

(Mr. LANTOS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. INSLEE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. SOLIS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PERMANENT MARRIAGE PENALTY RELIEF ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I claimed this time tonight because I wanted to talk to America about an important bill that we have on the floor tomorrow. It is H.R. 4019. It is called the Permanent Marriage Penalty Relief Act. I am proud that the 107th Congress on 22 occasions over the last year-and-a-half has passed 22 tax reduction measures.

I am not going to come before my colleagues tonight and say that all taxes are bad or not necessary, but I will come before my colleagues and say what I strongly disapprove of, and one of the reasons why I ran to be in this House and fight for American families is to free them from the burden of excessive taxes.

Also, though, because American families today are spending about 22 percent of their income, more than that, it is the greatest percentage of income going to Federal taxes since World War II. Our taxes have become excessive and burdensome, and because of that, we are forcing more and more married couples, more and more people into the workforce, to make ends meet, because those same families are paying more for taxes than they are for their housing and their food, the daily necessities of life, and I think that is wrong.

In that totality of taxes that I think are excessive and that we need to lighten the burden and trust people with their own money, sometimes there are individual type of taxes that are just plain wrong; just plain wrong.

Last week, we voted to permanently repeal the death tax. I thought that one individually was wrong. I am thankful that tomorrow that this body has the opportunity to give working families, mothers and fathers, permanent tax relief on the marriage penalty.

What is the marriage penalty? First of all, I am going to in a second intro-

duce the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) from the Committee on Ways and Means, because he has dedicated his congressional life to this issue. As we near Father's Day, I will call him the father of marriage penalty relief, because he has been a pit bull and obsessive, thankfully on this issue, but what happens is in American families, as I mentioned earlier, we take so much of their tax monies, tax money away from them, and it forces them to make decisions like perhaps working longer hours or both parents working, when that may not be their choice. Because they both work in our tax structure, they, because they are married, will pay more in taxes than if they were single.

□ 2130

It is the marriage penalty. What is worse is it hits those families that earn from \$20,000 to \$70,000. It is not the wealthiest, who pay their share; but it hits the hard-working families where each earn between \$20,000 and \$70,000 the hardest. That is just fundamentally unfair. That is morally wrong, to tax marriage. The fact that they just walked down the aisle and said "I do," and now have to pay more in taxes is just fundamentally wrong. It hits the middle-class families the hardest. That is fundamentally wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER). Earlier I mentioned that the gentleman has exercised dogged determination in his career to right this wrong.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Nebraska, who has been a real leader in bringing about tax relief. The gentleman and I share a common goal, and that is bringing about a recognition in government that taxes are too high, that working Americans work too long to pay their taxes, that we believe in the Republican majority that the American people can better spend their hard-earned income back home taking care of their families' needs than we can here in Washington.

And while the government needs some revenue to fund the activities of the Federal Government, we also need to recognize that families struggle, and we need to find ways to ease the burden on working families. That is why I was so proud just a year ago when the President signed into law the first major tax cut since Ronald Reagan was President. Prior to Ronald Reagan, it was John F. Kennedy, so it seems like every generation has a major tax cut. And now George W. Bush. But it was the commitment of the House Republican majority that drove this debate, even though we had essentially a hostile President in the White House under President Clinton, who did not share the view that taxes were too high. We continued to be persistent, and with the election of President Bush, we found an ally in our goal in bringing about across-the-board tax relief that benefits American taxpayers

and that addresses the issues of fairness in the Tax Code.

I would note that what we nicknamed the Bush tax cut benefits over 100 million American tax-paying households who have seen their taxes lowered as a result of the House Republican majority, and signed into law by President Bush.

Mr. Speaker, 3.9 million tax-paying households, low-income families, no longer pay Federal income taxes because the Bush tax cut was signed into law. Unfortunately, one thing we discovered, sometimes we find that Washington works in a strange way. It is interesting in Washington, we can raise taxes permanently like Bill Clinton and the Democrats did in 1993, we can increase spending permanently, but you will find rules somewhere in the Congress that make it hard to permanently cut taxes.

Unfortunately, there was a rule in the other body which prevented permanency to the Bush tax cut, permanency to the across-the-board rate reductions, permanency to the elimination of the death tax, permanency to our efforts to increase opportunities to put more into your IRA and 401(k) for retirement savings, for education savings accounts for your children's education, and also our efforts to eliminate the subject of tonight's Special Order, the marriage tax penalty.

