

we could do right now is let taxpayers choose between paying a flat tax and the current system. You heard me right; they could simply, come tax day, choose whether to report their income and pay a flat tax on that income or to stay in the present system. We do not have to wait to 2001. That is the Washington way of studying things to death; it is called paralysis by analysis back here in Washington.

We could also and should also let taxpayers have the choice of investing a portion of their payroll taxes, their FICA contributions, into a directed IRA, an individual retirement account, so that they can earn a better return on their money than Social Security. To do that though we have to, as Mr. SMITH just has suggested here, we have to take the Social Security Trust Fund off budget once and for all. We have to let the trust fund stay in, the surplus rather, stay in the Social Security, let the surplus stay in the Social Security Trust Fund so that it will continue to accrue and compound interest.

We can do this. We can give workers a choice now again between a flat tax and the current system, between being able and having to put all their payroll taxes in Social Security or at least being able to put a portion in a directed IRA so that they can earn a better return than Social Security. The net effect is higher take-home pay, better retirement security and more freedom and opportunity for every American.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA).

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to represent the citizens of central Florida's 7th Congressional District. Our area and other central Florida communities were in the path of devastating tornadoes yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, while our residences, our businesses and our communities can and will be replaced, the lives of an unprecedented number of wonderful human beings has been lost forever. I would like to extend my heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends who have lost loved ones in this terrible natural disaster.

The people of my district are strong, determined, faith and family-oriented. They will rebuild, they will heal their wounds, but they will never forget that night or those lost.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to again see the wonderful people of my district in central Florida come together. I saw volunteers, law enforcement, emergency management personnel, utility workers, Red Cross representatives, private contractors, State and local and Federal officials and employees working together.

Mr. Speaker, I salute and pay tribute to the fine citizens of my State and district, and I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to my colleagues and others who have made expressions of concern and support during this difficult time.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 34 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 2 o'clock p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

We know, O gracious God, that in our lives and in our world we experience the contrasts of life. There are threats of war and promises of peace. There are moments of laughter and times of tears. There are seasons of love and occasions of disdain. There are instances of trust and others of suspicion. And yet, with all these feelings and attitudes, we have Your abiding word and Your reconciling peace.

As we walk through the uneven paths of our existence, may we rejoice and be glad that underneath are Your everlasting arms supporting us and making us whole. For these and all Your blessings, O God, we offer this prayer of thanksgiving. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. TRAFICANT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

SALUTING ILLINOIS BROADCASTERS AND BROADCASTERS ACROSS THE NATION

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, broadcasters across this Nation have a single mandate from the Federal Government, to serve the public interest in the communities where they operate. I am pleased that the Illinois broadcasters in my State do such an excellent job both on and off the air.

A recent survey conducted by the Illinois Broadcasters Association indicates that the average TV station in my State contributes over half a million dollars annually in air time for public service announcements and over 80,000 per radio station.

These stations are an integral part of small town USA and even create a sense of community in large cities. Local stations provide the news we depend on, the weather warnings we count on, and the public affairs programs which give viewers and listeners the opportunity to hear from their elected officials.

I salute the Illinois broadcasters in my district and the broadcasters across the Nation that do such a fine job day in and day out. America's system of free, over-the-air broadcasting has been on the job since the 1920s and still serves us well almost 80 years later. It is one thing we can all count on in the next millennium.

WE NEED ALLIED SUPPORT IN IRAQ

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

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, the American people are saying if military action is needed in Iraq, America should not do it alone, and the American people are right. The days of sending American soldiers overseas with a rifle on their shoulder and a credit card in their pocket just does not cut it anymore, Mr. Speaker, especially when many of our so-called allies sit on the sidelines and shout Yankee go home to boot.

Kofi Annan is to be commended for his efforts. It sounds good. But in any event, I think the wise words of Ronald Reagan apply here: Trust but verify; trust but verify.

But I will not, Mr. Speaker, support military action unless our allies are on the battlefield with us. We represent Uncle Sam; we do not represent Uncle Sucker.

PROTECTING SOCIAL SECURITY

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

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, I was among hundreds of Republicans last month who stood and applauded President Clinton when he spoke in this Chamber I applauded because I thought he said that we should use any budget surplus to save "Social Security first." That is why so many of us vigorously applauded a position we thought he was taking. However, I have gone back and looked at his speech. What he actually said was we should "reserve" every penny of the surplus until we "save" Social Security.

What does that mean? We find out from the President's budget recently

submitted that it does not mean reserving the surplus for Social Security Trust Fund, because in the budget he presented, there is \$100 billion in new taxes, \$100 billion in new spending, but nothing about putting the surplus into Social Security. In fact, his senior economic advisers later have said they don't know what "reserving" it means.

Mr. Speaker, Mark Twain said everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it. This administration talks a good game about Social Security, but he hasn't done anything about it in his budget proposal. It would be nice if the President treated Social Security better than Mark Twain treated the weather.

