

Second, he should pick judges that do not let criminals back on the streets who should not be there;

Third, he should crack the whip with his Justice Department and find out why large budget increases for the FBI, DEA, and U.S. attorneys have not produced more criminal prosecutions.

Fourth, and most important, he should use the bully pulpit of the White House to show moral authority in the war on drugs.

Mr. President, this last point is the most crucial of all. So much of crime—especially violent crime—is a function of drug use and trafficking. Yet, the President has been silent on the drug issue until recently. He has said more about drugs the last 2 months than he did the last 3 years. It is a coincidence, I am sure, that this is an election year.

But when you look behind the rhetoric, and look instead at the record, the President has a lot of explaining to do. Why has the number of high school seniors using drugs frequently increased by 52 percent since this President took office? Why did he cut the drug office staff by 83 percent, and decimate its budget?

I would argue it is because he abandoned the bully pulpit. He declared a time-out in the war on drugs while the bad guys kept on playing. In short, he created a void in moral leadership on this issue.

And now, all the progress we made during the 1980's in fighting drug use are being reversed. It is just mind-boggling.

When it comes to fighting crime, the President seems to be playing in the wrong arena. He is not playing in the same arena that he talks about. People are out there driving in their cars, wondering if they could be next. And the moral leadership on this issue that the People are looking for from their leader in Washington is absent.

In my view, Congress will have to continue playing the lead role in turning our criminal justice system right-side up. We need to protect the victims of crime once again, instead of coddling criminals.

We could build a strong partnership in this effort, if only the President would joint us. Until then, this Congress will continue to battle the system that handcuffs justice rather than crime.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I request that I be allowed to proceed in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

GAS TAX REPEAL A MISTAKE

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I rise to address the majority leader's announced intention to introduce legislation that would repeal the 4.3-cents-a-gallon tax on gasoline that this body passed as part of the 1993 budget bill. I have a very high personal and professional regard for our majority leader

and I am certainly not unmindful of the political season that is upon us. Repealing a tax—any tax—and particularly a tax consumers are reminded of every time they fill up their cars at the pump, is unarguably attractive as a matter of raw politics, but it is terrible as a matter of public policy. Just when we are beginning to make sustained progress on bringing down the deficit, just when we are within reach of actually balancing the budget in 7 years and making a serious and principled commitment to real fiscal responsibility, we blink. We cannot take the political heat. On something this important to our Nation and our children's future, if we take the heat we ought to take President Truman's advice and get out of the kitchen.

We talk about a market economy, but we won't let the market work. The Federal Government has an important role to play in our lives, but it cannot and should not attempt to solve every problem we confront—particularly when to save the average motorist \$27 per year we move in precisely the wrong direction on the more important challenges of energy independence, national security, and fiscal responsibility—and send the wrong signals to our allies and others around the world about whether we are serious.

I hope a majority of our colleagues will have the political courage to resist what will undoubtedly be an extremely popular bill. If we do not, that the President will be willing to demonstrate the intestinal fortitude we lack—as he did in proposing the tax in the first place.

In my view, a \$30 billion tax repeal shouldn't even be considered in the absence of meaningful action on our long-term budget problems. The 1993 deficit reduction package, which contained this modest gas tax, and had no support on the other side of the aisle, has made a substantial dent in our annual deficits, making balance in 7 years possible. In the absence of that deficit reduction effort, we probably would not be discussing seriously the idea of actually reaching balance in such a relatively short period.

Even with that 1993 effort, however, trying to reach balance has been a monumental task. A number of us in the bipartisan group of Senators referred to as the Centrist Coalition have been working for months to find a balanced budget compromise, and a repeal of the 4.3-cents-a-gallon tax will only complicate our efforts to balance the Federal budget by sometime early in the next century.

Not only would the repeal move us in the wrong direction as far as balancing the budget is concerned, it would not solve the problem of higher gasoline prices. If the energy companies are culpable, I have no desire to take them off the hook, but prices have been rising because the demand for fuel has been rising while production has fallen short of this need. Quite simply, the evidence suggests that demand is rising as

Americans are driving further, at higher speeds, in less fuel efficient vehicles. Supplies have been curtailed because of a longer winter that kept refiners producing heating oil longer than expected and delayed their shift to gasoline, and fuel inventories were also allowed to remain low because of an anticipated release of oil from Iraq that has not come to pass.