I commend the gentleman from Nebraska and the majority of this House for sharing a view that many of us have argued over the last several years that the marriage tax penalty is essentially a fundamental issue of fairness. The most basic institution in our society is marriage. Around marriage we build our families. Unfortunately, under our Tax Code for almost two generations, we taxed marriage. I felt, as I know many of my colleagues did, that it was a legitimate argument to come to this floor and say is it right, is it fair that under our Tax Code, that we actually taxed married couples more in taxes, higher taxes, just because they were married. In fact, on average, 23 million married working couples on average were paying about \$1,400 in higher taxes last year than identical couples living together outside of marriage.

Essentially our Tax Code was saying the only way to avoid the marriage tax penalty was to get divorced or not get married in the first place. That is wrong. We believe the Tax Code should be marriage-neutral.

I am proud to say that several times this House Republican majority brought legislation to the floor and we passed out of the House of Representatives legislation supported by every House Republican, and I also want to note that up to 62 Democrats joined with us. We had bipartisan support for legislation which would permanently wipe out the marriage tax penalty.

Unfortunately, when we passed into law the Bush tax cut, it was a 10-year program which meant in the year 2010,

the marriage tax penalty relief would expire; and for a projected 45 million married working couples, they would see almost a \$42 billion tax increase because their taxes were going to be higher because the marriage tax penalty was going to be reimposed. Is that right? Is that fair? I think not.

Let me explain how the marriage tax penalty occurs. The marriage tax penalty occurs when a husband and wife get married. They are both in the workforce and file their taxes jointly. When they do that, their combined income usually pushes these married couples into a higher tax bracket. That produces the marriage tax penalty.

I have a couple here I would like to introduce to my colleagues in the House. Jose and Magdalene Castillo of Joliet, Illinois. They have two children, Eduardo and Carolina. They have a combined income of about \$82,000. They are a middle-class working couple in Joliet, Illinois. In their case, prior to the successful passage into law of the Marriage Tax Elimination Act this past year, the Castillo family suffered about \$1,125 in higher taxes just because they are married.

Now, the question before this House tomorrow, we are going to propose legislation to be voted on in the House tomorrow which will make permanent the elimination of the marriage tax penalty. Really, the question is for 45 million married working couples like Jose and Magdalene Castillo, do we want to reimpose the marriage tax penalty? I think not.

My hope is that over tomorrow's debate we will see an overwhelming bipartisan majority who will vote to make permanent the elimination of the marriage tax penalty, so the marriage tax penalty will be one of those things that we used to talk about that used to exist in the Tax Code because the Tax Code is complicated and we are working in this House to make the Tax Code simpler, and that means making the Tax Code more fair.

By eliminating the marriage tax penalty for Jose and Magdalene Castillo, we are not only making the Tax Code more fair, we are simplifying the Tax Code. My hope is tomorrow an overwhelming majority in the House will join with us, and the Senate will follow suit, and we will send to the President legislation which will make permanent elimination of the marriage tax penalty.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, according to the 2000 census, in the gentleman's district it is 59,536 couples that are affected by our current Tax Code. In my district of Omaha, Nebraska, it is 58,000 couples that have to pay more in taxes. When your great couple from your district, Jose and Magdalene Castillo, got married and said "I do," I do not think it was to more taxes just because they went down the aisle together and did what we hoped that they would do and formed this bond, formed this family.

Mr. Speaker, we should not have a tax policy that is antifamily,

antimarrriage. We have heard stories on news programs throughout the years, older couples in particular, younger couples that refused to married, older couples that would get divorced because of the tax that they have to pay. If we are going to be a country that embraces family, embraces marriage, then we have to have a tax policy that walks the walk. I thank the gentleman for all the work he has done.

It has been mentioned that we passed marriage penalty relief in my two terms here. Just thankfully we have a President this time that agreed with it the last time around. Even in the first few months of the 107th Congress when this was a solo vote and the Senate had not taken it up yet, 282 Members, very bipartisan vote. It dropped a little bit when we had the Bush tax plan. We lost about 40 Members. In the Senate they could only get to 58.

The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) mentioned this quirky rule that they have where it takes a supermajority of 60 votes to make reduction of revenue, i.e., a tax cut, they need 60 votes to make it permanent over there. We did the right thing and we negotiated a 10-year plan, a phase out of 10 years of a lot of these taxes. The marriage penalty is phased in much quicker to give these families relief.

Now we want to make sure we are doing the right thing for these families, these 45 million Americans, that it is made permanent, because in essence what we are going to say to these couples in the year 2011 is that you are going to have your taxes increased. You are going to raise taxes on over 3.9 million African American families out of that.

