should get some of his Cabinet Secretaries to stop their frequent flier trips they have going around the world. That would save much more.

The basic problem with this administration and the other side of the aisle that supports this administration is that their idea of running Government is the old established principle of their party taxing and spending. Translated, that means that the Government's budget goes up while family budgets go down. It is a zero sum gain.

If the Government's budget grows, the family's budget automatically shrinks. This is upside-down economics, and we have seen it before from the other side. So it is not voodoo economics, it is deja voodoo economics. It is called tax-and-spend.

President Clinton and our friends, the Democrats, have it all upside down. Their way has created falling income for workers while increasing the taxes on working Americans. It is a double whammy. It is a one-two punch on the workers of America. It really sticks it to them, something the President said he was going to avoid in that 1992 campaign.

The President should show moral leadership. The President should do the right thing. He should begin by apologizing to lower- and middle-income workers for raising their taxes, like he apologized to those rich Americans at the Houston Democratic fundraiser.

We in this body may not be able to force the President to apologize, but we can do something even better for these people. We must restore their faith in their elected leaders here in Washington. That must have a high priority. We can do that right away by helping the President keep his promise to the people that he made in 1992 not to raise the gas tax because it was going to hurt the retirees and the lower and middle-income working Americans. We can help restore the faith of these people in Washington by repealing the gas tax.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Iowa. He has pointed to something that I think baffles many Americans. I think they expect that there should be some relevance between what people say when they seek public office and what they do if they get it. There should be a connection.

As the Senator from Iowa noted earlier, when a person travels the country and says, as President Clinton did, ''Raising gas taxes sticks it to lower income and middle-income retired people in the country, and it is wrong,'' an intelligent American citizen would expect that that person, if in office, would not raise gas taxes because he said he would not raise gas taxes.

Then you barely get the bags unpacked at the White House, and you are up here with a proposal to raise gas taxes. The actual proposal was even higher than what happened—double. This has had a profound effect, in particular, on low-income people.

President Clinton's gas tax increase especially hurts lower income families. According to the Joint Economic Committee, the lowest 20 percent of taxpayers pay 7.1 percent of their income on gasoline. The top 20 percent of taxpayers pay only 1.6 percent. In other words, the lowest income families in America, the lowest income—we remember all the rhetoric that this tax increase only affects the rich—but the lowest income families in America pay four times as much of their disposable income on gasoline than the highest 20 percent.

Mr. President, I was talking a moment ago about this average family in Georgia which is very similar to data in every State. There are differences, but it is very close. This family, I said, made $45,093. I went through a litany of the State tax, the Federal tax, the FICA tax, regulatory costs, higher interest payments. At the end of the day, of the $45,093, this family of four got to keep $21,722. That is all they had left to do everything we asked of a family, which is to raise America, house America, clothe America, transport America, provide for the health of America. That is what we are asking of this family. But we only leave them a little less than half of their total wages to do it.

Here is the point I want to make, Mr. President. This gets back to the promise to the American people the President made. He said, ''I am going to lower your taxes,'' which meant that this amount of money that they had left would be larger. They responded to that.

But in fact, Mr. President, what has happened? In fact, they have $2,600 less in their checking account because President Clinton came to Washington as their new President. They thought they were going to get more in the checking account, but they got $2,600 a year less. And the meter keeps running with this Presidency. The gas tax, which every time that mother takes the child to the doctor or the car pool to the school or goes to the grocery store, that tax meter is running on the gas tax. It just runs and runs and runs.

We are suggesting, Mr. President, that President Clinton's gas tax, 4.3 cents per gallon, be ended, that we stop doing that and we leave that amount of money in the checking account of this family.

That will not correct, by any means, the effect of the President's higher taxes on the family. But it starts in the right direction. It will leave about another $100 to $200 in the checking account of this family that I have been talking about, and that is where it ought to be. We ask so much of this family, our families across the country, and we have taken so much of their resources away. This is a good beginning. End this gas tax, leave that money in these checking accounts, and then get on to the business of lowering taxes even more. It is just inexcusable that American families forfeit half their income to Government, to policymakers in Washington.

Mr. President, this gas tax is pervasive because it hits in many different ways. The total cost of the gas tax increase—take, for example, the State of California. California is forfeiting $550 million. That is half a billion dollars a year coming right out of the California economy. They have had some rough times in California. They have had disaster after disaster. But they are losing $550 million per year because of this gas tax.

