

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

Mr. BINGAMAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague for the courtesy. I did want to make a brief statement. I do not think I will take a full 8 minutes.

#### REVENUE LOST FROM REPEAL OF GAS TAX

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, there was an item in the morning paper that caused me to come to the Senate floor to speak briefly and alert my colleagues to a serious concern which I have. The article was entitled "Armeiy: Cheap Fuel Via Education Cuts." "House Leader Suggests Way To Offset Cost of Gasoline Tax Repeal."

The first three short paragraphs say:

House Majority Leader Richard K. Armeiy, Republican from Texas, yesterday suggested that the revenue lost from a repeal of the 1993 gasoline tax could be offset by cutting spending on education. "Maybe we ought to take another look at the amount of money we are spending on education," Armeiy said on the NBC's "Meet the Press." "There is a place where we are getting a declining value for an increased dollar. It's in education. In fact we can get some discipline in the use of our education dollar, I think we can make up the difference," Armeiy said.

Mr. President, my reaction to this article when I read it was, "Here they go again."

We spent much of last year in this Congress trying to hold off proposed cuts in the education budget. The budget resolution as first presented here called for \$18.6 billion being cut from student aid over a 7-year period, and \$26 billion being cut from K through 12 levels of education over that 7-year period.

There was a proposal to zero out funding for direct student loans, and proposals to zero out funding for School to Work, for Goals 2000, and for national service.

Mr. President, those fights are now behind us. But unfortunately, even today, we see that to some extent the efforts to cut back on education have succeeded. In the final appropriations bill that was signed into law 10 days ago by the President, there are still cuts in education.

There is a 6-percent cut in the Goals 2000 funding. There is a 9-percent cut in telecommunications for math funding. There is an 8-percent cut in library construction funding. There is a 15-percent cut in the funds for magnet schools, a 27-percent cut in technical assistance center funding, a 7-percent cut in adult education budgets. In Perkins loans there is a 41-percent cut, and in State student incentive grants there is a 50-percent cut.

Mr. President, my own view is that this is a very, very mistaken set of priorities that this Congress and that the majority leader in the House, RICHARD

ARMEY, are talking about when the first place they look to try to make up revenue is to further cut education.

I think in the long term our country is only as strong as the next generation, and we are only as smart as the next generation. If we cut out the funds needed to educate that next generation, I am persuaded that we are going against the will of the American people, we are going against our own best interests, and we are showing very serious shortsightedness, which I think we will come to regret.

Mr. President, I contrast this article, which, as I say, was in this morning's paper here in Washington, with an article that came out a little over a week ago, on April 27, also in the Washington Post. It was entitled, "Latinos Want D.C. School To Stay Open."

Let me just read a little bit of that article for my colleagues. It said:

About 400 people picketed the District of Columbia Board of Education offices yesterday, protesting a recommendation by School Superintendent Franklin L. Smith to close the Carlos Rosario Adult Education Center.

The demonstrators circled the block in front of the Presidential building . . . chanting "We want to learn English!" Some held bullhorns, others carried signs asking drivers to honk in support of the program.

"We see it as an issue of discrimination against Latin immigrants," said Arnoldo Ramos, Director of the Council of Latino Agencies. "This is the only adult education center serving Latinos. By closing this program, they are sending a message that Latinos don't matter and that we should continue serving tables, continue picking up garbage and having the lowest positions in society."

Several students said that without Rosario, it would be difficult to continue to learn English, which they say is their only ticket to a better life.

Mr. President, this article should bring home to us the importance that education has for the average people of this country. Education is not only their only ticket to a better life; it is the ticket that our children have to a better life as well.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to reject the recommendation of the House majority leader in looking first at education as a place to further cut the Federal budget.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

#### TAX FREEDOM DAY

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I was glad I had an opportunity to be here for at least the last portion of the presentation by my good colleague and friend from Virginia where he was admonishing us to be courageous and to avoid the proposal to repeal the gas tax.

It is my intention to support the repeal of the gas tax, and, frankly, I believe America is looking for a very different kind of courage today.

I do not think they are looking for courage to keep adding another burden,

another tax burden, another regulatory burden on the backs of the working families.

Most Americans—in fact, in survey data every social strata of our country—feel that the appropriate tax burden should be 25 percent. It does not matter whether you ask the very wealthy family or the poorest family. It is fascinating; they all come to the same number, that the burden of government, their willingness to contribute, is about 25 percent.

Tomorrow is May 7. It is an important day in America, because May 7, believe it or not—I would never have believed I would be in the Senate talking about this kind of crisis, but May 7 is the first day for which an American family can earn money and resources for its own dreams. Every other day from January 1 through March 15, April, you name it, all of those wages that were earned on all of those working days are taken from the family. They are taken by the Federal Government at about 25 percent, some much higher, they are taken by the State and local government 10 to 12 percent, and I might add May 7 does not include the regulatory costs to every American family, which is now about \$6,800 a year.

I think of that fellow who gets up, his wife who gets up, and they get the kids; they take them to school; they get to their two jobs, which are necessary now primarily because of the new tax burden on the American family; they go day after day like that working through the struggles of life, and until May 7 not a dime is available to house that family, to buy the home, to transport the family, to feed the family, to educate the family—all the things we ask the American family to do for America: Raise the country. Raise the country. But until May 7, they do not have a dime for their own dreams. They are sending all of those wages between January 1 and May 7 to some policy wonk somewhere with the task of reredicating where that money ought to go and what its priorities ought to be.

We just heard a presentation by my colleague on the other side of the aisle that it would be the opposite of courageous if we were to repeal this tax. We have a long way to go to get tax freedom day back from May 7 to where it appropriately ought to be. Every opportunity we have to lower that burden, in my judgment, is appropriate. That gas tax costs the average family of four about \$100—\$100 a year.

More importantly, the lowest 20 percent of taxpayers pay over 7 percent of their income on gasoline. If we are concerned about those who are disadvantaged, we ought to be concerned about lowering the burden on them, letting them keep those resources to do the things they need to do. The wealthy only pay 1.6 percent of their income on gasoline. This repeal of that gas tax