Mr. Speaker, does the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) have any statistics, and my impression from some of what I have read, some of this tax actually hits minorities harder, and so I am just pleased that hard-working families will get some relief, and they deserve to have it made permanent.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield briefly, I would note in the legislation we passed out of the House of Representatives that was signed into law by President Bush, we helped an estimated 45 million married working couples in a number of ways. When you are a taxpayer, you are an itemizer, nonitemizer, if you are a low-income working family, part of the working poor, earned income tax credit, only out of that 20 million married couples received marriage tax relief through the Bush tax cut through the doubling of the standard deduction to twice that for single people. Those who do not itemize their taxes use the standard deduction.

And for the middle class, those in the 15 percent bracket who itemize their taxes, homeowners, those who give to their church, temple, mosque, they are homeowners and itemize their taxes, we widened the 15 percent bracket so they can earn twice as much in income

and stay within the 15 percent as a single person. There are 20 million when you take advantage of the 15 percent widening which are the itemizers. And 4 million poor families, low-income families, benefit from the marriage tax relief that we provided in adjusting the eligibility for the earned income credit. Four million working-poor families who struggle, and thanks to Ronald Reagan received the earned income credit.

□ 2145

They would lose that marriage tax relief, that opportunity to have a little extra income to take care of their family's needs, if this is allowed to expire. That is just one more reason why I believe we need to make it permanent, because we do not want to see a \$42 billion tax increase on 45 million married working couples who would be forced to pay higher taxes just because they are married. My hope is tomorrow when we debate making permanent the marriage tax relief that was part of the Bush tax cut, that an overwhelming majority of this House will vote in a bipartisan way to make permanent the elimination of the marriage tax penalty.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, we have been joined by three of our good colleagues that have fought hard and feel strongly on this issue.

I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY).

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. I thank the gentleman from Nebraska for yielding. I also thank and congratulate the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for his great efforts on the marriage penalty.

There are few issues that I feel more strongly about, and one of my main goals coming here to Washington was to eliminate the marriage penalty. I am very pleased that at least over the course of the next 10 years that we have accomplished that. It is a major goal that we have achieved, but our work is not yet done. I do not understand why we tax marriage. We as a Congress, we as a government, we as a people should be working to strengthen marriage, to strengthen families. Families are the foundation really for the strength of our country. We should do all we can to bolster it. When we charge married couples an average of \$1,400 more just for being married, we are discouraging them from getting married. This makes no sense. They should not get that extra gift from Uncle Sam when they say "I do." Something that makes this very personal to me is when I think about my son or daughter coming to me in a few years, maybe after this 10-year period, so I have to get this permanent, and saying, "Dad, you've taught us well. You've taught us how to look at the numbers really well and we have noticed that it is going to cost us \$1,000, \$2,000, \$3,000 more to be married. So what we are going to do is we are just going to live together, but we are going

to put that \$1,000 or \$2,000 to good use and we'll do good things with it."

I do not want to have that conversation and no parent should have that conversation and no couple should struggle with those issues. We should be helping them to the greatest extent possible. We should be making this permanent. It is a shame that we were not able to make this permanent before. We were two Senators short, unfortunately, as the gentleman from Nebraska mentioned, and any of many States could have provided us those two Senators. We will not name any States in particular, but this is critical that we get it permanent. It is also bad budgeting. The budgeting after 10 years assumes that we are going to let the marriage penalty go back up. I know if the group that we have in this room and those that have worked so hard on the marriage penalty have anything to do with it, we are not going to let the marriage penalty tax be increased and brought back to life again in 10 years.

I strongly encourage all my colleagues to vote "yes" on tomorrow's resolution to back American families, to back marriage, to help the children that will come from that and to help the strength that comes from taking the bonds of holy matrimony.

I again thank the gentleman from Nebraska for having us here today and for his leadership as well as the leadership of the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. TERRY. The gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY) has provided great leadership. The citizens of Minnesota should be pleased with his leadership on this issue. Probably the 59,000 affected couples in his district should thank him.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON).

Mr. KINGSTON. I thank the gentleman for yielding. It is hard to speak with so many distinguished members of the Committee on Ways and Means here because you guys, we know, are the tax experts. But back in our little old briar patch, we know a thing or two about fairness. I do not think we even need to debate this, and the liberal Democrats would even admit that the marriage tax penalty is unfair because in essence you cannot carry your tax deduction with you. When you walk down the aisle, leave your deduction outside the church because you are fixing to lose it, as we would say.

The issue, I think, that is underlying this, and I think you have covered the substance of the bill pretty well, is just the fact that the liberals, particularly those on the other side of the Capitol, and this is a bicameral body, this legislative body. It is very similar to the Georgia legislature where we had a House and we had a Senate. This is a similar institution. When the House passed something, the Senate would pass something or the Senate would amend it. In this case we have got a body who hates tax reductions. Period. Fairness does not matter, all that matters is income, so they can go out and spend more money.