Take the State of Texas, $368 million a year. Florida, $263 million a year. My own State has lost $60 million a year because of this gas tax. What do State governments do when they lose revenue? They raise taxes. Sixteen States in our Union have raised gas taxes to make up for the reduced consumption that came when the President raised his taxes.

Mr. President, the majority leader, BOB DOLE, said in an article in USA Today—he was quoting the comment made by the Senator from Iowa—''Probably there are people in this room still mad at me— '' this is President Clinton talking to a group in Houston. ''Probably there are people in this room still mad at me over the budget because you think I raised your taxes too much. It might surprise you to know, I think I raised them too much, too.''

Mr. President, for the President to admit he raised taxes too much, and then to call on his colleagues here time and time again to block every attempt to reduce taxes on the American people, no wonder the American people become cynical about our Government when we have policymakers who go to them and make promises and come here and do exactly the opposite. The empirical evidence always shows that when they do the opposite, the person that gets the brunt of the deal is the average American family.

Mr. President, I believe my 90 minutes has expired. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAIG). Without objection, it is ordered.

REPUBLICANS' SELECTIVE MEMORY

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I had the opportunity to listen to the colloquy by our colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I wanted to come to the floor for a couple of minutes to respond and I know that a number of our colleagues will also be doing so a little bit later on this morning.

I find the selective memory very intriguing, and I certainly appreciate the good words by so many of our colleagues about the impact that the 4-cent gasoline tax has had. What I am surprised at is that they have chosen not to also direct some of their concern and attention to the dime's worth of increases in gas taxes in the 1980's and early 1990's—increases that most of them supported.

We raised the tax in 1982 by 5 cents and again in 1991 by an additional 5 cents. As I understand it, almost every single Republican supported those two increases—a dime. In fact, our distinguished majority leader was one of those who supported the increase in gasoline taxes of 10 cents. We like to refer to that 10-cent increase as the ''Dole dime'' because, in effect, that is what has been the result of the gasoline tax policy over the last 15 years. Mr. President, a 10-cent increase was supported by virtually every single Republican in 1982 and again in 1991.

In order to cure this selective memory about gasoline taxes, I would remind my colleagues that the 4.3-cent increase that we passed in 1993 was part of an overall budget package that has led to the single most consequential deficit reduction program in the history of this country. We have not seen 4 consecutive years of deficit reduction since the Civil War, but we did it in 1993, we did it in 1994, we did it in 1995 and now for the 4th year in a row we have done it in 1996. What a remarkable achievement. We have brought the deficit down to about half of what it was when the Republican Presidents left office after 12 years of dramatic increases in the size of the deficit.

The deficit in 1980, as everyone recognized when President Reagan took office, was about $800 billion. After 12 years of Republican White House domination, that deficit had ballooned from $800 billion to $4.5 trillion. This, despite all the rhetoric about deficit reduction, despite all the promises we were given about how we would bring down the size of the debt—it increased to $4.5 trillion.

It took a Democratic White House, with leadership from this President, beginning the first year he was in office, to force this deficit to come down now for 4 years in a row. We want to continue to do that. The President has made every overture I would expect him to make, urging the majority leader, the Speaker, and others to continue negotiations, trying to find a way, in a bipartisan effort, to maintain this downward trend in the deficit.

We can achieve a meaningful deficit reduction package for the next 7 years, bringing deficits to absolute zero if we have the courage and the wherewithal and the determination to do what this President did in 1993. The opportunity is there. The door is open. We do not have to use new gas taxes. We do not have to find new sources of revenue. We can do it with the cuts proposed in this President's budget.

As everyone understands, it is a budget that has been scored by the Congressional Budget Office, something that the Republican leadership has said again and again is one of the key ingredients to coming to some resolution. The President's CBO-scored budget is, in large measure, the effect of many months of negotiations with the Republican leadership in an effort to continue the progress that this President has made now for the last 4 years.

I must say, this selective memory amazes me—I did not hear a word today about the dime increase, the 10-cent increase supported by virtually every Republican Senator in the past decade. If they are so concerned about the 4.3 cents, why is it we have not heard anything about the 10-cent increase proposed by our colleagues and supported almost unanimously on the other side? If we are going to give tax relief, maybe we ought to go to the Dole dime as well as to the 4.3-cent increase that has been discussed this morning.

