

make it easier for one parent to stay at home to take care of the children, if that is what they decide is best for them. They could make four to five payments on their car or minivan. They could pay their utility bill for nine months.

Mr. President, it seems to me that if couples need advice about their decision to marry, they should be encouraged to look to their minister or rabbi, or their family, not their accountant or the Internal Revenue Service. This amendment represents an effort to strengthen families and give them a chance to spend their hard-earned money in the way they best see fit.

Given that federal revenues as a share of the nation's income, as measured by Gross Domestic Product, will set a peacetime record this year—a whopping 20.5 percent of GDP—and given that we are anticipating a budget surplus of more than \$63 billion, it seems to me that there is no excuse for the Senate to allow the marriage-penalty tax to continue any longer.

I urge my colleagues to join me today in voting to end the egregious marriage-penalty tax.

Mr. FAIRCLOTH. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the Brownback-Faircloth marriage penalty relief amendment.

In fact this amendment is the same as the legislation I originally offered with Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON and many others to provide relief from the marriage penalty tax.

Mr. President, in listening to my colleagues, I find very little opposition to the notion that couples should not be penalized with additional taxes simply because they choose to marry.

As several members have stated, the Congressional Budget Office has determined that married couples are taxed an extra \$1,400 on average more than singles. This legislation would correct that problem.

Relief from the marriage penalty tax is an idea which enjoys broad, bipartisan support in the Senate. In fact, legislation which I offered as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 1999 Budget resolution established marriage penalty tax relief as among the highest priorities of the Senate this year. That amendment passed this body by a vote of 99 to 0.

Clearly, there is no objection to providing this much needed relief.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that the bill before us is not the appropriate bill to serve as a vehicle for this tax relief. In fact, the only objections I can find to this amendment are based on procedure, and not about the merits of the issue.

I understand the concerns raised about procedure, but I would urge my colleagues to consider the injustice of this marriage penalty tax, and join me and the other sponsors of this amendment to eliminate this unfair burden. I urge my colleagues to vote no on the motion to table the Brownback-Faircloth amendment.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MEASURE PLACED ON CALENDAR—H.R. 4250

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, I understand H.R. 4250, regarding patient protection, is at the desk and is awaiting second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4250) to provide new patient protection under group health plans.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, I object to the consideration of the bill at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TREASURY AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 3359

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I rise to address the amendment offered by Senator BROWNBAC. I appreciate the work he and others have done. I agree with the premise of this amendment.

We need to provide much needed marriage penalty relief to American families. We all know how unfair the marriage penalty is. We have heard from our constituents. We see how it cuts into the family budget. We realize that it must be changed. Our laws should not penalize married couples and their families.

Over the years, I have been a forceful advocate for marriage penalty relief. In fact, during the recent consideration of the tobacco bill, I cosponsored an amendment that would have provided such relief. I have also stated many times that marriage penalty relief should be included in any package of tax cuts. As chairman of the Finance Committee, I remain committed to that position.

As we look to real and meaningful tax reform, we will take care of the marriage penalty. This will be one of

our top priorities. But addressing this important issue must be done at the proper time and in the proper way. This is not the time, nor is this appropriations bill the appropriate vehicle to proceed with this amendment. This is a tax issue. It does not belong on this appropriations bill. It did not come through the committee of jurisdiction. That committee is the Finance Committee.

I know many of my colleagues agree with me when it comes to the marriage penalty. They are seeking an opportunity, as I am, to address it and find a remedy as quickly as we can. This will be our objective in the future. We intend to take care of this in the right way. I ask our colleagues outside the committee to support it.

Adoption of this amendment at this time would not only disrupt the proper order of things and result in the loss of appropriate and constructive debate within the Finance Committee, but, equally important, it would subject the entire Treasury-Postal appropriations bill to a blue slip from the House of Representatives. Revenue measures must originate in the House. If not, any Member—I emphasize “any Member”—of the House can raise an objection. The result would be that this appropriations bill dies. And that is not in anyone's interest.

While I completely agree with the objective and necessity of this amendment, while I remain a staunch ally of those who seek to provide marriage penalty relief, I cannot vote for this amendment.

I ask my colleagues to vote with me. Allow the Finance Committee and the Senate to address this important issue in a way that is correct and will bring real and lasting tax relief to married couples and families.

Mr. President, I understand the distinguished Senator from Texas wants to address this matter.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, before the Senator would make any motion, I would like to be able to speak for a few minutes on the amendment. I didn't want to be shut out.

If that is the Senator's intention, I would just ask if he would allow me at the appropriate time—

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mrs. HUTCHISON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Delaware, because I wanted to be able to speak on this matter. I have just come from a committee markup. But the bill that is on the floor as an amendment is actually a bill that Senator FAIRCLOTH and I introduced.

I am very pleased that Senator BROWNBAC and Senator ASHCROFT and others have pursued this, because I think it is at the core of what we should be doing in this Congress; that is, to try to give people back the money they worked so hard to earn.