Mr. President, the fact of the matter is that the recent price increases are not due to a 4.3-cents-a-gallon tax increase that was put into law 3 years ago. That 4.3-cents-a-gallon is no more responsible for the recent increase in gas prices than it was responsible for the low gasoline prices we have enjoyed for the previous 2 years when the measure was also in effect.

If we take the oil companies at their word that recent gas prices are the result of demand outstripping supply, then the last thing that we should be considering is a repeal of the 4.3-cents-a-gallon tax, further pushing up demand. For those of us who believe that a higher gasoline tax is a necessary element of sound public policy because it encourages conservation and reduces our dependence on foreign oil, a repeal of this tax would be totally inappropriate.

Mr. President, I was one of several colleagues recently recognized by the Concord Coalition as being willing to make the tough choices, and I intend to continue making them, despite the political downside. I fully understand that rejecting politically popular tax cuts in an election year represents a tough choice for legislators, even if this tax repeal would involve less than \$30 a year for the average motorist. But if there is a good public policy reason for the tax in the first place and a repeal will not be likely to dramatically affect the perceived problem, it should not be that tough a choice. For these reasons, I would encourage my colleagues to join me in opposing the proposed repeal of the 4.3-cents-a-gallon tax on gasoline.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 3 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 5 minutes each.

The Democratic leader, Mr. DASCHLE, or his designee, is recognized to speak for up to 90 minutes, and the Senator from Georgia, Mr. COVERDELL, or his designee, is recognized to speak for up to 90 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, my understanding is that my designated time began, or should have begun at 1:30. I am going to ask unanimous consent that my designated time begin at 1:42 in order to accommodate my colleague who wishes to make a brief statement.

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

Mr. BINGAMAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague for the courtesy. I did want to make a brief statement. I do not think I will take a full 8 minutes.

REVENUE LOST FROM REPEAL OF GAS TAX

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, there was an item in the morning paper that caused me to come to the Senate floor to speak briefly and alert my colleagues to a serious concern which I have. The article was entitled "Armeiy: Cheap Fuel Via Education Cuts." "House Leader Suggests Way To Offset Cost of Gasoline Tax Repeal."

The first three short paragraphs say:

House Majority Leader Richard K. Armeiy, Republican from Texas, yesterday suggested that the revenue lost from a repeal of the 1993 gasoline tax could be offset by cutting spending on education. "Maybe we ought to take another look at the amount of money we are spending on education," Armeiy said on the NBC's "Meet the Press." "There is a place where we are getting a declining value for an increased dollar. It's in education. In fact we can get some discipline in the use of our education dollar, I think we can make up the difference," Armeiy said.

Mr. President, my reaction to this article when I read it was, "Here they go again."

We spent much of last year in this Congress trying to hold off proposed cuts in the education budget. The budget resolution as first presented here called for \$18.6 billion being cut from student aid over a 7-year period, and \$26 billion being cut from K through 12 levels of education over that 7-year period.

There was a proposal to zero out funding for direct student loans, and proposals to zero out funding for School to Work, for Goals 2000, and for national service.

Mr. President, those fights are now behind us. But unfortunately, even today, we see that to some extent the efforts to cut back on education have succeeded. In the final appropriations bill that was signed into law 10 days ago by the President, there are still cuts in education.

There is a 6-percent cut in the Goals 2000 funding. There is a 9-percent cut in telecommunications for math funding. There is an 8-percent cut in library construction funding. There is a 15-percent cut in the funds for magnet schools, a 27-percent cut in technical assistance center funding, a 7-percent cut in adult education budgets. In Perkins loans there is a 41-percent cut, and in State student incentive grants there is a 50-percent cut.

