

In the 1980's alone, the tax laws were changed over 100 times. In 1986 alone, the 1986 Tax Reform Act, they added over 100 new tax forms to the IRS, 100 new forms one had to look at and fill out.

Now, no wonder every year that goes by, more Americans find it impossible to figure out their own taxes. I do not need to tell my colleagues, as Members of Congress, most of them are honest, but we end up having to go to tax preparers, I know I do, because I cannot figure it out any better than the folks that I represent back in upstate New York.

The percentage of Americans using professional tax preparers rose from 41 percent in 1981 to about 50 percent today who use professional tax preparers. Money Magazine reported that the tax bill that we passed this summer and that was signed into law in August will add 37 new lines to the form used to report capital gains alone.

Now, I am very pleased that we were able to bring about reductions in capital gains taxes, but even in our effort to try to bring about reductions in capital gains taxes we added 37 new lines to the form, and you know and I know that we are going to have to go out, most Americans, and hire somebody to help us fill out those forms with all of these increases in complexity that have been put into place.

There is a huge burden in compliance with the Tax Code. Individuals spend 1.7 billion hours per year filling out their taxes. Businesses spend 3.4 billion hours filling out their taxes. No wonder two out of three or more small businesses fail in their first 2 years just trying to deal with all of this complexity, and that means job losses for Americans. Of course, and I know this is no surprise to people in my district, the problems of the IRS are profound. In 1989 alone, the IRS answered just 62.8 percent of taxpayer questions correctly. This means 24 million Americans were given the wrong answer.

In 1995, about half of the computer-generated correction notices contained inaccurate information from the IRS, and about 40 percent of the revenue collected from IRS penalty assessments was abated, set aside, when citizens challenged the penalties. Just think about that. Forty percent of the revenue that the IRS assessed was abated or repealed when people challenged their IRS decisions.

Now, folks and my colleagues, I just think that those kind of statistics should make us really understand how compelling the need is for swift action to repeal the IRS code that I want to do under H.R. 2483 and replace it with some other system. But if that does not make us want to do it, these figures will.

Earlier this year the House passed legislation, H.R. 1226, to provide criminal penalties, criminal penalties for IRS employees who snoop through taxpayer records. We may say, well, is that really happening? According to

the General Accounting Office, there have been over 1,000 incidents reported of IRS snooping in taxpayer files. I want to make clear, it is not every IRS employee, it is a small number that are doing this. However, in my home area, in Buffalo, NY in early April of this year it was revealed that 18 Buffalo IRS agents snooped through tax returns, and unfortunately just two were fired for their actions.

We have 110,000 IRS employees in this bureaucracy, most of whom are doing their job diligently, but they are enforcing a Tax Code that is unenforceable, indecipherable, misunderstood by everybody, whether one is trying to prepare taxes or the folks who oversee it, and then we find a few people are abusing their jobs at the IRS, and out of the 18 of the agents that were charged, just 2 were fired in my hometown of Buffalo, NY.

The IRS itself has grown dramatically. Today, the IRS employs 113,000 people. I was wrong, it is not 110, it is 113,000. But contrast that with other Federal agencies. The FBI out there on the front lines of the war against criminals, only 24,000 compared to the 113,000 at the IRS. The Immigration Service, 12,000 defending our borders, yet 10 times that many in the IRS. The Drug Enforcement Administration waging a tough fight against the war on drugs, only 5,700 employees. We have 113,000 in the IRS. The border patrol again at our Nation's borders, 5,800 people.

Would it not be better if we could get rid of that IRS, get rid of that Tax Code, replace it with a flatter, fairer income tax or a national sales tax or consumption tax or something else, and take some of those IRS employees and retrain them to help our FBI agents in the war on crime or our border patrol or our INS or our DEA as they try to keep people out or keep drugs out of our Nation.

Of course recently, and again I know this is no surprise, folks at home and in this Chamber know these statistics, but Money Magazine every year selects a group of professional tax preparers and asks them to complete the tax returns for a fictional family. They put together some numbers. The same numbers are submitted to a group of professional preparers.

This past March Money Magazine gave this test to 45 different preparers, and it comes as no surprise, they received 45 different answers. Only one-quarter of the preparers even came within \$1,000 of the correct answer. How can we have confidence in a system that is so impossible to comprehend, even by the professionals who are supposed to understand all of this?

Now, it is not the first time that we would have the opportunity to repeal the income tax. In 1861 the U.S. Government passed the first income tax. It was 3 percent on net incomes over \$800, and 1.5 percent on income from government bonds. The tax was so unpopular that the Treasury Secretary then, Salmon P. Chase, refused to collect it.

In 1862 Congress mandated the collection of this income tax that remained in effect even after the Civil War ended. It was so unpopular that Congress passed a law in 1870 to repeal the income tax starting in 1872. Now, it did not take commissions or blue ribbon panels to figure that out. They set a deadline, they passed the tax, and then they repealed it.

My friends, I have to say this. My colleagues in this Chamber, the time has come to do what the American people want us to do. The time has come to have some courage, to stand up and say we are going to turn our backs on the special interests, we are going to turn our backs to the special interest breaks that are out there for a few, the privileged few. We are going to tell our constituents that it is time to involve them in the process, for a change, of determining policy in this country.

Let us shoot that gun to start the debate, the race. Let us set the finish line of December 31, 2000, to sunset the Federal Tax Code, to end it, and let us begin that great race, that great debate, that great discussion with the American people on what should replace it.

I am convinced that this Congress has done many great things in the past couple of years: welfare reform, the effort to balance our Nation's budget, so many other good pieces of legislation. But I believe as we begin the new millennium on January 1, 2001, what a great way to start that new millennium and what a great hope and opportunity for our children and grandchildren and frankly for ourselves, to begin our new millennium and our place in an even stronger economy in the global marketplace, by repealing this Income Tax Code and replacing it with something that the American people can trust and believe in once again.

OMITTED FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1997

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. GOSS (at the request of Mr. ARMEY), on account of personal reasons.

Mr. YATES (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT), on account of illness.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BONILLA (at the request of Mr. ARMEY), for today on account of family illness.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska (at the request of Mr. ARMEY), for today, after 3 p.m., on account of personal reasons.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT), for today, on account of official business.