

American people create a system that promotes fairness and economic prosperity by treating everyone the same, regardless of income or occupation, and removing special preferences and disincentives for economic growth that characterize our current IRS Tax Code? They also ask, when will it be time to eliminate our current code's bias against savings and investment?

Currently interest rates are at historic lows. It is hard enough to convince people to put money in a savings account, because it doesn't pay very much, and, on top of that, you pay at the highest rate on the money you earn on that savings account, certainly a disincentive for savings. When savings are no longer taxed twice, I believe people will save and invest more, leading to higher productivity and greater take-home pay.

Mr. Speaker, a year ago, my third month in Congress, I introduced a bill, H.R. 1783, called The Freedom Flat Tax Act. The Freedom Flat Tax Act allows people to opt into a pro-growth tax system that restores fairness, simplicity and efficiency to our current Tax Code. It replaces our current costly tax system with a single-rate system that, most importantly, only taxes income one time.

This flat tax could be phased in over a 3-year period, with a 19 percent rate for the first 2 years, with a 17 percent rate in subsequent years. There would be no deductions or loopholes. It will allow some personal exemptions, including \$5,500 for each dependent.

The key is this flat tax was a little different from other flat taxes that have been introduced in this Congress. The most important difference is that this fundamental change in tax structure is actually within our reach. It is within our reach this year, if we were to choose to do it.

It is optional. If a family has constructed their savings or their life so that they do well under the IRS code, they are welcome to stay in the IRS code. But if they find that they would like simplicity and efficiency in their life, they are allowed the option to elect into a simple, fairer system; a simple, fairer, single-rate system. There would be no ability to move in between the two systems once the election has been made. It would be permanent.

Mr. Speaker, back in my district in Dallas, there is a financial columnist who writes an article for the Dallas Morning News named Scott Burns. He is certainly no great friend of the Republican Party. He has been critical of us on several occasions. But he wrote an article that dealt with home ownership and the home mortgage deduction, and you do get a lot of concern from people who say, gosh, I get my home mortgage deduction now, and I would hate to give that up.

But Mr. BURNS' study showed across the country, the amount that you are able to save off your income taxes varies greatly depending upon where you

live. Around Dallas, Texas, the average homeowner's savings over 3 years' time is about \$1,000. Down in San Antonio, Texas, it is even less. It is about \$100. In Santa Barbara, California, it is \$42,000, so clearly a resident of Santa Barbara, California, would probably like to stay in the current IRS code, but my constituents around Dallas should be given the option of a code that makes more sense for them.

It would be enormously easier to figure current tax bill under a single-rate system. Simply subtract and pay 17 percent of your wages after the personal exemptions.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for us in this body to take the concept of fundamental fairness in the Tax Code to the next level. I know there are others on my side of the aisle who argue for a Federal retail sales tax. I can tell you there are parts of that that seem agreeable to me as well, but the reality is the implementation of that type of tax would be costly, and it would be disruptive in the economy.

Our current situation, people who fill out the 1040-EZ form spend 3½ hours to do their taxes; The regular form, they will spend 13½ hours doing their taxes. Billions of hours are spent complying with Tax Code forms instead of being with your family.

The current Tax Code is expensive. The average household pays \$2,000 a year in compliance costs. For the year 2001 alone, Americans lost \$183 billion in opportunity costs instead of working on money-producing activity for themselves or their families.

As I stated before, the current Tax Code punishes hard work and doubly punishes savings. We pay the government to take our hard-earned money off our hands just so they can punish us for job-creating behavior.

Mr. Speaker, the time is now, the power is within our grasp. I urge my colleagues to take a look at H.R. 1783, and let us see if we cannot make that a reality for the American people next year.

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

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

#### SAVE THE HUBBLE SPACE TELESCOPE

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

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to deliver the thoughtful opinions about the Hubble Space Telescope from the fifth grade math class at Island Park Elementary School. All 25 students unanimously believe that the Hubble Space Telescope should be saved.

I recently visited Thelma Ritchie's class as a part of Hubble Awareness Day. It is a program I started to listen directly to the American people about the future of the Hubble Space Telescope. According to the Administrator of NASA, the Hubble has no future. Mr. O'Keefe may be the only person in America who actually believes that, but he certainly is one person who can kill the Hubble if he wants to.

Students at Island Park Elementary believe Hubble should have a future. So do I. So do millions of other students and scientists and ordinary people across America.

Thelma Ritchie's students recently spent the entire week working on Hubble-related activities. The day I was there, students were using Hubble images and math to learn how to accurately estimate the billions of stars visible without counting all of them.

The classroom fueled inspiration amid the wonder of scientific discovery. Hubble pictures were everywhere. You could see the excitement and wonder in the eyes of very young students. Some had crafted Hubble models. Others had drawings. Many of them were totally engaged in the pursuit of scientific discovery inspired by the Hubble Telescope.

Thelma's classroom, like every math and science classroom in America, is an incubator for future scientists, astronauts and astronomers, and one tool at their disposal will be lost if we do not act and save the Hubble.

Before I arrived, Ms. Ritchie had given her young scientists an assignment: Read the House Resolution that 47 colleagues and I have sponsored to save the Hubble and tell us what to do. Here is what the students said.

From Claire and Juliana: "Without the Hubble, space would be a half-solved code for us to crack."

Byron said: "In my opinion, NASA should go and fix the Hubble, since it has been giving tons of information."

Matt said: "I think NASA should keep Hubble up there," and Charlotte added, "because then younger kids can get more interested in science."

Shoshana offered this: "Advice for NASA would be pretty much to listen to the public and scientists and do what is best for us all."

Sidney said: "Not only does it give scientists answers, but it teaches kids way more about space."

Alyssa was even more direct: "I disagree with NASA and I think they should keep the Hubble."

NASA's Administrator claimed that safety is the reason for letting the Hubble die, that it would be too risky to send the space shuttle to service the Hubble, as it has in the past.

Let us be clear: Space flight is risky, and safety must be paramount. But it is hard to follow the Administrator's logic on safety at the same time the administration wants to go to Mars. I think Mr. O'Keefe is seeing red, partly over the criticism of Hubble, but mostly because the President wants to go to