I think the real issue here is obfuscation with regard to meaningful ways of which to help working families. If they really wanted to help working families who are struggling to make ends meet—in many cases, with reductions in purchasing power year after year after year—the best thing they could do would be to pass the minimum wage increase. We are talking about a 4.3-cent reduction in taxes, when if we wanted to, this very day we could pass a 45-cent increase in the minimum wage. This afternoon we could pass a 45-cent increase, 41 cents more than the relief we get out of a gallon of gasoline, providing purchasing power to millions of struggling American families.

This week marks the 35th anniversary of the signing of President Kennedy's increase in the minimum wage back in 1961. As a result of raising the minimum wage in 1961, purchasing power for a working family increased, in 1996 dollars, to $6.61 an hour. You heard it right: $6.61 an hour in 1963. That is what working families had at the lowest rung of the economic scale 35 years ago—$6.61. Today, they are relegated to $4.25. Their purchasing power goes down year after year after year after year.

We are now at a 40-year low in terms of purchasing power. While CEO's across this country saw a 28-percent increase in their purchasing power just last year to an average of $950,000 per year in salary, the purchasing power of working people at the lowest rung of the economic scale has gone down to a point where it is almost more beneficial for them to stay on welfare than to go out and work. How wrong is that, Mr. President?

I do not deny any one of those CEO's a good income. In many cases, they deserve it. But if we can find ways in which to advance the economy and build the growth within the economy that we have seen in the last several years—8.5 million jobs, an economy that is booming, the stock market has reached unprecedented levels—why is it we cannot come up with the wherewithal in this country to provide some purchasing power for people at the lowest end?

We have produced an action agenda that we want to pass sooner rather than later. That action agenda has everything to do with the paycheck—first, passing a minimum wage that every single American could ultimately benefit from; secondly, passing retirement security that allows people to take their health insurance with them; and finally, passing pension and retirement security, making sure that every time a worker changes jobs—and the average worker changes jobs now seven times in his or her lifetime—they can take that pension with them. They can go from one job to the next with the assurance they will have a pension when they ultimately retire. Pension security, especially for women, is something we ought to talk a lot more about in the Senate. We will do that in the coming weeks.

Mr. President, we can talk about gasoline taxes, this 4.3 cents. I suppose that is something that has relevance to the increase in gas prices. We ought to figure out a way to ensure that taxpayers have relief. I think we better make absolutely certain that if we provide relief, it goes in the pockets of the consumers and not the oil companies. For every 1-cent decrease in tax, we could see $1 billion in additional profit for the oil companies, unless we ensure that the benefits actually get back to the people who need it. We must make absolutely certain our tax relief is for consumers and not some bailout for the big oil companies.

If we are really serious about economic security, if we are really serious about helping working families, then the best way to help working families, Mr. President, has a lot more to do with minimum wage, it has a lot more to do with health security through passing the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill, it has a lot more to do with pension security and making sure retirements are secure when people retire, than it has to do with 4 cents on a gasoline tax.

So we hope to work with our Republican colleagues and do a number of things this year that can provide real relief. No. 1, let us pass minimum wage. No. 2, let us pass Kennedy-Kassebaum. No. 3, let us ensure that we have pension security. No. 4, let us continue this deficit reduction effort that the President has laid out for us in such an able way now for the last 4 years. No. 5, let us pass a balanced budget resolution that allows us deficit reduction, and reduced interest rates, and a healthy economy which can be brought about by a balanced budget. All of this is within our grasp. It is going to take a bipartisan effort to do it, but we ought to do it. We can do it now. Let us do it, commit to it, and send a clear

message to the American working family that we are on their side.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MACK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, may I inquire, what business is the Senate in at this moment?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business, 90 minutes controlled by the minority leader.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, then I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to continue as in morning business.

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

THE NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY ACT OF 1996

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, for all the right reasons our Nation has been a generator of radioactive material for nearly five decades. Most of this material is a byproduct of two principal activities: national defense activities and commercial nuclear powerplants, which generate more than 20 percent of America's electricity.

These two major activities have worked to benefit all Americans. Therefore, I believe managing these radioactive wastes is a national concern and responsibility. We cannot and must not walk away from this responsibility. To not address this responsibility would be unwise, irresponsible, and unsafe.

With specific regard to electrical generation, every American benefits from the richness and diversity of our country's natural resources and their use. Through interconnecting transmission lines that traverse the land, we have one of the world's most reliable and powerful electricity supplies that drives our economy.

Nuclear powerplants are at work in more than 30 States in every region of the country. Supplying more than 20 percent of the Nation's electricity, nuclear energy is part of the foundation for our Nation's high standard of living and economic growth.

