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MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask a simple question: What has the support of the Republican party and the support of 80 percent of the American people? The answer is very simple, the repeal of the marriage tax penalty.

This ridiculous tax provision forces 25 million couples to pay an average of \$1,400 each in extra taxes every year just because they are married for a working family. This \$1,400 would be used to buy a home computer or used for 3 months of childcare, but instead of using this money for their family, these couples are forced to give it to the government.

Our Nation was founded in part because our Founding Fathers grew tired of unfair and ridiculous taxes. Well, I can think of no more unfair or ridiculous tax than the marriage tax penalty. This penalty must be repealed.

Surely everyone can agree that married couples should not be subject to extra taxes just because they are married. Married Americans deserve to be treated fairly. Let us repeal the marriage tax penalty today.

MARRIAGE PENALTY

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today the House is going to vote to end the marriage penalty. Right now married couples pay more in taxes than two single people living together; that is just not right.

Washington must stop penalizing the cornerstone of the American family. We should encourage marriage, not penalize it. We must restore families and the American dream.

Last year, President Clinton labeled the marriage penalty relief risky and even vetoed it. This year Democrats are encouraging him to veto it again. In my district alone, this bill will help end the marriage penalty for over 150,000 Americans. The President and his Democrat friends should stop playing election-year politics.

I say to the President, why do you not help us put American families first? Let us do it now.

STEPS TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, in Savannah, we are blessed. My wife's grandmother, 97-year-old Betty Carswell is still alive and in good health. She is on Social Security and she needs it.

When I was a boy, growing up down the street my good friend Ross Fox's dad died, and when he died, leaving Mrs. Fox with two young boys to take care of, Social Security was there to protect them. Yet today Social Security is in trouble.

By the year 2030, it will be out of money. There are six positive steps we can take, however, to protect and preserve Social Security. Number one is to have some principles, to say that the benefits for current retirees and near retirees will not be increased; number two, to lock away the Social Security surplus so that the money will not be spent on roads and bridges but used only for Social Security; number three, taxes for Social Security should not be increased; number four, the government should not invest Social Security funds in the stock market; number five, modernization of Social Security should not change the disability and survivors' components for friends like Ross Fox, who lose their loved one, their parents; number six, a portion of the Social Security account should be personalized so that younger people on a voluntary basis would have the option of putting theirs in an interest-bearing account which earns more money than Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, we can do this. We can have a good voluntary program to set up to protect and preserve Social Security. Our seniors need this and our future generations.

HOPE AND PRAY FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

(Mr. CARDIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I want to express appreciation to President Clinton for bringing together the prime minister of Israel, Mr. Barak, and Mr. Arafat at Camp David. I know that we all hope and pray for peace in the Middle East. Mr. Barak has shown tremendous courage in putting peace first, in trying to find a way in which we can find true and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that Mr. Arafat and Mr. Barak will understand the historical significance of this meeting and will take advantage of this opportunity so that at least we can look forward to the future of peace in the Middle East.

OUTRAGEOUSLY HIGH DRUG PRICES

(Mr. GUTKNECHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an issue that every senior citizen knows about and, frankly, if we have had town hall meetings, we know about it as well, and that is outrageously high drug prices. My 82-year-old father, for example, takes a

drug called Coumadin. It is a blood thinner. In the United States, the average price for that drug is \$30.25, but the Europeans for the same drug made in the same plant under the same FDA approval pay only \$2.85.

Mr. Speaker, in the information age, we can no longer keep this secret. Americans are paying double, triple and sometimes quadruple the prices that people around the rest of the world are paying for the same drugs, and it would be easy for us to say shame on the pharmaceutical companies. But the truth of the matter is this administration has had 8 years and what have they done about this? Well, they have sent thousands of threatening letters to senior citizens when they tried to import legal drugs into the United States.

Shame on the FDA. Shame on our Justice Department and shame on us. It is time for this Congress to take action to make certain that American senior citizens have access to world market prices for prescription drugs that they need. No senior should have to choose between getting the food they need and the drugs that they need as well.

STRIKE THE GAG RULE

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, the gag rule has created a policy that increases the number of abortions and it also threatens the lives of many young women.

Last year, this body added in law an international family planning gag rule for other countries that is unconstitutional in America. What happened? Thousands of young women were denied the information they needed to plan or postpone their pregnancies, so thousands of 13-year-old girls, 14-year-old girls and 15-year-old girls got unsafe and often fatal abortions.

These abortions could have been prevented. No U.S. funds are used for abortions. International family planning saves women's lives so we should all support on both sides of the aisle an effort to strike the gag rule.

PERSONAL LOCKBOX BILL

(Mr. SANFORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SANFORD. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to bring to everybody's attention the fact that today I am introducing a bill called the personal lockbox bill. I think it is built on common sense, because one of the things I have consistently heard from folks back home is the very simple idea that the first part of saving Social Security is making sure that Social Security taxes stay with Social Security. That is what this bill does because it takes the Social Security surplus, whatever

that happens to be, and simply rebates it back to the people paying Social Security taxes, not to go out and fix up the car or buy a refrigerator with it but instead to go into their own personal Social Security savings account that would be held by a fiduciary like the local bank.

