

What I would like to do this evening is just for a few minutes here discuss some things I think are very important to the future of our country as well, and to say that a couple of years ago about this time there was a debate going on in this country over the airwaves about the Republican so-called commitment to destroy Medicare, and we heard over and over on the airwaves, from candidates who were seeking elective office, that this somehow was going to come to pass, and here we are two years later.

Of course, after that, when we came back in January, when those of us who were freshmen came and joined the Congress, and then last summer we passed the balanced budget agreement and believe it or not the plan at that time that was characterized as destroying Medicare then became our plan to save Medicare. A lot of our friends on the other side, who ran campaigns in the fall of 1996 attacking Republican candidates for what they perceived as a plan to destroy Medicare, ended up voting for a plan that then became a plan to save Medicare and actually spent less on Medicare than the very plan that they spent all of 1996 attacking.

Now, I just use that as an illustration to point out some of the hypocrisy that you are going to hear, and I want the American people to listen very carefully to this because the same thing is going to happen again this year. We have already heard it start.

On Saturday, we passed historic legislation to set aside money for Social Security. Ninety percent, or \$1.4 trillion, of the projected surplus that will come into this country is going to be walled off and set aside to save Social Security. That is a commitment that we have made.

The balance, the remaining 10 percent, or about \$80 billion, is going to be used to bring tax relief to the American people.

Already our friends on the other side have been relentlessly attacking the Republican plan to destroy Social Security, and I just want those who are watching this evening across America, the taxpayers of this country, the people who should care very deeply about this issue, to know one thing. You are going to hear over and over and over again repeated a parade of speakers on this floor in this House, and on the airwaves this fall, about attempts to kill Social Security. I want you to know they are flatly untrue.

What we are trying to do is to save Social Security, not only for the current generation but for generations to come, and that is why we are taking advantage of this historic opportunity to dedicate and set aside \$1.4 trillion of that surplus to save Social Security.

What I would like to do this evening is talk about the other 10 percent, and that is those dollars that we have committed to give back to the taxpayer some of their hard earned money. We did it in a way on Saturday with a vote that was historic because it will deliver

tax relief to families by relieving the marriage penalty. It will also allow small savers to set aside more in terms of dividends and interest and to protect that from income tax and lessen their tax liability there, but also for the farmers and ranchers of this country, and in my State, who are very near and dear to my heart.

This is such a wonderful plan for agriculture. If we think about the things that are accomplished in this tax relief bill and the problems that we are facing in agriculture today, we have an economic disaster in rural America. We have historically low prices. We have a price crisis, and we need to do everything that we can to help our farmers recover.

We are going to vote upon an ag assistance package later on hopefully this week that will provide some needed assistance out there, but at the same time we can couple that with tax relief that will put some dollars into their pocket.

One of the things that we did is we lessened the death tax and so that those farmers and ranchers who want to pass on their operation to the next generation will be able to do so without facing the undertaker and the IRS at the same time.

We also allow for the deductibility of health insurance premiums for self-employed people, farmers and ranchers and small business people who can benefit tremendously from being able to deduct health insurance premiums that they are paying.

There is a provision in there that makes permanent income averaging for farmers and ranchers who have very volatile income. Some years it is up. Some years it is down. This allows them to spread it out over time and thereby lessen their tax liability.

There is a loss carryback provision that allows farmers who have had losses in the last couple years to offset those losses against more profitable years and therefore get a tax refund this year. There are expensing provisions that they can use again to help them reduce their tax liability.

This is an incredible package for the farmers and ranchers of this country and it is, again, as I said earlier, done in a way that allow us to accomplish tax relief and yet make a long-term commitment to saving Social Security for the future of our country.

These are important provisions in this bill. I was proud to support it. I hope that we can move this bill forward and pass it in the Senate and have the President sign it.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair and not the viewing audience.

THE DISTINGUISHED CAREER OF REPRESENTATIVE LEE HAMIL- TON OF INDIANA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. VISCLOSKY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to stand before the Members of the House tonight in a special order devoted to honoring our colleague, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON) who will be retiring from this institution after serving for 34 years.

The gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON) has had a distinguished career, and I would note that literally, depending on the day the 106th Congress is sworn in next year, Mr. HAMILTON may also hold the historical record of having served in this House longer than anyone else in the history of the State of Indiana.

I am here tonight, and I know my colleagues are here tonight, not because of the quantity of the service of the gentleman from Indiana but the quality of the man and the quality of his service; the quality of his mind, which is exceptional; the quality of his service. He has been selfless every day of those 34 years as far as his commitment to the American people and to those who he has served internationally; and the quality of his person, his ethical conduct, his commitment to his God, to his family and, again, to the people that he has represented in the Ninth District of Indiana.

Seventeen years ago, as a young man, I decided to run for the United States Congress, and at that time the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON) gave me a gift. He gave me the gift of his intelligence and he gave me the gift of his support.

Following my election, 14 years ago, as a Member, the gentleman from Indiana gave me additional gifts: The gift of his patronage in the House of Representatives and the gift of his counsel.

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To all of us, he has given the gift of his time, whether as chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, where he attempted to ensure that every American had the fairest chance for the best job in the world's strongest economy, whether it was chairing the House Intelligence Committee to ensure that our Nation was secure above all others, or whether it was his distinguished service on the Committee on International Relations as chair and ranking member, where he ensured that the voice of those least fortunate or those most in danger was always heard.

But on a personal note, I must emphasize that what I will miss most about LEE HAMILTON is our extended conversations about the Indiana University football team. I say that simply because LEE was the athlete I never was and never will be and would point out to those who might not know that