I always say that if I was walking down the street with two of the liberal Democrats from Washington and I had \$15 in my pocket and they did not have any, the two of them would vote on who was going to pay for lunch and it would end up being me, and in their view that is fair. They did not have any money and I had money, so they voted and I have to pay for lunch, and that is fair. We all laugh about that, but I will tell you this. Look at it this way. Say you had a thousand people walking down the street or a thousand people in the room, and of that thousand people, 999 did not have any money, but one person had a whole lot of money. And so the 999 voted and said, "You're going to be paying a little bit more, you're going to be paying extra, and you're going to be paying for all of us." They would say obviously that person who had money must have done something wrong, must have gotten real lucky, must have cut some corners short, and so of course it is fair. That is the view of so many Washington liberals of the tax dollars that our constituents back home make.

One of our colleagues today said, if you really want to know the truth of the matter, talk to somebody who has oil on his hands or dirt on his fingers and his sleeves rolled up in America and they can give you the view, and in about 3 seconds, the American workers back home would say the marriage tax penalty is unfair and ridiculous, get rid of it. And so the only question here tonight is, why are we not getting rid of it? It is because of this other body. The House has passed this over and over again.

The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER), as you pointed out earlier tonight, has practically made a career in this. I expect he has had a very spectacular career, made a great contribution to the governmental process, the debate process up here, but the reality is the folks on the other side of the Capitol love taxes and they block it every single time.

I know our good friend from Arizona is here just chomping to get at the bit.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, the 62,397 married couples who have been hit by the marriage penalty in the gentleman from Georgia's district I am sure thank him for his leadership on this issue.

I want to bring into our discussion here the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH) who, because of his leadership and vote tomorrow, the 52,429 married couples in his district will be trusted with more of their money.

I yield to the gentleman from Arizona.

Mr. HAYWORTH. I thank my colleague from Nebraska for yielding, my friends from Illinois and Georgia who join us here tonight, Mr. Speaker, and I stand in the well alongside my friend from Nebraska, traditionally at the podium given to our friends from the Democratic Party. I do so tonight to signal the fact that our vote tomorrow should be a vote that does not accen-

tuates party lines, that when people go and register for a marriage license, they do not declare a political party preference, they are not required to register as Democrats or Republicans or independents or libertarians or vegetarians, they go and apply for a marriage license.

Tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, it is my fervent hope that we will see a bipartisan vote to restore rationality and common sense to the peculiar situation we find because of a quirk in the rules where we have failed to make this marriage tax relief permanent.

Mr. KINGSTON. If my friend would yield, I just want to say that quirk is, of course, there on purpose by the liberals who like to collect tax dollars and so I just wanted to emphasize a point that the gentleman has made several times in the past.

Mr. HAYWORTH. I thank my friend for making the point. I would appeal to all who come here, when you talk about tax fairness, there is nothing fair about penalizing people for getting married. I think back almost a decade and a half ago now to the news that I took my mom, when Miss Mary and I decided to get married, she said, "Oh, honey, I'm so excited for you. After all, two can live as cheaply as one." My mom is a wise woman, but she is not a certified public accountant and she was not dealing with the Tax Code, because we have seen in so many cases for so long when couples would stand at the altar and say "I do," they were unwittingly saying "I do" to higher taxes. And now with a commonsense reform that we have embraced on a bipartisan basis in this body, others on this Hill with a clever rule differentiation seek to take it away, we simply go on record tomorrow reaffirming that the Tax Code should have real fairness, that there should not be a penalty for marriage.

Indeed, confronting the challenges we confront in a society, knowing how beneficial it is to have healthy, happy households where men and women in a loving relationship of marriage bring up their children, there is no reason to penalize people who work hard and play by the rules.

And so tonight we come here to reaffirm our belief that we should rescind the marriage penalty permanently and tomorrow this House has a chance to go on record saying "I do" to lower taxes, taking away this barrier of discrimination that has affected the institution of marriage and taking another step for true tax fairness.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow again we will hear the tired old arguments of class warfare. Let me simply reaffirm what we have found through the years when we reduce the tax burden, whether it is on businesses or on families or on individuals. When the tax bite is reduced and money is put to work in terms of saving and investment and spending for

those items that families need, something very interesting happens. Revenues to the Federal Government actually increase. So I come to this particular position in the well tonight symbolizing the fact that we appeal to our friends on the left, not as a Republican versus a Department issue, but as an American commonsense point of view, to permanently rescind this penalty, to make good on the efforts my friend from Illinois has championed for so long, to recognize the commonsense value that there is no need to attach an economic stigma to the institution of marriage. And now as my friend, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY) points out, if we in fact have people tomorrow vote against making this permanent, in essence what they are doing is calling for a tax increase on every married couple. They are calling to add back taxes to their family budget.

