certainly fell short of that mark.

The proposed tax hike the Democrats sent down last week is four times bigger than the one in 1993 that even President Clinton said was too big for Americans and, ultimately, even for him. How can Democrats think the American people will accept this one? Do they think Americans want to see the gains of the last 6 years washed away by a budget that reinstates every tax we have lowered or repealed over that period?

Budget week is always a clarifying time of year on Capitol Hill. What the other side's budget makes clear once again is that our friends on the other side are more concerned about growing the size and scope of Washington spending, while we want to grow the family's budget. At a time of great economic uncertainty, Americans expect more from Government than a \$1.2 trillion tax hike and billions of dollars in new spending.

This budget spends more than \$775 billion from the Social Security surplus. It increases gross debt by more than \$2 trillion. It increases the deficit by almost \$400 billion. And it completely ignores the question of where we are going to get the money to pay for \$66 trillion in promised entitlements—this despite the fact that the Democratic chairman of the Budget Committee has explicitly said we need to reform entitlement programs.

Republicans made a pledge last year to fight tax increases and to rein in spending. We stuck by that pledge last year. In these difficult economic times, we will certainly stick by it this year. With this budget, Democrats want to spend more from Washington and raise your taxes to pay for it. I, for one, will vote to allow families to keep more of what they earn so they can decide how to spend it.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL GARY BRENT COLEMAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of a soldier who gave his life in defense of his country. CPL Gary Brent Coleman of Pikeville, KY, perished on November 21, 2003, in Balad, Iraq, when his vehicle overturned mid-chase during combat operations. He was 24 years old.

The memorial service for Corporal Coleman was so large it filled the auditorium of his alma mater, Pikeville High School. Brent, as he was known, had been a local hero for his prowess on the football field. He became an even greater hero by stepping forward in a time of war.

Friends, family members and fellow soldiers spoke, one after another, on the effect Brent had had in their lives. When it was over, Brent's father, Gary Keene Coleman, said, "I was . . . proud that Brent had made that type of an impact on so many people. But I would rather for him to be here."

For his bravery in uniform, Corporal Coleman received many medals, awards and decorations, including the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star Medal.

Brent was born in Pikeville, in eastern Kentucky, and spent the majority of his life in the area. From a young age he was not afraid to speak his mind. When Brent was about six or seven, he and his family went to the circus. They had lions there, and the lion tamer was directing them with his whip.

But young Brent thought the lion tamer was using the whip on the lions—and that despite their sharp claws and teeth, they needed a small boy to come to their aid. “Stop that right now!” he yelled to the lion tamer. The whole circus audience laughed at Brent’s display of compassion and bravery.

Brent loved sports, and grew up playing T-Ball, baseball, and football. Once when Brent and his cousin Ben were both 12 years old, Brent showed Ben how to hold the football close to his chest. Ben took the ball and ran, Brent tackled him, and I guess Ben was holding the ball a little too tightly—it broke his shoulder and his rib.

Gary took Brent and his brother, Jason, to the Super Bowl every year. Brent’s favorite team was the Detroit Lions, and star running back Barry Sanders was his role model. Brent, Gary, and Jason would fly to wherever the big game was and stay for the weekend; they never missed a Super Bowl.

Football was more than just a game to watch for Brent, it was his passion, and he excelled at it. At Pikeville High School, Brent was an all-county running back for the Pikeville Panthers. He was named offensive player of the year at the start of his senior year, in 1996, and he is still the leading rusher and scorer in the school’s history.

The Kentucky High School Athletic Association recognizes Brent for holding these records: 8th overall in career yards rushing, tenth overall in career touchdowns, and 11th overall in career points scored.

“Brent was idolized by the students and their parents,” says Eddie Coleman, Brent’s uncle. “He was a local hero before he was the real hero.”

With so much talent came an appropriate nickname. Brent’s teammates called him “Rocket,” because he could find a hole and plow right through it.

Footage from a local television station shows Brent earned yet another nickname—“Stumpy.” “I guess because I’m short and fat,” a grinning Brent said to the TV reporter.

