

happens, what the benefits are of balancing the budget to the average family versus what the gas tax repeal would do.

Balancing the budget, balancing the unified budget, would reduce the home mortgage for a typical family in the United States by \$917 a year. That is because interest rates would be reduced; a car loan savings would be \$97 a year; student loan savings \$56 a year; in comparison to what the gas tax would mean to a family, \$42 a year.

Mr. President, it seems to me very clear that the priority ought to be in further reduction of the deficit rather than in a repeal of the gas tax, which is unlikely to ever be passed through to consumers. The benefit to consumers, the benefit to families, lies in further deficit reduction.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. BURNS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

AMERICA ON MY MIND

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise today with America on my mind to applaud our favorite Republican Senators and Republican Congressmen who have worked so diligently in trying to present a budget that stays in balance and would balance the budget in 6 years and still would not raise taxes.

It is interesting that my colleague from North Dakota would also put in there that he likes the balanced budget. We would like to see him vote for one. Take-home pay, if the budget is balanced, will increase, predictability in the marketplace, predictability of jobs. That is what worries people today: "Will I have my job in a year?"

Government has to be more responsible when it comes to spending. I look here at this cartoon. "What are you looking at?" He says, "Our paychecks!" He takes a magnifying glass to see it.

The Republican budget will balance by the year 2002 and does it by living within its means without raising taxes. This budget provides real welfare reform, real welfare reform that the President and the administration has called for but has vetoed. It provides tax relief for job expansion, predictability in the workplace, and, more importantly, it gets us on the road of saving and preserving Medicare for future generations, of which our colleagues, some of them, have stuck their heads in the sand.

Mr. CONRAD. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BURNS. It looks out for the long term, not just the short term.

Mr. CONRAD. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BURNS. I would like to make my statement, and then I have a committee meeting to go to, if the Senator does not mind.

Balancing the budget, without raising taxes, and deals also with Federal spending. You know, spending money, especially other people's money, is sort of like alcoholism. A fellow asked, "Does he have a drinking problem?" And he says, "No, he has a stopping problem." That is what we have in this Government. But if we deal with the spending problem, here is what has to happen. Families have to balance their budget. Government does not have an income problem. It has a spending problem. Mr. President, 38.2 percent of the family's income right now goes for taxes. So there is no doubt about it, a balanced budget will put more money in the pockets of Americans, not just a selected few, all Americans—single-income taxpayer, double-income taxpayer, newlyweds, farmers, ranchers, high tech, low tech. Everybody wins with a balanced budget.

The best way to increase our take-home pay, not only earn more but save more, to keep more in your pocket at the end of the month—it is better than any other program—is to go with a balanced budget. I applaud my colleagues who have worked so hard on this budget, presenting it to this Congress later on this week. I stand in support of that budget. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent we extend morning business so I may be permitted to make a 10-minute presentation that is accounted for in the previous order of the Senate.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask if the Senator would be so kind to extend that for another 5 minutes so I may have 5 minutes when he concludes his 10-minute presentation.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, let me further amend the unanimous consent, if I might. My colleague, Senator CONRAD, had wanted to respond. Let me ask if we might add 2 minutes to respond because the previous speaker spoke of Senator CONRAD and refused to yield to him. I make a unanimous-consent request that Senator CONRAD be accorded 2 minutes. I continue to seek my 10 minutes, and I am happy to accommodate the Senator from Missouri.

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

A BALANCED BUDGET PLAN

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the Senator from Montana, in his presentation, said that he would like the Senator from North Dakota to vote for a balanced budget plan. I do not know where the Senator from Montana has been. Not only have I voted for a balanced budget plan, I have presented three in the U.S. Senate in the last year.

I presented the fair share balanced budget plan last year; got 39 votes. It was the most ambitious deficit reduction plan that has been presented by

anybody in either House—got 39 votes in the U.S. Senate.

No. 2, I cosponsored with Senator SIMON last year the commonsense balanced budget plan. We got 19 votes in the U.S. Senate for that plan. That plan was the second most ambitious deficit reduction plan that anybody has presented in the U.S. Congress.

