

are closer to the people. They can better reflect the views of the people. And, again, if three-fourths of the States ratify the action by Congress and ratify the amendment, it becomes part of the Constitution.

So why not go through the constitutional process that our Founding Fathers so wisely set up? There is a word for that process, and that word is democracy. That is what it is all about: Democracy. Let us let democracy work. No more excuses, no more obstacles. Eighty percent of the American people want a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. By passing the amendment, we can balance the budget by the year 2002. We can protect the Social Security trust funds, and we will have done the single most important thing we can do to ensure the Nation's economic security and to protect the American dream for our children and grandchildren.

Now, having said this, it is my hope that we can start this process sometime this next week. As I said, there is no issue more important. Eighty percent of the American people wonder why we have not done it by now. We failed by one vote. Six of my colleagues who had voted for it the year before, voted against it last year. Maybe they will come back home. We will do our best to accommodate some of the concerns that some of my colleagues have raised on the other side of the aisle, if we can work out some accommodations.

Let us take this out of politics. Let us tell the American people it is bipartisan, as it is, with Senator SIMON the leader on the Democratic side, Senator CRAIG and Senator HATCH, Senator DOMENICI, and others on this side of the aisle. So we hope that we can find a solution next week, start on this next week and maybe complete action the following week.

There is nothing more important. And I hope that we can come together, as we should, to do the right thing for the American people, the American taxpayers and our future generations.

REPEAL OF THE 4.3-CENT GAS TAX

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, finally, let me say a word with reference to the Finance Committee hearing that was held this morning on repeal of the gas tax, the 4.3-cent gas tax, which was made permanent in 1993 in the Clinton tax bill, which raised taxes by \$265 billion, the gas tax increase contributes about \$4.8 billion a year.

Not a single Republican voted for the big, big, big tax increase, the largest tax increase in the history of America. In fact, I think one of my colleagues said, "No, in the history of the world." Whatever, it was big. It has had an impact on the economy. Only once before—in 1990—did Congress ever vote to have a gas tax to pay for deficit reduction. Gas taxes were always set aside in a trust fund to build highways, bridges, and whatever.

That is a very worthy purpose, and that is why motorists and others who use fuel are prepared to pay that tax to have better roads, better highways, and better bridges. But in 1993, in the \$265 billion Clinton tax increase, which included a 4.3-cent increase in gas taxes, which was an increase of about 25 to 30 percent in the Federal gas tax, instead of dedicating the funds to bridges, highways, and whatever, it is being used for deficit reduction.

Gas prices are spiraling. They have gone up 30 cents in the State of California, for example—15 cents, 20 cents in most other States.

Will repeal of this gas tax mean the price of gas will fall? Not necessarily. If we repeal the gas tax, we are certain they are going to be 4 cents less than they were before. We should not be raising taxes. We ought to be cutting spending. The American people want us to cut spending, not raise taxes, whether it is a gas tax or some other tax on the American people, American consumers, particularly low-income Americans.

So it is my hope—in fact, on Tuesday of next week, I will introduce legislation, along with Senator GRAMM, who will be the principal sponsor, along with Members of the House, to repeal the gas tax—repeal the gas tax and remind the American people that this is the beginning, this is the beginning.

Remember, without a Republican vote, the Democrats in the House and Senate passed a \$265-billion tax increase in 1993 that President Clinton wanted. We believe this is one small step we can take. It amounts to about \$4.8 billion a year. We will find offsets, and they will not be tax increases. We will try to relieve the consumers and the motorists of at least that part of the burden on the Federal gas tax. It is going to go to the consumers. We cannot predict that prices may not rise because if there is no supply, prices will rise. But, as I have said, they will at least be 4.3 cents cheaper than they were before.

I believe there will be strong bipartisan support for repeal, and we hope to have that legislation ready and on the Senate floor in the very near future.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. WARNER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I wish to commend the distinguished majority leader, and I shall join with him and ask if I may be a cosponsor of that legislation.

Mr. President, this is a tax put on gasoline that does not go to the improvement of the Nation's highway transportation system. When a driver moves up to the pump and pays the tax, which could be as high as 18 Federal, those taxes historically have gone to improve America's transportation—roads and bridges—but not in this case. President Clinton designed this tax to go elsewhere.

I commend the distinguished majority leader. This Clinton tax must be re-

pealed and repealed promptly. And henceforth, when you go to the gas pump, whatever tax it is, that tax must be directed toward the improvement of the transportation system. Those are the users in those automobiles and those trucks, and they are entitled to those funds to be expended for the very roads on which they must drive and work to support their families.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Virginia.

I hope to be meeting with him tomorrow on this very important issue.

WHITE HOUSE TRAVEL OFFICE REIMBURSEMENT

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate turn to the consideration of H.R. 2937 regarding the White House Travel Office.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2937) for the reimbursement of attorney fees and costs incurred by former employees of the White House Travel Office with respect to the termination of their employment in that Office on May 19, 1993.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 3952

Mr. DOLE. I send a substitute amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kansas [Mr. DOLE] proposes an amendment numbered 3952.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. REIMBURSEMENT OF CERTAIN ATTORNEY FEES AND COSTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall pay, from amounts in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, such sums as are necessary to reimburse former employees of the White House Travel Office whose employment in that Office was terminated on May 19, 1993, for any attorney fees and costs they incurred with respect to that termination.

(b) VERIFICATION REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall pay an individual in full under subsection (a) upon submission by the individual of documentation verifying the attorney fees and costs.

(c) LIMITATION.—Payments under subsection (a) shall not include attorney fees or costs incurred with respect to any Congressional hearing or investigation into the termination of employment of the former employees of the White House Travel Office.

(d) NO INFERENCE OF LIABILITY.—Liability of the United States shall not be inferred from enactment of or payment under this section.