I understand in Washington, Mr. Speaker, that \$1,400 on average, that is not even in Uncle Sam's change scoop on his dresser drawer. I mean we deal in millions and billions of dollars, but I would submit, as my colleague, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER), has made clear so many times, \$1,400 is real money to a family, in terms of a college fund, in terms of making educational opportunities available, in terms of saving for the future, in terms of buying clothes for the family, in terms of orthodontia for children, in terms of real life, real budgetary decisions made around the kitchen table. The common sense of making this tax relief permanent cannot be denied and, yes, we can have those denizens of class warfare come out and play this warped game where they define fairness in a deranged way that my friend, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON), pointed out, the theater of the absurd so clearly to us in this body mere moments ago, but the fact is there is no reason to deprive families of money that they can save, spend, and invest for their own futures and in so doing help our country, because the economic activity in the long run will actually increase revenues to the government because people are willing to put their money to work in effective spending for their family or savings or investment for the future, and we are not talking about something that is a drop in the bucket. We are talking about millions of American families here.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, is the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH) telling me that it is not a cost that we are going to hear about, how it is costing the government to give these families this relief?

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, let me let the gentleman in on a little secret. The gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY) asks a very pertinent question, and given the curious mathematics of Washington, let us point out at the outset that we could take every economist in the world, lay them end to end, and still never reach a conclusion. But part of the peculiarities of

the way in which we practice accounting in Washington, D.C. is with a bias towards spending. We call it static scoring. That is to say, we fail to take into account the history that we have seen for the better part of close to 50 years in the United States.

For example, and again I am glad to stand here in this portion of the well, because we can point to a Democratic chief executive, John F. Kennedy, who in the 1960s cut taxes across the board.

□ 2200

This is an approach that was reaffirmed by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s and by our own current President, George W. Bush, just 1 year ago. The premise, as it has turned out, and check the numbers, as we say in baseball, you could look it up, revenues to the government actually increase when you cut taxes across the board. If we cut taxes on these millions of American families, I have every confidence that, in the long term, revenues to the government will increase, because money is being put to work on behalf of these families.

Again, it comes down to this realization, Mr. Speaker: This money is not money that belongs to the Federal Government; it is money that belongs to the American people. When that money is put to work, through prudent spending, wise investment and making the money work for the families of America, it returns to the Federal Government in terms of tax revenue. Yet you would not know it from the culture of the forecasts and the evaluations of the static scorers who fail to let reality be taken into account in terms of their ledger sheets. That is the reality with which we deal.

But in Washingtonese, what we will hear tomorrow is a parade of speakers stating flat out that the American people are not entitled to their money, stating somehow in bizarre fashion that the marriage penalty is a quirk, a curiosity, and, I dare say, coming to the floor, speaker after speaker, as prisoners of process, rather than champions of policy.

So, again, my appeal, and I realize it is a challenge with 100-plus days to a midterm election, and I realize it is difficult for many to separate politics from policy, but I believe tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, there will be those on the Democratic side of the aisle who will join us in saying let us end the marriage penalty permanently, because it is not a Republican issue, it is not a Democratic issue, it is an issue of concern to all Americans and all American families who need to have the chance to prosper and succeed and make the most of their opportunities, for themselves and for their children.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for that great oratory. We talk about this quirky Senate rule. We are going to hear a lot about it. Because when we had the death tax repeal discussion last week, we kept hearing from some of

the leadership on the other side about how it was the Republican bill, that we were somehow deceiving the public, and now we are trying to come back. I heard a lot of strange and weird stories last week. I am sure we are going to hear those same stories again.

The reality is we did the right thing for the American public by taking one step forward. But it was not the giant step that was absolutely necessary, and we are trying to correct it tomorrow.

The Senate rule requires, if I kind of understand it right, is that in the Senate you cannot reduce revenues outside of the scope of the budget, which is a 10-year budget in essence. So that is why it is a 10-year plan.

I think it is ironic that just today on the House floor we had a vote to require that this body, both Houses, a constitutional amendment that would require a two-thirds vote to raise taxes. I just think it is ironic that the practical effect of the Senate rule is it takes a supermajority to lower taxes, but a simple majority to raise taxes.

Mr. WELLER. If the gentleman would yield, I think the gentleman from Nebraska is bringing up a good point. That is what is frustrating, and one of the reasons I know I came to Congress in 1994 and one of the causes we in the House Republican majority have been working towards, is finding ways to help working families have some extra spending money to meet the needs of every American family, to be able to afford to go to college, or buy a new bicycle for the little girl when she is getting old enough to ride a bicycle.