Mr. President, my own view is that this is a very, very mistaken set of priorities that this Congress and that the majority leader in the House, RICHARD

ARMEY, are talking about when the first place they look to try to make up revenue is to further cut education.

I think in the long term our country is only as strong as the next generation, and we are only as smart as the next generation. If we cut out the funds needed to educate that next generation, I am persuaded that we are going against the will of the American people, we are going against our own best interests, and we are showing very serious shortsightedness, which I think we will come to regret.

Mr. President, I contrast this article, which, as I say, was in this morning's paper here in Washington, with an article that came out a little over a week ago, on April 27, also in the Washington Post. It was entitled, "Latinos Want D.C. School To Stay Open."

Let me just read a little bit of that article for my colleagues. It said:

About 400 people picketed the District of Columbia Board of Education offices yesterday, protesting a recommendation by School Superintendent Franklin L. Smith to close the Carlos Rosario Adult Education Center.

The demonstrators circled the block in front of the Presidential building . . . chanting "We want to learn English!" Some held bullhorns, others carried signs asking drivers to honk in support of the program.

"We see it as an issue of discrimination against Latin immigrants," said Arnoldo Ramos, Director of the Council of Latino Agencies. "This is the only adult education center serving Latinos. By closing this program, they are sending a message that Latinos don't matter and that we should continue serving tables, continue picking up garbage and having the lowest positions in society."

Several students said that without Rosario, it would be difficult to continue to learn English, which they say is their only ticket to a better life.

Mr. President, this article should bring home to us the importance that education has for the average people of this country. Education is not only their only ticket to a better life; it is the ticket that our children have to a better life as well.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to reject the recommendation of the House majority leader in looking first at education as a place to further cut the Federal budget.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

TAX FREEDOM DAY

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I was glad I had an opportunity to be here for at least the last portion of the presentation by my good colleague and friend from Virginia where he was admonishing us to be courageous and to avoid the proposal to repeal the gas tax.

It is my intention to support the repeal of the gas tax, and, frankly, I believe America is looking for a very different kind of courage today.

I do not think they are looking for courage to keep adding another burden,

another tax burden, another regulatory burden on the backs of the working families.

Most Americans—in fact, in survey data every social strata of our country—feel that the appropriate tax burden should be 25 percent. It does not matter whether you ask the very wealthy family or the poorest family. It is fascinating; they all come to the same number, that the burden of government, their willingness to contribute, is about 25 percent.

Tomorrow is May 7. It is an important day in America, because May 7, believe it or not—I would never have believed I would be in the Senate talking about this kind of crisis, but May 7 is the first day for which an American family can earn money and resources for its own dreams. Every other day from January 1 through March 15, April, you name it, all of those wages that were earned on all of those working days are taken from the family. They are taken by the Federal Government at about 25 percent, some much higher, they are taken by the State and local government 10 to 12 percent, and I might add May 7 does not include the regulatory costs to every American family, which is now about \$6,800 a year.

I think of that fellow who gets up, his wife who gets up, and they get the kids; they take them to school; they get to their two jobs, which are necessary now primarily because of the new tax burden on the American family; they go day after day like that working through the struggles of life, and until May 7 not a dime is available to house that family, to buy the home, to transport the family, to feed the family, to educate the family—all the things we ask the American family to do for America: Raise the country. Raise the country. But until May 7, they do not have a dime for their own dreams. They are sending all of those wages between January 1 and May 7 to some policy wonk somewhere with the task of redefining where that money ought to go and what its priorities ought to be.

We just heard a presentation by my colleague on the other side of the aisle that it would be the opposite of courageous if we were to repeal this tax. We have a long way to go to get tax freedom day back from May 7 to where it appropriately ought to be. Every opportunity we have to lower that burden, in my judgment, is appropriate. That gas tax costs the average family of four about \$100—\$100 a year.

More importantly, the lowest 20 percent of taxpayers pay over 7 percent of their income on gasoline. If we are concerned about those who are disadvantaged, we ought to be concerned about lowering the burden on them, letting them keep those resources to do the things they need to do. The wealthy only pay 1.6 percent of their income on gasoline. This repeal of that gas tax