Third, I have been involved in the centrist coalition, which will have a substitute to the Republican plan that we will offer this week, which is a 7-year balanced budget plan that 22 of us have put together—11 Democrats and 11 Republicans. Not only have I voted for balanced budget plans, I have helped author them, or in some cases authored them in their entirety. I just want to set the record straight.

I thank my colleague from North Dakota for this opportunity to respond.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). The Senator from North Dakota.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I watched yesterday. We had, I think, six of my colleagues from the other side of the aisle come to the floor. We have seen six or seven of them virtually every day come to the floor of the Senate and describe to us what is wrong with the President's agenda and what is right about their agenda.

Yesterday, specifically, the discussion was about the proposed reduction in the gasoline tax of 4.3 cents a gallon. The point was repeatedly made that the gasoline tax was increased in 1993 in order to accommodate more Federal spending. That, of course, is not the case. The gas tax increase of 4.3 cents a gallon was a result of it being included in a very large package of spending cuts and, yes, some tax increases, in order to reduce the Federal budget deficit. It is worth noting that since that time, the Federal budget deficit has been reduced by 50 percent on a unified budget basis.

Last week, on Thursday, we faced the spectacle at that point of having a proposal brought to the floor of the Senate to reduce the gasoline taxes by 4.3 cents a gallon and to pay for it with kind of a Byzantine scheme of telecommunications spectrum sales beginning in 1998, and some other things that the Office of Management and Budget said would increase the Federal deficit by \$1.7 billion next year. In other words, a proposal was brought to the floor of the Senate that said, "Let's reduce the gasoline taxes by 4.3 cents a gallon."

The experts say there is no guarantee that the consumers will see the benefit of that, or that it will be passed through for a reduced pump price to the consumers. However, we would then see a \$1.7 billion increase in Federal deficit in the next year as a result of it.

In the very next breath, we are told that there is something wrong with

others in the Chamber who do not support a balanced budget. I do not know who those others are, but somehow those who bring a proposal to the floor to increase the Federal budget deficit, even as they repeal the 4.3-cent gasoline tax, are accusing others of not supporting a balanced budget. It is an interesting paradox in political dialogue.

I thought it would be useful today, just for a couple of minutes, to talk about some of these proposals more generally. Those who bring the proposed cut in the gas tax to the floor of the Senate, I suspect, think it is very popular, and it may be popular for someone to bring a bill to the floor to say, "Let's repeal all taxes. Let's have no one any longer be a taxpayer. Let's get rid of all taxpayers." But, of course, we provide for the common defense. That costs some money. We build roads in this country. We provide for schools. We hire police and firefighters. We do all the things necessary to govern.

Then we have people come and say, "Today is tax freedom day; it is the day beyond which no one ever has to support government again," suggesting, somehow, that the taxes that have been paid earlier in the year to invest in Social Security, Medicare, a police department, a fire department, or a Defense Department or the Centers for Disease Control, somehow none of that mattered, and all of that was squandered and wasted.

I guess I do not understand some of the logic. But the same people will bring to the floor apparently next week a proposal for a \$40 to \$60 billion national defense plan, a new iteration of star wars. These same people who propose a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution that, by the way, would raid the Social Security trust fund, now say, "Let's embark on a new program called national missile defense." They say, "On the little issues, we insist that the Pentagon does not know what it ought to spend. We demand that the generals and admirals spend \$12 billion more than they ask for. We insist they buy planes they do not ask for, they buy trucks they do not need, they buy submarines they do not want. We insist they buy all of that because generals and admirals do not know how much they want to spend. We in Congress know better," and then insist they spend \$12 billion more than the Pentagon has asked for.

On top of that, we insist on a new, expensive, gold-plated star wars program now named "national missile defense." Oh, it is not star wars, they say. Oh, yes, it is. The bill suggests that we build space-based lasers. Of course it is star wars. Will it cost a lot of money? You bet your life it will cost a lot of money—\$40 to \$60 billion. The tragedy is this: There is relatively little likelihood of a rogue nation getting hold of an ICBM missile in order to put a nuclear tip on the top of it and threaten the United States. There is so little likelihood of that. There is so great a

likelihood of some terrorist nation, some rogue nation, some band of independent terrorists getting a nuclear device and putting it in the trunk of a rusty Yugo and parking it on a New York City dock, or a glass vial that big with the deadliest biological agents known to mankind to threaten a major metropolitan area, or, yes, even a rental truck with a fertilizer bomb.