Mr. TERRY. We are going through the same thing with our 7-year-old.

Mr. WELLER. Or make improvements to the house. Families struggle. The gentleman from Arizona, the point he made about how when you figure out what the amount the marriage tax penalty comes out to, it is real money for real people. You take Jose and Magdalena Castillo of Joliet, Illinois. For the Castillo family, prior to a year ago when the Bush tax cut was signed into law, the Castillo family faced about a \$1,150 marriage tax penalty.

Thankfully, because of the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, which was combined as part of the Bush tax cut, signed into law, they no longer pay this marriage tax penalty. If we fail to make permanent the marriage tax penalty relief signed into law last year, they once again will have their taxes higher, raised. They will lose that \$1,150 back to Uncle Sam. For the Castillo family, in a town like Joliet, in the south suburbs of Chicago, for Jose and Magdalena, \$1,150 is several months of car payments, that is 2 to 3 months of child care for little Carolina, that is a significant portion of tuition at Joliet Junior College. The marriage tax penalty is real money for real people like the Castillo family. That is what this is really all about.

The marriage tax relief signed into law last year, which currently is temporary, and my hope is this House will

vote to make permanent tomorrow, is meaningful to 45 million married working couples, just like Jose and Magdalena Castillo of Joliet, Illinois. When you think about it, for 45 million married working couples, if this marriage tax penalty relief is not made permanent, these couples, 45 million couples, will see a \$42 billion tax increase just on marriage, if we fail to make permanent the marriage tax relief.

Mr. KINGSTON. If the gentleman will yield, I want to talk about that number a little bit. Did the gentleman not tell me earlier that in the First District of Georgia, over 65,000 people would benefit?

Mr. TERRY. I can find that again here. In the First District of Georgia, and this is 2000 census data, 62,397 couples in the gentleman's district.

Mr. KINGSTON. Okay. So then that is \$1,400 a couple.

Mr. TERRY. On average that they pay.

Mr. KINGSTON. That is about \$85 million. Now, if I as a member of the Committee on Appropriations was asked by the chairman, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), "Kingston, you got \$85 million you can spend in your district," how would you do it? Would you go out and buy a bridge, would you build something for the government, a new monument? Heck, no. What you would do is spread it out as much as possible to the middle class working families in your district, and that would be one of the greatest appropriations I could bring home to the First District.

So this vote tomorrow I will have the opportunity to return to my district \$85 million for the local economy, for the local jobs, for the taxpayers. As the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) has pointed out, tuition, new tires, home mortgages. That is a lot of money. I can only think of what \$85 million will mean to coastal Georgia. Also, I will feel a lot better that they are spending that money, rather than the United States Congress spending it.

Mr. TERRY. That is the point. The gentleman is correct. That is the point of this, is that we are trusting people with their own money, to make their own decisions about what is best for them and their family.

Now, we in Congress, I hear this all the time, "what have you brought back for the district?" This is something we get as representatives asked by some of our business leaders or constituents, and sometimes you brag about a bridge or helping with the bridge.

But there is no better appropriation, there is no better gift that we can give our constituents, than their own money, letting them keep their own hard-earned dollars.

Let us go back to one of the things we talked about at the beginning here. This marriage penalty hits hardest the lower and middle income families, those that earn on an average, a single income, combined, \$20,000 to \$70,000.

That is who is paying the burden and brunt of the marriage penalty. These are hard-working Americans that we are talking about. You are taking a vote so they can keep \$82 million of their own money. I just cannot imagine what that would do for your economy.

I just jotted down a few notes of what it would do for an average Nebraska family. Remember, these are couples who are both working. Sometimes when we talk in an esoteric or academic way about the marriage tax penalty, we leave out that both parents are working. Both parents are working.

So, how about some good quality time? With both parents working, maybe both parents should take a vacation and take those two lovely children to Disneyland. That \$1,400, they can have a 4-day vacation at Disneyland or Disneyworld. They can buy for their school children a new computer with a scanner, printer, software. They can get a pretty good piece of equipment for \$1,400.

Talking about just keeping your family budget intact, in Nebraska that is probably 6 to 8 months of utility bills for the family. That is anywhere from 4 to 6 months, depending on the type of insurance contract they would have, to pay their health insurance costs. Or, as all of us have said, just maybe invest or save in your children's future. Or use another provision of the tax bill that we passed last year that we need to make permanent, and that is educational savings accounts. They can invest that money in their children's future. These are all things that we trust their families to make their own decisions on.