Mr. Speaker, the individual could not get their hands on the money until they turn 65, but they would get a monthly statement and for the first time, because of the private property rights that come with an account like that, for the first time have a firewall created between political forces in D.C. and their Social Security surplus.

DEFENSE OF NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of our National Missile Defense System. Last Saturday, the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization conducted a flight test over the Pacific. Unfortunately, a missile anomaly occurred which had nothing to do with the concept being tested. The booster simply did not separate from the kill vehicle and, therefore, the kill vehicle was not freed so that it could function.

Opponents of a National Missile Defense System thus have no basis for saying we should abandon our efforts. This was only the third of 19 planned tests. Successes and failures are to be expected as we perfect any defense system. This was not a concept failure.

Mr. Speaker, developing a missile defense system is one of the most civilized things we can do. When deployed, and God forbid, we need to use it, it only protects. It protects the people we love and does not destroy our enemy. This is the ultimate in defense.

Mr. Speaker, the so-called rogue nations are developing their capabilities to attack our people. As outlined by the Constitution, we, in Congress, have the obligation to provide for the defense of this country. We must go forward. We should not yield to political pressures. We must develop the National Missile Defense System.

U.S. ATTACKED BY KOFI ANNAN AT NOTRE DAME COMMENCEMENT

(Mr. DUNCAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, in this year's commencement speech at Notre Dame, Kofi Annan, the head of the United Nations, bitterly attacked the United States.

He said the U.S. was one of the "least generous" Nations in helping the world's poor. Actually, the exact opposite is true. No nation on the face of this Earth has even come close to the

U.S. in what it has given to poor people around the world.

Mr. Annan called the U.S. "shameful." Actually, U.S. taxpayers pay one-fourth of all U.N. costs and most of the costs of the so-called U.N. peace-keeping missions.

Mr. Speaker, most of our tax money for the U.N. is wasted to pay high salaries to U.N. bureaucrats who pay no Federal income taxes.

Interestingly, Mr. Annan has refused to release a copy of his financial disclosure as required by law or a copy of his own personal charitable giving for the past 5 years as requested by the Freedom Alliance.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Annan is the one who should be ashamed, not U.S. taxpayers.

SKYROCKETING GASOLINE PRICES

(Mr. SCHAFFER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, it is a great time of year to vacation in beautiful Colorado, but gas prices are still high. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson is on record saying that the Clinton-Gore administration was "caught napping" on the issue of skyrocketing gasoline prices.

Because of the administration's failed energy policies and inattention, Americans are being forced to pay outrageous prices at the gas pump, some cases \$2.35 a gallon.

We all know how dangerous it can be when a driver falls asleep at the wheel, and now we can see how dangerous it is when an entire administration falls asleep at the wheel.

While this administration was napping, domestic oil production decreased to 17 percent, and this increased dependence on foreign oil has helped put us to this current predicament.

Perhaps, Congress should start a caffeine IV for Secretary Richardson and the other Rip Van Winkles over at the White House who are responsible for this policy disaster.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon the Clinton-Gore administration to wake up. The slumber party is over. Americans are tired of getting gored at the pump.

ACCUSATIONS OF A "DO NOTHING CONGRESS"

(Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, many of our friends in the Democrat party have been spending a lot of time lately accusing this of being a do nothing Congress, and I guess coming from a Democrat that is a tremendous compliment.

Do you know what it means when they accuse us of doing nothing? It means we are not raising taxes, that means we are not spending enough of the surplus. We have not raided the So-

cial Security surplus. We are not making government regulations burdensome enough.

Mr. Speaker, I say to my friends I consider the definition of "doing nothing" as a badge of honor. And do you know why? Because my Democrat friends and the Vice President have a funny definition of accomplishments.

They do not consider it an accomplishment to end the unfair penalty on married couples. They do not consider it an accomplishment to end the earnings limit for working seniors. They do not consider it an accomplishment to say that the Federal Government or the IRS should not take half your farm when you die, half of your business when you die.

They do not consider it an accomplishment to make prescription drugs available and affordable to our senior citizens in the country. This is what we have done over the last several months.

Democrats may not consider these things to be accomplishments, but millions of Americans who work every day, get up, they pay their taxes.

DEATH TAX

(Ms. PRYCE of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the House passed a repeal of the death tax last month. We will continue to work to see that this unfair tax is repealed.

The American dream is about the opportunity of every citizen to build a better future for themselves and their children through hard work and personal initiative. It means building your own business, pouring your own sweat into a small farm to turn a profit, saving each day so you can leave something to your family.

Yet it is these Americans who are working so hard, playing the rules and paying taxes who, upon their death, become the victims of a tax that discounts their dedication, punishes their entrepreneurship, and denies their dying wishes.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of this death tax, only one-third of all small businesses and family farms are passed on after the first generation. This is not right. Where is the logic?

Why does the government have to grab someone's life savings out of their hands once they die? It is time we eliminate the death tax and reinvest in America, so the dreams and values of these folks can be carried on to future generations. We need to make sure that death tax gets buried.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, the pending business is the question of the Speaker's approval of the Journal of the last day's proceedings.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.