

They are wrong. The electoral revolution of 1994 lives today. Each of us in the Republican majority should stand proud and tall, knowing that if American people had not given their trust to us in 1994, and renewed it in 1996, our economy would not be surging, our budget would not be balanced; we would not have had the first tax cut in 16 years, and the stock market would not have more than doubled in just three years. Each of us in the Republican majority can take pride in the new-found hope and confidence of our Nation.

I stand here not to boast of our accomplishments, but to thank the American people for their well-placed trust, and I pledge to them that those of us in the Republican majority will put the needs of families first, always. You see, families do come first, for me, and for the Republican majority.

This afternoon I am proud to say that when I cast votes in this session of the 105th Congress to reduce taxes on the American family, to reform government and its overreaching involvement in our lives, and to restore our precious and sacred rights, including the most fundamental of all, the right-to-life, I will think of a new little Kansan named Jason Robert Searl, Jr., because it is his future, along with the future of all our children, that we determine when we vote in this sacred chamber.

He was born just three days before Christ's birthday at 5:18 in the evening at Via Christi Hospital's St. Francis Campus, in Wichita, Kansas. Really, I should not call him little, because he weighed 8 pounds and 10 ounces and was over 20 inches long.

I want to salute and warmly congratulate Chrissy and Jason Searl. I want to thank them for having the courage to take the toughest job in our world, parenting. I pledge to them and all others who place their trust in the Republican majority that we will continue to live up to the promises we made to all of them, including little Jason.

REMOVING FINANCIAL BURDENS PLACED ON FAMILY PHARMACIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues' support for legislation I am introducing with Senator DORGAN to eliminate the regulatory and financial burdens placed on America's family pharmacies by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

The Balanced Budget Act contained a provision that required all dealers of durable medical equipment for Medicare to obtain a \$50,000 surety bond. Unfortunately, pharmacists were inadvertently included in the surety bond requirement, because some of them do sell small amounts of durable medical equipment such as crutches and other items.

My bill will exempt any licensed pharmacist who owns his or her own business from the bond requirement. It is an unnecessary and costly burden for these professionals, who are already struggling to keep their businesses afloat, particularly in rural areas.

America's family pharmacist is already under siege by drug companies who set prices on pharmaceutical prices. These companies offer reduced or rock-bottom prices to HMOs and other purchasing groups, but do not offer the same discounts to a family pharmacist.

Even if the terms of a recent court settlement are met by the pharmaceutical companies, the family pharmacist in rural areas will likely still not have full access to these discounts.

Who is hurt most by high drug prices? Our pharmacists, increasing numbers of whom are forced to shut down their family-owned businesses in rural areas, and, most important, their patients. It is indeed a crime that here in the world's richest Nation, our seniors must choose between buying groceries and buying prescription drugs.

This legislation will eliminate the costly burden placed upon pharmacies by the Balanced Budget Act, but it will not eliminate the costly burden of the high drug prices that continue to grow by leaps and bounds. I intend to address that issue at a later date.

HANDLING THE SO-CALLED BUDGET SURPLUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, over the President's Day break I had the opportunity to travel the length and breadth of my great State of South Dakota, and during that time I met with senior groups, with business groups, with education groups, with volunteer groups, with student groups, with community leaders, all across my State.

This is the real world. These are real people who are concerned about their future, their children's future, about their children's education, about affordable health care, about retirement and about the deterioration of American values.

Now, there was an aversion as I traveled across the State, I didn't find anybody who was very much in favor of the situation in the Middle East of our going to war there. I heard a lot of interest in getting a transportation bill passed in the very near future, and I also had a lot of skepticism expressed by the people in my State about the budget situation in Washington, the so-called budget surplus, and what might be the right thing to do with that.

And what is the right thing? That is a question I asked as I traveled the State. And the answer I frequently got from the people of South Dakota, according to them, is to use the budget surplus to the extent there is one to

pay down, begin retiring our \$5.5 trillion debt, to repay the Social Security Trust Fund. Beyond that, there wasn't much appetite for new Washington programs and new Washington spending. Instead, people would like to see those dollars, to the extent there are any additional dollars available, returned to the taxpayers.