By the way, the money that these families save by us not taking their money, married families will return to paying in 10 years, paying the Federal Government more than \$100 a month just to be married. That is \$3.88 every day just because you said "I do." Every hour you will owe 16 cents just because you have a spouse. If your marriage lasts 50 years, and, by the way, I just wrote a letter to a nice couple on their 50th anniversary, the love of your life will have cost you \$70,000 in extra taxes. \$70,000 extra.

So tomorrow we have the opportunity to make this permanent.

Mr. WELLER. If the gentleman will yield, my hope is that everyone will join with my colleagues from Georgia and Arizona and Nebraska in voting to make permanent the marriage tax relief. I think as this discussion we have had here in this House Chamber shows, regarding the marriage tax penalty, what it means in real terms for real people, about how you have a husband and wife, both in the workforce, struggling to make ends meet, who, prior to a year ago, paid higher taxes just because they were married.

In the case of Jose and Magdalena Castillo, they paid \$1,150 more in higher taxes. As the gentleman from Nebraska pointed out, if they could save that, in a period of 20 years, when little

Carolina may be in college, a sizeable portion of her college tuition could be paid for during the 4 years she may go to the University of Illinois, my alma mater, could be paid for by setting aside the \$1,150.

Mr. TERRY. She could be a Rebel and go to the University of Nebraska.

Mr. WELLER. Or a Bulldog and go to the University of Georgia. But the bottom line is the marriage tax penalty is a real issue for ordinary people back in Illinois, Georgia and Nebraska and throughout this country.

In the last few days I have heard some suggestions, particularly from some of my friends in the left wing of the Democratic Party, who have said we do not need to do this now. We have got things here in Washington that we need to spend that money on; that maybe we should take that \$1,150 out of Jose and Magdalena's pocket and spend it on something here in Washington.

Maybe in Washington \$1,150 for the Castillo family is no big deal, in Washington, where you think in terms of millions and billions of dollars. But for regular people, like Jose and Magdalena Castillo, \$1,150, elimination of the marriage tax penalty for the Castillo family represents a 12 percent reduction in their taxes. So if we fail to make permanent the marriage tax penalty relief in what we nicknamed the Bush tax cut, they will see a 12 percent increase in their taxes so that Washington can better spend it, as some on the left side of the aisle view.

My hope is that we will see an overwhelming bipartisan vote tomorrow to eliminate the marriage tax penalty permanently. I was proud to say that almost 280 members of this body voted to move a stand-alone bill which would permanently eliminate the marriage tax penalty almost 2 years ago. Unfortunately, that bill was vetoed by President Clinton at that time, and we came back later with what was in the Bush tax cut, signed into law, a temporary measure to eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

My hope is all 62 of those Democrats will once again vote with us, and that more Democrats will join with every House Republican in voting to permanently eliminate the marriage tax penalty. Because of that overwhelming vote, I hope that our friends in the Senate, many of whom have resisted permanent elimination of the marriage tax penalty, will follow suit, and we can put on the President's desk by this fall legislation which permanently eliminates the marriage tax penalty.

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Think what that will mean to 45 million married working couples; good people, good, hard-working people like Jose and Magdelene Castillo and little Eduardo and Carolina, who would have a little extra spending money to meet their needs rather than sending it to Washington. It is an issue of fairness. Our Tax Code should be neutral regarding marriage. We believe that the Tax

Code should not punish society's most basic institution; and of course, marriage is our society's most basic institution.

Let us eliminate the marriage tax penalty and let us eliminate the marriage tax penalty permanently so it is one of those things that we talk about that once used to exist, but it is history. Let us make the marriage tax penalty history by permanently eliminating the marriage tax penalty.

I am happy to yield back to the gentleman from Nebraska, and I want to thank the gentleman from Nebraska for his leadership in organizing tonight's discussion of the importance of eliminating the marriage tax penalty and what it means to real people like the Castillo family of Joliet, Illinois.

Mr. TERRY. Well, it is because of the opportunity that we have here in the House of Representatives, why I wanted to be here was to help families like them and the 58,000 like them in the Second Congressional District in Nebraska. Just think of the opportunities that those two children would have if they put the nearly \$600 for each child in an educational savings account for college, what a wonderful opportunity that this body will give those families.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) the last word, if he would close the discussion tonight.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from Nebraska and the gentleman from Illinois and the gentleman from Arizona and the gentleman from Minnesota earlier tonight for their leadership on it. Because right now we could be home and in bed and watching the baseball game. Somewhere I am sure the Braves are out beating somebody. But the reality is, we are doing this because we care. I am a little bit senior to both of these gentlemen, and I have served in the minority; and I can tell my colleagues that it was no fun. Because when the Republicans were in the minority, we were always fighting more spending that the Democrat majority kept pushing on us. Here is an opportunity for all Members of Congress tomorrow to go in and vote for lower taxes, less spending, and more fairness for American couples.