“He didn’t lack for confidence,” his father Gary tells us. “Brent was someone with compassion, always trying to do good, always trying to do the right thing, and he had a competitive personality.”

Everyone around him could see Brent was special, and that did not change

when Brent joined the Army. After attending Marshall University in Huntington, WV, for 2 years, he enlisted on July 11, 2001, and underwent basic training at the U.S. Army Armor Center at Fort Knox, KY. He graduated Basic in the top five overall.

Brent was then assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, based out of Fort Carson, CO. Upon graduating basic training, he told his family, “I know I can make it on my own.”

Brent saw service to his country as a way of life. “He was going to make a career out of it, and I encouraged him to,” says Gary. Brent held several positions on the M1A1 Abrams tank, including gunner and loader, and he eventually became a tank commander.

Stationed in Colorado Springs, Brent met a special woman there, and Brent and Kirsten Sinley Coleman became husband and wife. They married in March, 3 weeks before Brent deployed to Iraq.

The star running back and tank commander who had already acquired a few nicknames soon picked up another from his fellow soldiers: “Hollywood.” I will let SSG Jason Gallegos, who served with Brent, explain why.

Brent “was about five-foot-five and weighed about 175 pounds,” Staff Sergeant Gallegos says. “His body was short in stature, but he was pure muscle with about maybe eight to nine percent body fat.”

“He looked like an action figure, a poster child of what a United States soldier looks like. . . . The reason behind the nickname was because Corporal Coleman worked out hard every day here for two to three hours a day.

“Then whenever he got the opportunity, he would go outside our bunker into the sun in just his PT shorts, place mirrors around him, put on his shades and throw on some music and tan. It was like he was a movie star.”

Brent was well liked by his fellow soldiers; and not just because of funny stories like these. He was liked and respected because he always gave his best, and encouraged others to do the same.

“He would always volunteer for the tough missions,” Staff Sergeant Gallegos says. “‘Be smart and be aggressive,’ he would say, because he felt if you’re passive then you not only endanger yourself, but also your soldiers. . . . He was there for anybody, no matter what platoon, what day of the week, or what time of day.”

At Brent’s funeral, his sergeant told the Coleman family, “Brent was 24 and they get a lot of 18-year-olds. Brent would always volunteer to take the young ones’ places to protect them.”

“He served his country. He never complained. He was made for the military, physically and mentally,” Brent’s father, Gary, says. “He said he had a job to do.”

Mr. President, I had the honor of meeting Gary Coleman in 2005, and I presented him with an American flag

flown over this Capitol. Neither that flag nor the words we say here today can make up for what the Coleman family has lost. But they are the very least we can do to honor Brent’s memory.

We are thinking today of Brent’s loved ones, including his wife Kirsten Sinley Coleman; his mother Janie Adkins Johnson; his father Gary Keene Coleman; his brother Jason Byron Coleman; his grandmother Ruby Coleman Damron; and many other family members and friends.

Mr. President, today, March 10, is Brent’s birthday. It is a day to celebrate Brent’s life, and I thought an appropriate day for me to speak on how he lived, and what he lived for.

To the Coleman family who have lost a husband, brother, and son, I want to say this: CPL Gary Brent Coleman left this world a hero. And on behalf of a grateful Nation, the U.S. Senate honors his life of sacrifice and service.

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#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each and with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Washington is recognized.

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#### AIR FORCE CONTRACT AWARD

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, in the last several days, we have learned some surprising things about the Air Force’s decision to award a \$40 billion contract to the European company, Airbus.

The Air Force wants Airbus, which is headquartered in Toulouse, France, to supply our next generation of aerial refueling tankers. It chose Airbus over the American company, Boeing, which has been making those tankers for the last 50 years.

I have made it clear over the past several days that I think this decision is shortsighted and dangerous. But today, even more questions have been raised about the process the Air Force followed to make this decision. So I want to take the opportunity this afternoon to walk through the impact I believe the Air Force decision will have because I think we need to take a good hard look at whether we as Members of the Senate think this contract should be finalized.

First, we need to be very cautious about any decision that awards the right to build a critical part of our military air technology to a company