Now, in deciding how best to do that, I came up with an idea which is now in the form of legislation, and I have introduced along with the gentlewoman from California (Ms. DUNN) a couple of tax relief bills which I think are consistent with two principles that are very important as we debate tax relief in this country.

The first principle is that we ought to be looking at how we can come up with tax relief legislation that is broad-based. We hear a lot from the White House, from Members even in this body, about targeted tax relief, about Washington picking winners and losers. In my own view, the best way we can deal with the issue of tax relief is to do it in a way that allows everyone in this country to participate from a growing economy and benefit from a growing economy.

So our legislation is based upon the principle that everyone, irrespective of what your status is, whether you are married, whether you have children or any other issue, that you ought to be able to, if you are a taxpayer, have the benefits of tax relief.

The second principle is this: It ought to lead us toward the goal of simplification. As we move to the long-term goal of a new Tax Code for a new century, it ought to be about trying to come up with a way in which we further simplify, rather than further complicate, the Tax Code in this country.

I, a couple of weeks ago, did my own tax return, and I can tell you that even though last summer in the balanced budget agreement we lowered taxes on people in this country, we made the Code even more complicated than it already is.

I think an underlying fundamental principle of any tax relief that we do ought to be moving us toward the goal of simplification. So, in doing that, we came up with a couple of ideas.

The first raises the personal exemption from \$2,700 to \$3,400. Again, anybody in this country who is a taxpayer claimed as a dependent on a tax return gets the benefit of that tax proposal.

The second proposal actually raises the late rate at which the 28 percent rate applies to taxpayers in this country. It drops 10 million taxpayers out of the higher 28 percent bracket, down to the 15 percent bracket.

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That is significant for a number of reasons: because it gives an incentive to people, to hard-working Americans, to work harder, to produce more, to earn more. Instead of penalizing them by assessing 28 cents out of each additional dollar they earn, it moves them back into the 15 percent bracket.

More taxpayers in this country—in fact, the estimate is that there are 29 million Americans in this country who will have their taxes lowered under this proposal, to the tune of about \$1,200 per filer. That is significant. I think that is a movement in the right direction.

In a conversation I had last week with Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan, I asked him, what things can we do to continue the economic growth cycle we are in? He said two things, one of which was lowering marginal rates. That is effectively what our legislation would do.

These are real choices. This is real relief for hard-working men and women in this country because it allows them to decide how they spend their savings. Instead of creating new Washington bureaucracies, new Washington programs, new Washington spending, we say that as a matter of principle and philosophy we believe the people of this country are better equipped to make those decisions in their living rooms, in their homes. We want to empower people in small town America to make those decisions on their own and to quit looking to Washington, D.C.

I encourage the Members of this body to take a hard look at cosponsoring this legislation, and work towards its passage.

URGING MEMBERS TO SUPPORT H.R. 856 AND ALLOW A VOTE ON THE STATUS OF PUERTO RICO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. SERRANO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, for half a century our Nation has been committed to political freedom and self-determination around the world. In his special message to Congress on Puerto Rico on October 16, 1945, President Truman said, "To this end I recommend that the Congress consider each of the proposals, and that legislation be enacted submitting various alternatives to the people of Puerto Rico. In that way, the Congress can ascertain what the people of the island themselves most desire for their political future."

Since then, Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton all have supported self-determination for Puerto Rico. Moreover, both the Democratic and Republican Party platforms have supported self-determination by the people of Puerto Rico. But support is not enough.

Therefore, I come before the House to remind Members that next week we will be taking up H.R. 856, a bill submitted by the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. DON YOUNG) and supported by yours truly and many Members on this side. In fact, it has bipartisan support.

