

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

THE GAS TAX

Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, I will make a quick comment regarding the comments that the leader made on a repeal of the so-called gas tax of 1993, the 4.3 cents.

Well, I think that if you look back in history, when we passed that 4.3 cents, after it was passed, the price of gas at the pump was actually lower than before we passed the tax. It is something called supply and demand, which I had thought the folks on this side of the aisle were particularly enthusiastic about. It is very clear that there are market forces at work here. Repealing the Federal 4.3 cent tax on gasoline of 1993 is certainly no guarantee that that is going to mean a 4.3 cent lower price at the pump for the citizens of this country, unless someone is going to start mandating to private industry what the price of fuel is going to be that they sell.

I point out, if we remember history, last year at this time, between the months of April and May, the price of gas rose about 6 cents a gallon because of greater use and higher crude oil prices in the world. During the middle of the summer and toward the latter summer, gas prices started coming down because of supply and demand. At the end of the year, in December, the price of gas in the country averaged about \$1.16 a gallon. All of last year, in 1995, the price of gas at the pump for the whole year averaged the lowest it had been since we started recording the price of gasoline in real terms in this country—lower in real terms than it was per gallon in 1920.

All of that, I suggest, has a great deal more to do with the price of crude oil in the world. The fact that we had about a 6- to 8-percent increase in heating oil production because of a colder winter, and also because of the fact that we are now driving faster because of actions of this Congress, when we increased the miles per hour people could drive, the speed limit, up to the higher levels that we now see throughout the country.

So I just say that if anybody can guarantee that any time we reduce the gas tax it means a lower price at the pump, I think we would be willing to look at it. I do not think history proves that. I think we ought to know where we are going before we start off in what I think is a political direction.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

IMMIGRATION CONTROL AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT OF 1996

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the present amendment be set aside so that I may offer an amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3809 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3743

(Purpose: To adjust the definition of public charge)

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Illinois [Mr. SIMON] proposes an amendment numbered 3809 to amendment No. 3743.

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

In Section 202(a), at page 190, strike line 16 and all that follows through line 25 and insert the following:

“(v) Any State general cash assistance program.

“(vi) Financial assistance as defined in section 214(b) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1980.”

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, my amendment conforms the Senate amendment to a similar provision in the House amendment in terms of being eligible for deportation if you are here illegally and you use Federal programs of assistance.

Under the Senate bill, an immigrant receiving public assistance for 12 months within his first year in the United States may be deported as a public charge. That would include, for example, higher education assistance. The Presiding Officer, the Senator from Indiana, is on the Labor and Human Resources Committee. If a legal resident came in and got job training, under this amendment, unless we conform it to the House amendment, that would make you subject to deportation. If one of your children got into Head Start, that would do it.

My amendment would make this bill precisely like the House bill and limit the assistance to the basis for deportation to AFDC, SSI, and, frankly, SSI is the program that is being abused. As to the other welfare programs, legal immigrants to our country use these programs less than native-born Americans. But my amendment would limit the AFDC, SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, housing, and State cash assistance.

I think it makes sense. I cannot imagine any reason for opposition. But I see my friend from Wyoming is not on the floor right now. I am not sure what his disposition may be on this amendment. But I would be happy to answer any questions that my colleagues have.

Mr. President, if no one else seeks the floor, I ask to set aside my amend-

ment so that I may offer a second amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3810 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3743

(Purpose: To exempt from deeming requirements immigrants who are disabled after entering the United States)

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Illinois [Mr. SIMON] proposes an amendment numbered 3810 to amendment No. 3743.

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

In section 204, at page 201, after line 4, insert the following subparagraph (4):

(4) ALIENS DISABLED AFTER ENTRY.—The requirements of subsection (a) shall not apply with respect to any alien who has been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence, and who since the date of such lawful admission, has become blind or disabled, as those terms are defined in the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 1382j(f).

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, I see my colleague from California, who has greater concern in these areas than any other, for obvious reasons, because of the huge impact on California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Chair could interrupt the Senator for a moment, the allocated time under the previous unanimous-consent agreement has expired on the Democrat side of the aisle. Time could be yielded from the Republican side of the aisle for the Senator from Illinois to continue.

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, I confess some lack of understanding of precisely where we are in terms of the parliamentary situation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is operating under a unanimous-consent agreement which provided time equally between the two sides to expire at 2:45. The time allocated to the Democrat side of the aisle has been utilized.

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. LOTT. I will be happy on behalf of our side to yield 2 minutes to the Senator from Illinois if that will be helpful.

Mr. SIMON. I thank the Senator from Mississippi.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized for 2 minutes.

Mr. SIMON. My second amendment simply says—and I will just read it:

The requirements of subsection (a)—

That is deportation.—

Shall not apply with respect to any alien who has been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence and who since the date of such lawful admission has become blind or disabled, as those terms are defined in the Social Security Act.