to the education budget for that purpose. And that is exactly what my amendment accomplishes.

As I said, my amendment offsets the cost of restoring Perkins—and it reduces the deficit, as well—by rescinding two tax cuts that have not yet taken effect. Both of these tax cuts—the so-called PEP and Pease provisions—were enacted in 2001. One of these tax measures repeals the law enacted in 1990 that scales back the magnitude of itemized deductions that high-income taxpayers can take. The second tax-cut measure repeals another provision enacted in 1990, under which the personal exemption is phased out for households with very high incomes. Under the 2001 tax cut legislation, these two current provisions of law begin to be phased out next year, and are eliminated entirely in 2010.

We have a unique opportunity, here, because we are not proposing to repeal or un-do tax cuts that are already in effect. Rather, we are saying that—because of radically transformed budgetary circumstances—we are not going to go forward with two new tax cuts that have not yet taken effect. . . two new tax cuts that we can no longer afford.

When the PEP and Pease phase-out provisions were passed in 2001, a case could be made—I disagreed, but certainly a case could be made—that these tax cuts were affordable. Thanks to the budget surpluses that President Bush inherited from President Clinton, we were looking at cumulative surpluses of $5 trillion over the coming decade, enough to eliminate the national debt, and then some. The chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Alan Greenspan, publicly worried about the impending surplus crisis—What in the world would we do with all these surpluses after we eliminated the national debt? Moreover, President Bush and other advocates of the 2001 tax cuts assured us that they would total no more than $1.35 trillion between 2001 and 2010.

Well that was then, and this is now. The tax cuts that were supposed to cost $1.35 trillion are now projected to cost more than $2 trillion in the decade after 2010. And because of the surge in federal spending since President Bush took office—including the creation of a huge new entitlement program—the surpluses bequeathed by President Clinton are gone. Instead, we are looking at projected deficits in excess of $200 billion each year as far as the eye can see—and annual deficits in excess of $500 billion a year a decade from now if we follow the President's recommendations.

It makes good sense to eliminate these two tax cuts. The fact is, they are a ticking timebomb scheduled to detonate after 2010—a detonation that will further explode the deficits and debt. The revenue loss because of the PEP and Pease phase-outs would be a relatively modest $24 billion over the first 5 years. But the revenue loss explodes in the years after that. In the first 10 years after full implementation, the revenue loss will be a whopping $146 billion.

And who gets these tax cuts? According to the Tax Policy Center of the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institution, 54 percent of the benefits go to households earning more than $1 million a year. Fully 97 percent of benefits go to households making more than $200,000 per year.

What does that mean for a taxpayer? When the phase out is fully phased in by 2010, the tax cut will save the average taxpayer making over $1 million nearly $20,000 per year.

But almost no taxpayers making less than $150,000 will receive even a penny of tax cuts under these provisions.

These are two tax cuts that we cannot afford. They are two tax cuts that their beneficiaries do not need.

The deficits and debt are exploding because of actions by the President and Congress. To quote the cartoon character Pogo: ''We have met the enemy, and he is us.'' But we now have this unique opportunity to rescind two unnecessary and unaffordable tax cuts before they take effect.

Such a modest mid-course correction is exactly what President Ronald Reagan did in 1982. He realized that his 1981 tax cuts had overshot, and that they were projected to cause the kind of monster deficits we are experiencing today. President Reagan did the prudent and responsible thing: he pared back some of his tax cuts. Today, we need to show that same kind of restraint by not allowing the PEP and Pease provisions to go forward.

The difference, or course, is that President Reagan repealed tax cuts that had already taken effect. What we are proposing, today, is simply to not allow two new tax cuts to go forward—tax cuts that haven't yet taken effect.

The Perkins program is a lifeline to low-income Americans struggling to obtain marketable job skills. It is an essential rung on the ladder of opportunity that we extend to our young people.

So I come back to President Kennedy's remark that ''to govern is to choose.'' We can't have it all. We must choose. And today we are confronted with this choice. We can go forward with these two new tax cuts, overwhelmingly for people who don't need them, while eliminating Perkins funding for vocational education. Or we can say, ''Two trillion dollars in tax cuts, mostly for the affluent, is surely enough. Let's rescind these two new tax cuts before they go into effect. And let's redirect that money to education. . . to giving millions of young Americans the vocational skills they need to succeed in the global economy.''

Certainly, all who favor creating an opportunity society should be in favor of this amendment. So should all who believe in basic fairness and equity.

Indeed, if all the millionaires who stand to benefit from these two new tax cuts were here in this chamber, today, and voting on this amendment, there is no doubt in my mind that the vast majority of them would vote ''yes.'' They would say, ''We have already made it. America has already blessed us with wealth and comfort. By all means, withhold these latest tax cuts, and redirect that money to vocational education students so they can graduate, so they can have opportunity, so they can achieve the American dream as we did.''

Let's restore Perkins funding and let's reduce the deficit. I urge my colleagues to join me in a resounding, bipartisan vote on this amendment. We voted 99–0 to reauthorize the Perkins program. Now let's vote to keep this proven, effective program alive and thriving for millions of students across America.

I will close by saying I hope we will get this amendment up for a vote tomorrow so Senators can express themselves on it.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9 A.M. TOMORROW

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 10:06 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, March 16, 2005, at 9 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate March 15, 2005:

DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION

JAMES H. BILBRAY, OF NEVADA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION. (NEW POSITION)

PHILIP COYLE, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION. (NEW POSITION)

ADMIRAL HAROLD W. GEHMAN, JR., UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION. (NEW POSITION)

JAMES V. HANSEN, OF UTAH, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION. (NEW POSITION)

GENERAL JAMES T. HILL, UNITED STATES ARMY, RETIRED, OF FLORIDA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION. (POSITION)

CLAUDE M. KICKLIGHTER, OF GEORGIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION. (NEW POSITION)

SAMUEL KNOX SKINNER, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION. (NEW POSITION)

BRIGADIER GENERAL SUE ELLEN TURNER, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE, RETIRED, OF TEXAS, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION. (NEW POSITION)