This bill would allow, for the first time ever, a federally-sponsored plebiscite in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico where people can choose to remain a Commonwealth, choose state-

hood, or choose independence or free association. What I think is most important as we look forward to this vote is to fully understand that unlike some opponents' comments, the bill does not commit this Congress to any one option. In other words, this is not, I repeat, this is not, a pro-statehood bill. If you have a problem with statehood, or if you have a problem with independence, or if you have a problem with the Commonwealth status, this bill would only allow, this November, for a vote to be taken in the Commonwealth. Then 180 days later we take up the result. Then you can bring up the issue of whether you support statehood or not based on their requests.

So it is important as we look forward to next week that we do not allow some people to muddy the waters by suggesting that this bill favors statehood. But from 1493 to 1898, Puerto Rico was a colony of Spain. Now, from 1898 to this July 25th, 1998 will be another 100 years of colonial status.

I know that the minute some of us mention the word "colony" some people react to it and say, well, it is truly not a colony. It is a self-governing commonwealth. But the fact of life is that the government and the people of Puerto Rico cannot establish relationships with another government at this point. They cannot trade ambassadors, they cannot trade on their own, they cannot set up foreign affairs offices. Therefore, they are not an independent nation.

At the same time, they do not have six Members of Congress and two U.S. Senators who sit here, they have one Representative who does not have a vote in Congress representing 4 million people. So it is not a State.

I ask the Members, if it is not a State and it is not an independent nation, call it whatever you want, it is a colony. Even though we do not pay much attention to the United Nations, the United Nations has suggested that by the year 2000 every country in the world do away with, get rid of, or solve the problem of any colonies they may hold.

Next week is a historic moment during the commemoration of this 100-year relationship. By passing the Young bill, we will allow 4 million Puerto Rican citizens on the islands of Puerto Rico to make this decision for themselves, and then we will put forth our advice.

It is interesting to note that in 1917 Congress took a vote and gave the citizens of Puerto Rico American citizenship. Since then Puerto Ricans have fought in every war, have participated in every Democratic and Republican Convention, and yet have had very little representation, if any, at the Federal level. This bill will give us the opportunity, once and for all, to do in Puerto Rico what we preach to the rest of the world.

I ask the Members, as I ask them on so many other occasions, can we truly demand for the Cuban government to

hold "free elections" if we do not allow for 100 years a free election in Puerto Rico to determine its future? Secondly, can we promote democracy throughout the world and demand that people, as they should be, be free of all persecution, if we on one hand say "you are 4 million American citizens," and on the other hand say "but you do not have the same rights either as an independent nation or as a member of the union?"

Think of this. If any one colleague who is here with us today, or anyone watching this program, was to move to Puerto Rico with me, they would immediately lose all their rights. So I ask Members next week to vote for the Young bill, a way out of this problem.

CELEBRATING 9 YEARS OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE, AND URGING MEMBERS TO HELP END THE MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of personal privilege this afternoon. While I acknowledge that every constituent within the Sixth Congressional District of Arizona is very important, I think my colleagues, and indeed, my constituents, will not mind if I talk about the one to whom I refer as my most important constituent, because, Mr. Speaker, it was on this date 9 years ago today that Mary Denice Yancey became Mary Denice Hayworth. In those 9 years I have been honored beyond compare.

The institution of marriage is many things: A sacred partnership, a friendship, a trust, a shared endeavor. Mary Hayworth, Mr. Speaker, has been my best friend and companion and helpmate for this Member, is often said to have the ability to put into words many things. It is essentially indescribable.

For those of us who endeavor to serve and embrace this public life, there are many challenges, challenges of spending time here in the Nation's capital as well as spending time in the district, challenges of family. We live in the Sixth District. Mary several days of the week basically has to take care of all the responsibilities of the household, and added responsibilities of a congressional spouse.

But I cherish her and I appreciate her, and I love her very much for all that she does for me and our family. Mr. Speaker, I think it is proof positive that miracles can and do happen that someone like Mary Denice Hayworth is there to help me and love me and encourage me.

You learn many things, as I mentioned earlier, through marriage. I remember one remark my mother made, and maybe it is something many of us have heard, "Oh, honey, I am so happy you are going to get married, because after all, two can live as cheaply as