For this reason, there is broad consensus and support for ensuring that the Federal Government meet its responsibility to provide a central storage facility for used nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive material from the defense program. Senate bill 1271 allows and directs our Federal Government to meet that responsibility.

As I know many of my colleagues have discovered in meetings, phone calls, and in their mailrooms, support for S. 1271 is coming from all quarters, including State and local government officials, public utility commissioners, newspaper editorial boards, labor unions, chambers of commerce, national trade associations, and electric utilities, just to name a few groups. I am very pleased to have the bipartisan support of 28 cosponsors for my legislation.

Lawsuits have been filed by 18 States against the Federal Government over inaction of the Government to follow their statutory direction to manage radioactive material. This clearly demonstrates the importance and urgency of fulfilling the Federal Government's obligation to accept spent fuel. That obligation has been directed in law since the 1982 Nuclear Waste Act, and it is reaffirmed by my legislation.

Since the late 1950's, scientists have been studying, testing, and successfully employing storage technologies. And since the early 1970's, the Nevada test site was singled out as one of the nine leading sites to consider for a radioactive waste repository. Hasty decisions are not being made here. S. 1271 is directing action be taken as a result of the science and technology and testing.

Electric customers have committed nearly $12 billion solely to study, test, and build a radioactive waste management system. Already more than $4.6 billion has been spent, much of it to assure public safety. Now is the time to act on the Nevada site.

Broad-based national support for the nuclear material waste management program and S. 1271 is based on the fact that this issue is clearly a national concern requiring a national solution. Furthermore, support is buttressed by the positive work that is ongoing at the Nevada test site, which is an isolated, unpopulated, dry desert location that has a long history of uses for some of the most extreme research known to man.

For these reasons, I urge my colleagues to join with the many State and local officials, labor leaders, business leaders, and scientists throughout the country in support of S. 1271. Allow our citizens the comfort of knowing our Government has acted responsible to assure safe, environmentally sound long-term storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive material.

Mr. President, with that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

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

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

THE GASOLINE TAX

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I am somewhat at a loss because I have been in the Finance Committee this morning and also have been serving in another capacity for the last few minutes, so I have not heard any of the actual statements on the floor of the U.S. Senate that have been made this morning. However, it has been brought to my attention that several statements have been made relative to the gasoline tax and the proposal to repeal 4.3-cent-per-gallon of the gasoline tax.

Considering that those statements have been made this morning and having a general idea of probably what those statements were, I would like to not only stand for a moment to respond but also to place in the RECORD some pertinent facts that I think need to be made very clear.

First, in the Finance Committee meeting this morning, which I must say was very spirited, very lively, we had a lot of discussion about whether or not we should repeal the 4.3-cent-per-gallon gas tax enacted in 1993 toward deficit reduction. We had a distinguished panel that represented the truckers, that represented the bus industry, that represented the airline industry. They had a wonderful man there who operates, in Prince Georges County, two service stations. The basic theory was, if we could get the Congress to repeal the 4.3-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax, that immediately 4.3 cents per gallon would be taken off of gasoline at the pump.

Let us look back a little bit to see if this logic will come true. After 1993, the 4.3-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax was collected, after we placed the tax on and allocated this particular new tax, this new fee toward deficit reduction, not only did we start decreasing the deficit, but we did something else. Gasoline prices came down. Gasoline prices came down after we placed the 4.3-cent user fee, in 1993, on gasoline. People do not talk about that very much right now, but that was the case.

There is another concern that I had this morning in today's hearing in the Finance Committee. The people on the panel, who are very good advocates for their constituent groups, for the truckers and the airlines, the service station owners, and all the rest, these individuals came before the Senate Committee on Finance this morning and basically stated that, first, ''If you will repeal this gasoline tax, we're going to be able to spur the economy, we're going to be able to lower gasoline prices, we're going to be able to buy diesel for our trucks at 4.3 cents per gallon less.''

But what was never stated, even though they were coming and saying, ''Give us a break, give us some relief,'' they never stated—any of them—how we were going to make up this loss of revenue. We collect $4.8 billion a year in this particular tax of 4.3 cents per gallon. Not one of our witnesses this morning said, ''We have a way for you to prevent the deficit from rising dramatically if you repeal this gasoline tax.'' Not one of them. Not one witness this morning gave us an indication of how we are going to make up this shortfall.

I guess they were saying, ''Cut this tax out, let the deficit increase,'' because they gave us no responsible alternative for making up the difference.