IRS REFORM IS LONG OVERDUE

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, Rush Limbaugh, in an interview with the very distinguished gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT) asked why would Bill Clinton defend the IRS?

Let us think about that. Why would Bill Clinton defend the IRS? If my colleagues recall when the President was confronted with hearings this past month which exposed the incredible abuse of power that seems to be a way of doing business over at the IRS, his first reaction almost instinctively was to defend the IRS.

His first reaction was to say that things are really not that bad, and he criticized the Republican reform plan. Of course, that was until he saw the polls that the American people were having none of it, that they have known for years that the IRS suffers from heavy-handed tactics, sloppiness and lack of accountability.

This last point is the key point. Any agency or bureaucrat that lacks accountability will, over time, abuse its power. The Republican IRS reform proposal would inject real accountability into the IRS, and make the audit process accountable to an outside review body for the first time ever. It is long overdue.

SULLIVAN AWARD TO PEYTON MANNING, QUARTERBACK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

(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 the last 4 years, Peyton Manning, quarterback for the University of Tennessee, has earned a reputation not only as one of the finest college athletes in the country, but also as an individual of exceptional integrity and character.

Tomorrow, the Amateur Athletic Union will present the Sullivan Award to Peyton Manning, recognizing him as the most outstanding amateur athlete in the country. This prestigious award

recognizes not only athletic ability, but also exceptional leadership, moral character and sportsmanship.

In his time as starting quarterback at University of Tennessee, Peyton Manning has become the SEC's all time leading passer and has broken a total of 42 NCAA SEC and Tennessee records.

However, Peyton Manning's accomplishments go far beyond the football field. He graduated near the top of his class in only 3 years, and he is well known for his leadership and service to his school and the community.

Last spring, Peyton Manning passed up the opportunity to make millions of dollars by turning pro, instead choosing to stay at the University of Tennessee to continue his education and finish his fourth year of college eligibility. Peyton Manning certainly deserves the Sullivan Award, and I commend the Amateur Athletic Union on their selection of Peyton Manning as their athlete of the year. No one is more deserving of this award.

PRIORITIZING SPENDING AND FOCUSING ON DEFENDING OUR BORDERS

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, it is often said that those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it. Today, this Nation stands on the edge and the threshold of runaway drug use and rising violence against all Americans. So how do our liberal colleagues plan to counter this most dangerous trend? Well, my colleagues can guess it, \$120 billion in new taxes and more Washington-knows-best, unworkable big government programs. They are proposing that we make the Federal social bureaucracies larger and more invasive into the lives of American people.

To them I say, enough is enough. What does it say about our government when the IRS employs five times as many as the FBI and 14 times as many people as the DEA? When did policing the American taxpayer become more important than policing America's drug dealers and criminal thugs?

Now more than ever we must practice fiscal discipline and common sense by reprioritizing spending and focusing our government on defending the borders of this Nation and the safety of the American citizens.

OPPOSING THE USDA'S ORGANIC LABEL STANDARD

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

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, 8 years ago it became apparent that producers of organic foods were having a marketing problem. The public was confused about what organic meant. The label "organic food" was being cheapened by the public confusion.

So, in 1990 the Congress passed a law to correct this problem, organic Foods Production Act, a single set of criteria by which food products could be labeled as organic. However, what the USDA is proposing is both overreaching and inadequate.

For example, the USDA proposal would allow irradiated foods. Further, the proposal would permit genetically engineered ingredients. It would permit vegetable ingredients where the plants had been fertilized with municipal wastes.

I think we need to send this agency, our U.S. Department of Agriculture, out to talk with consumers. They need to find out what organic means to the consumer now, and it does not mean radiated, engineered or sludge-fertilized food.

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I am emphatically opposed to these proposed standards.

CUBAN DISREGARD FOR INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, today, February 24, marks the anniversary of a tragic case of the Cuban regime's blatant disregard for international legal and moral standards.

Two years ago today, three U.S. citizens and a U.S. resident exiled in the United States died at the hands of the Cuban Air Force. The Cuban regime did not care that these were civilian planes. The regime in Cuba did not care that they were flying over international waters. The illegal Cuban government did not care that these four men were keeping a vigilance in search of Cubans risking their lives in these treacherous waters. The corrupt dictator, Fidel Castro, did not care then, nor does he care now.

What many are not aware of is that the violations in this case did not end with the shootdown of these four brave men. The grandniece of one of the victims was still in Cuba. This 11-year-old girl was suffering from Reye's syndrome. Her ailments were affecting her sight, and the pain to her fragile body was intolerable. But as the niece and the granddaughter of individuals who had fled Castro's claws, she was denied basic medical attention.

When a visiting doctor began tending to her suffering, the Cuban regime detained him and threatened his family. Castro did not care about the pain of the defenseless child, and the regime did not care, nor does it care now, about basic human rights.

ORDERING SELECTED RESERVE OF ARMED FORCES TO ACTIVE DUTY—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 105-217)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message