We understand about terrorism and about the threat to this country. The threat is not a rogue nation having a sophisticated intercontinental ballistic missile. It is the threat of terrorists with deadly biological agents and suitcase bombs, including suitcase nuclear devices that will threaten this country. Yet, we are told a national missile defense star wars program is what this country needs.

My colleague this morning said the issue is paychecks, the issue is paychecks and jobs. I agree with that. There is no social program in this country that has the value of a good job that pays well. That is one of the reasons I would like to do a number of things. I would like to straighten out our trade mess in this country. Our trade deficit is unforgivable. We ought not have a \$30 billion trade deficit with China and then have them, when they need to buy airplanes, tell us, "You either make them in China or we will not buy them from you." We ought not have a recurring \$60 billion annual trade deficit, a \$30 billion combined trade deficit with Mexico and Canada. Jobs leave America.

The second point is we ought to have the courage in this Chamber to shut off the tax incentive that exists in our tax laws telling firms, "Move your jobs overseas and we will give you a tax break." I am still waiting for one person to stand up and say, "I support that provision," but we cannot get it repealed.

We have a tax incentive to move jobs overseas. Finally, another step of paycheck and jobs issues is the minimum wage. Yes, we care about the minimum wage. The fact is, a whole lot of folks in this country work for minimum wage and have now been, for 5 years, at the bottom rung of the economic ladder without a 1-cent increase.

The last time the minimum wage was increased, on April 1, 1991, the stock market was at 2881. It is now almost double that. The minimum wage has not moved a cent. But CEO's at the top of the economic ladder got a 23-percent increase in their compensation last year—an average of \$11,000-a-day compensation for the CEO's at the top of the ladder. But it is \$8,800 a year, full-time minimum wage, for the folks at the bottom. They have not had an adjustment for 5 years.

I say to some, if you do not believe in the minimum wage, bring a bill to the floor to try to repeal it. If you believe there ought to be a minimum wage, then you ought to believe in an adjustment at some point. The question is how much and when. Let us discuss that.

If I might, in the last minute, read again a letter I received last week from a young woman who has four children, has had a tough life. She has had setbacks almost every minute, every time they turn around, it seems. Their trailer house burns and they lose everything, or there are operations or medical problems with the four children. She, in a four-page letter, says:

How can we make it like this. I wish somebody in an official capacity could be the one to tell my boys they can't play baseball this summer because I can't afford the \$25 fee for each of them, let alone the money for bats and gloves they would need. We don't spend our money on alcohol or drugs. We don't go out on the town. Our lives revolve around trying to make ends meet. Our dream of owning a home is long gone. We are better off, I know, than a lot of others who have to live on the street, but how far are we from that? One check maybe?

We are in that forgotten group of people called the working poor, the people that fall through the cracks of Government. We want to have something to show for working hard every day instead of slipping further in the hole. We are suffocating, and the future looks dim for us. I beg you shamelessly, for the sake of my children, to please help us find a glimmer of hope to help us dig our way out of this hopelessly grim situation.

This is from a woman and her husband who work at the minimum wage, are unskilled, and have suffered setback after setback and cannot find a way at the bottom to pull themselves up. They, for 5 years, have had their wages frozen because there has not been a one-penny adjustment in the minimum wage. During that time, the stock market has doubled. CEO's are doing great. They got a 23-percent increase last year alone.

The folks at the bottom deserve some kind of adjustment. They are the voiceless that we ought to give a voice to. They are the hopeless that we ought to offer hope to, as we work in the U.S. Senate, and say we care about you and we are going to try to do something to offer some help to those on the bottom rung of the economic ladder. I hope we can do that together in a bipartisan way in this Chamber in the coming weeks.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Chair recognizes the Senator from Missouri to speak for up to 5 minutes.

CUTS IN THE VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BOND. Thank you, Mr. President. I rise today to make the basic and simple point that numbers do not lie. I am chairman of the Veterans' Affairs/HUD Appropriations Subcommittee. I have been very much concerned about making sure that the people who serve this country in the military get the kind of care that has been promised by the Veterans' Administration.

The VA deals, primarily, with those who have suffered war-related injuries, and who are medically indigent now. Yes, there are efficiencies that can be