So I certainly appreciate my colleagues for doing what they are doing and standing tall for America's families. I look forward to casting yet another vote with the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER). And I thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY) for his leadership in organizing this tonight.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for participating and using his time when he could be watching the Braves. Tune in to the college world series this weekend, though.

DEMOCRAT MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROPOSAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KELLER). Under the Speaker's an-

nounced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity this evening, which I have done many times over the last couple of months, actually, to discuss the need for a Medicare prescription drug benefit. I am particularly happy to be here tonight because I know that tomorrow the Democrats in the House will be announcing our Medicare prescription drug proposal at a press conference at, I think, approximately 11 a.m. on the steps of the Capitol.

I know that for a number of weeks now I have been highly critical of the Republican leadership in the House, because even though they are the majority party, they have failed to address the concern, I think the number one concern of the American people, which is for a prescription drug plan under Medicare.

When I go home and I have a town meeting or I talk to my constituents, the issue that most frequently comes up is the fact that it is very difficult for all Americans, but particularly for seniors, to afford prescription drugs, to afford their prescription medicine. Prices have gone up by double-digit inflation over the last 6 years; and increasingly, most Americans, particularly seniors, find that they are not able to afford the drugs, the prescription drugs or medicine that their doctors prescribe that the doctors think are necessary for them to continue to live a quality life.

The House Republican leadership, I guess about 2 months ago, announced with much fanfare that they intended to bring up and write a bill that would provide for prescription drug coverage for seniors, and then they said that the bill would be available and would go to committee sometime before the Memorial Day recess and then be passed in the final week before the Memorial Day recess. Now, we know that did not happen. They came back from Memorial Day recess, about 2 weeks ago now, and again with much fanfare said that they were going to bring up the bill the first week, which would have been last week, and then we heard this week they were going to bring it up this week; and now we hear that they may bring it up next week and that they are definitely going to bring it up before the July recess.

Well, I have my doubts because I have been hearing this so many times. But more than the question of when they are going to bring it up is what they are going to bring up. Everything that we hear about the House Republican proposal is that it is not a proposal that will actually provide coverage for most seniors under Medicare.

I think that most of my colleagues know that Medicare has been in existence now for over 30 years; and Medicare, which is a government program, run by the Federal Government and fi-

nanced by the Federal Government, is a very successful program that provides seniors with their hospitalization and with their doctor bills. Under part B of Medicare, a senior has the option, and 99 percent of seniors exercise it, of paying a fairly low premium every month; and as a result of paying that premium, they get 80 percent of the cost of their doctor bills paid for by Medicare, by the Federal Government. They have a very low deductible, \$100 a year; and basically, the program has been tremendously successful. Most seniors participate in it. Their doctor bills are paid 80 percent by the Federal Government, up to a certain amount; and we hear very few complaints. Most people seem to be satisfied with the Medicare program in terms of the coverage for hospitalization and for their doctor bills. However, Medicare does not have a benefit for prescription drugs.

What the Democrats have been saying is very simple: that we should have a guaranteed benefit under Medicare for all seniors, all those who are eligible for Medicare. It is not hard to comprehend. We set up a new part, maybe call it part D, we model it after the part B program that pays for doctor bills. We again have a very low premium, say \$25 a month, a very low deductible, \$100 a year; we have 80 percent of the cost paid for by the Federal Government, a 20 percent copay and, after a certain level, we suggest \$2,000, after you have paid out of pocket or your bills have come to more than \$2,000, the Federal Government would pay for everything at a sort of catastrophic level at which the Federal Government pays for everything under Medicare.

Well, the Democrats are saying that is what we should do. We will be talking about it in a lot more detail tomorrow at the press conference. Most important, we address the issue of price. We understand very strongly that we can expand Medicare to include prescription drugs and provide a guaranteed benefit for every senior and everyone eligible for Medicare, but that it would be difficult to do that if we do not control the costs in some way.

When I talk to seniors or any American, any of my constituents, they talk about how the price of prescription drugs is too costly. So we have to do something at the Federal level to bring the cost down. The easy way to do that, and this is what the Democrats will propose, is to say that the Secretary of Health and Human Services has the obligation, has the mandate to negotiate prices for prescription drugs that would be significantly less than what most seniors are paying now, perhaps a reduction of as much as 30 percent or more. I think that is very possible to do, since the Secretary will have 30 or 40 million seniors, Medicare beneficiaries, that he represents; and he has the ability to go out and basically force the drug companies to lower prices because of the bargaining power