

us has today—but doesn't exist for somebody who is 65 years old or older because they are Medicare eligible? It is not a good bargain.

So what I am hoping is that the Finance Committee will hold hearings later this month—those hearings have already been set, I understand, by Senator ROTH—and that there will be legislation coming to the floor, and our bill coming to the Senate floor very soon thereafter. And sometime in the early spring we can pass on to the President a bill which will restore the right of all seniors in this country to go to the doctor of their choice without being told by Medicare that they can't do that; that, in effect, it is either Medicare or no care. That is un-American. It is wrong. It denies the basic right of all Americans. And we need to ensure that we can correct that problem through the passage of the Medicare Beneficiaries Freedom Contract Act.

In closing, if any one of my colleagues who have not done so already would like to sponsor the legislation, please see me because we will be moving forward on this very quickly.

Thank you.

Mr. GRAMM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I might say that under the order the Senator from Oklahoma reserved time at 12:30.

Mr. GRAMM. I think I have sufficient time between now and then, Mr. President. Thank you.

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Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, Senator BYRD has already spoken about the highway bill. I want to amplify on what he has said.

When you go to the filling station and you pull up your car or truck and you take out that pump and stick it into your gasoline tank, now most filling stations don't have the little clip on the bottom. So you have to stand out there and pump it. Probably most people have done what I have done. And that is while you are standing there you read what is written on the gasoline pump. What is written on the gasoline pump is sort of bad news and good news. The bad news is that a third of the cost of a gallon of gasoline in this country on average is taxes. The good news is, as it says right on the gasoline pump, that every penny you pay in gasoline taxes is going to build roads.

The problem that Senator BYRD and I are talking about today and the problem which we are trying to fix is that the bad news is true. A third of the cost of a gallon of gasoline is taxes. But the good news—that it is spent on roads—is not true. In fact, today over 25 cents out of every dollar collected in gasoline taxes goes to general Government. It funds programs that have absolutely nothing to do with highways, transportation, or with gasoline taxes.

My colleagues will remember—perhaps some people in the country that follow the debate will remember—that last year I offered an amendment to the tax bill that took the 4.3 cents a gallon tax on gasoline that had been part of the President's 1993 tax increase, and took that money away from general revenue and put it back into the highway trust fund where it belongs.

That became the law of the land last October 1st. It went into effect. It went into the highway trust fund. Senator BYRD and I are trying to take a final step which we view as an honesty-in-Government step, and that is to require that the money that we collect in gasoline taxes be spent on roads. Those who oppose this amendment are trying to delay its consideration to get it commingled with the budget so that it simply can be portrayed as another competition for available money, and perhaps an effort to bust the budget.

I want to remind my colleagues that the amendment which Senator BYRD and I have offered specifically does not bust the spending caps. All we are doing is asking that the money that we collect in gasoline taxes be spent for the purpose that we are telling the American people that the money will be spent. That would require us over the next 5 years to reallocate 1.4 percent of nondefense discretionary spending, and by reallocating it guarantee that the money goes to the purpose that we said that the money would go when we collected it at the gasoline pump.

We have 50 cosponsors. I urge my colleagues to join us in this effort. I urge our leadership to not commingle this with the budget. We have a highway bill to write. The current highway bill will terminate on May 1. Money will not be available for construction after that time unless we act.

I think it is important that we bring the bill up and that we have an up-or-down vote on honesty in Government, and that vote is, do you believe the gasoline tax, which we tell people goes to road construction, should actually go for that purpose? I believe it should. That is why I am a cosponsor with Senator BYRD, Senator BAUCUS, Senator WARNER, and many others in this effort to basically require that gasoline taxes be spent on roads.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. INHOFE. I thank the Chair.

EXECUTION OF KARLA FAYE TUCKER

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I see the Senator from Texas. I would ask him, although it would elicit probably too long a response, if he has ever done anything that is really politically stupid. And I am sure he has either knowingly or not knowingly—as I am about to do—done something that would fall into the category of political stupidity.

Tomorrow an execution is scheduled to take place at 6 p.m. in the State of Texas. The young lady's name is Karla Faye Tucker. It happens we have an individual we know in common, so I became somewhat familiar with this case, and I will just give a thumbnail sketch as to what happened.

Karla Faye Tucker, when she was a very, very small child, went into heroine at age 10. She is the daughter of a prostitute. Karla Faye went into prostitution when she was 13 years old. She never had a childhood, I guess we could say. Fourteen years ago, while living in a drug cult, an individual on a motorcycle came riding into her living room, dripping oil and breaking things and stealing things and rode out. And the next day, Karla and an accomplice broke into the apartment of the motorcycle rider, who was in bed with a girl, and murdered both of them—a brutal murder.

I do not think there is anyone in the Senate who has a stronger record and background in punishment as a deterrent to crime than I have, nor is there anyone here who has been more active in establishing stronger death penalties than I have. The Furman case took place in 1972, and that is what struck down most of the States' capital punishment laws. I was in the State Senate at that time, and for 5 consecutive years I was the author of the capital punishment bill in the State of Oklahoma. I have always felt that punishment should be severe, it should be swift, and it should be equal.

We had a person who became very famous after 15 years on death row, Roger Dale Stafford, who brutally murdered nine Oklahomans. This guy was left on death row for 15 years. No one ever questioned that he was guilty. He never had any remorse. He just sat there and got fat. He gained 100 pounds while he was in there watching color TV. I have often said the longer the length of time between the conviction, the sentence to death and the carrying out of that sentence, the less that punishment serves as a deterrent to crime. So I have always felt that punishment should be carried out immediately.

But as I watched developments unfold with Karla Faye Tucker, I came to the conclusion that I have reached in a very unusual way. It is something I never thought I would do. It occurred to me that if Carla Faye Tucker had been a man, Carl Tucker, already either he would have been executed or would have been commuted to life and we would never have even known about it. Nobody would have cared.

The controversy that has been stirring around this—which I think probably would have gotten a lot more controversial if it had not been for the sex scandal that has dominated the media in recent days—was, I think, primarily because Karla Faye Tucker is a woman. It would not have happened if Karla Faye Tucker had not been a woman. Now there is all the public and