

1998. The largest growth occurred in payroll taxes, and state and local taxes. Adjusting for inflation, the total of all taxes paid by the two-earner family in 1998 was 4.9 times greater than in 1955.

These year-to-year comparisons provide a useful gauge, but ultimately, the goal should be to set tax rates as low as possible after the federal government has met its obligations. The substantial surpluses that are projected alone suggest that we can and should provide additional tax relief.

Another observation: According to Census Bureau data, the labor-force participation of married women, as a proportion of all married women, has nearly tripled from 23 percent in 1951 to 62 percent in 1997. Some of that increase, no doubt, can be attributed to women pursuing their career goals, and that is a good thing. We want our mothers, wives, and daughters to pursue their dreams and fulfill themselves in the workplace. But I suspect that a good part of the increase can also be attributed to the need for many families to earn extra income to pay their bills, including their tax bill.

More people in the labor force means that tax rates do not have to rise substantially to produce more revenue for the government. But when more families have to have two wage earners because they cannot make ends meet, no one is left home with the kids. That is not such a good thing. providing tax relief will give more families the choice and opportunity to have one parent stay home to raise the children.

As for defense, the increase allowed in the Committee budget is certainly not enough to repair the harm done by the Clinton Administration's underfunding in previous years, but it builds upon the start we made last year.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall 10 years ago, the strength of our nation's military forces has shrunk from 2.1 million to slightly under 1.4 million active-duty troops. Spending on the military has declined 29 percent since 1989, while spending on almost all other areas of government has gone up. Defense spending has shrunk at the same time that our military has increasingly been called upon to carry out global peacekeeping, domestic disaster relief, the war on drugs, and other less traditional missions.

While many of these objectives are important, they are often pursued without regard to the wear and tear they inflict on our troops and equipment. If we continue to simultaneously increase demand on our forces and cut their budget, we will leave our country vulnerable to potential aggressors. Indeed, according to a review conducted last year by the Pentagon, the U.S. could not today muster a force equal to that which won the 1991 Persian Gulf War so rapidly and decisively.

Last year, Congress reversed this trend by approving an \$18 billion increase in defense spending to: improve the pay and benefits necessary to at-

tract and keep qualified people in uniform; purchase badly needed new equipment, spare parts, and maintenance; improve training; and defend the United States from the growing threat of ballistic missile attack. Yet even this increase merely kept defense spending on pace with inflation.

So the Budget Committee's recommendation to put more money toward defense in this next budget represents a step in the right direction and a good effort to set priorities.

The Committee identified other high priorities, as well, and recommended allocating significant increases toward them. For example, the Committee budget would fund education at a level that is \$13 billion higher than last year—\$600 million more than the President requested. It would increase spending on veterans health by \$1.1 billion, and provide a like increase for the National Institutes of Health for medical research. It would reserve \$40 billion over five years for a new Medicare prescription drug benefit. These are things the American people are telling us are most important to them and they want funded. We do that, in this budget.

Of course, providing these increases in high priority areas will mean that spending on other, less important activities will have to be restrained. But unless we want to return to the days when Congress raided Social Security to pay for other programs, or to the days of big budget deficits, prioritizing spending is key. We have come too far to abandon the discipline that has finally restored some order to the budget process.

I will conclude by talking just briefly about one other aspect of this resolution. To ensure that we ultimately do what we say is intended here, the budget includes some important enforcement provisions. It would establish a 60-vote point order—that is, it would effectively require a supermajority vote to run an on-budget deficit and thus make it harder to raid Social Security in the future. It would similarly require a supermajority vote to declare spending as an emergency that is exempt from spending limits. It would establish a firewall to ensure that we abide by spending limits for defense and non-defense activities. And finally, it would make it much harder to shift appropriations into future years in order to avoid current-year spending limits.

I commend the Chairman and members of the Budget Committee for their work on this resolution, and particularly acknowledge the work of Senators GRAMM, NICKLES, GREGG, and GRAMS, who helped hold the line on spending and ensure that many of the budget gimmicks employed by Congress and the President in recent years were not employed again. As a result of their efforts, I think we have a much better budget.

I urge support for this spending plan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. KERREY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 20 minutes.

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

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, might I ask what the subject matter is?

Mr. KERREY. Nuclear weapons, the Senator's favorite subject.

Mr. KYL. I have no objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, might I ask the indulgence of the Senator from Nebraska to read some brief remarks for the leader regarding the remainder of the day?

Mr. KERREY. I am pleased to yield the floor.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### FAIRNESS IN ASBESTOS COMPENSATION ACT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I have been asked whether I intend to call up for consideration on the Senate floor legislation that has been introduced in the Senate with respect to asbestos. After conferring with the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the chairman of the subcommittee with jurisdiction of this issue, it is clear that a markup has not yet been scheduled, and that extensive work would be needed before the bill is ready for Senate floor action. I have also conferred with the sponsor of the bill who informs me that since the bill was introduced, the consensus regarding this legislation, S. 758, between industry, the plaintiffs, and other concerned parties, and among industry itself, appears to have deteriorated substantially. This bill is not ready for Senate floor action. The Senate will soon be occupied with budget, appropriations, tax and other legislation. For these reasons, and in all candor, the necessary floor time will not be available to act on the Senate asbestos bill this year.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I appreciate the majority leader's comments and candor on this issue.

Last year I introduced S. 758, the Fairness in Asbestos Compensation Act in response to two Supreme Court rulings urging Congress to act on national legislation that would fairly and efficiently compensate victims of asbestos. As U.S. Supreme Court Justice David Souter wrote for the court in *Ortiz* versus *Fibreboard*: "The elephantine mass of asbestos cases . . . defies customary judicial administration and calls for national legislation . . . to date Congress has not responded."

It was my hope that this bill could serve to bring all parties together to