THE CLOSURE OF PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE: A MATTER OF COMMON SENSE

● Mr. Pryor. Mr. President, there has been a lot of talk recently, both in Congress and in the media, about reopening the area of Pennsylvania Avenue directly in front of the White House that was closed due to security concerns. Reopening the street to commuter traffic sound good to drivers who are inconvenienced. But before we tear down security structures at any Federal facility we should step back and review recent events in Oklahoma City and New York. The security of Federal buildings has become a serious issue indeed, and when the lives of Americans are threatened we cannot afford to act politically.

About 1 year ago, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, whose department is charged with protecting the President, ordered the Secret Service to close Pennsylvania Avenue to vehicular traffic in front of the White House. His decision was not made precipitously but only after it was called for by the most comprehensive study of White House security in our Nation's history. That study, which was conducted by a body called the White House Security Review, determined that the threat of violent acts against the White House, and other Federal buildings, had grown much more serious over the last decade.

It does not take a big study to tell us that times have changed and that there is a greater threat to Federal buildings such as the White House. The World Trade Center bombing, the Oklahoma City bombing, not to mention the murder near CIA headquarters 10 miles from here, are ample evidence of the threat that domestic terrorism now poses in America.

Mr. President, all of us agree that the White House is the property of the public, that it should be as accessible as reasonable possible. But the White House Security Review clearly found that the threat to public safety from an open Pennsylvania Avenue far outweighed the inconvenience to commuters and sightseers in cars. After much consideration the Review concluded that it was, not able to identify any alternative to prohibiting vehicular traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue that would ensure the protection of the President and others in the White House complex from explosive devices carried in vehicles near the perimeter. These findings were endorsed by its independent bipartisan Advisory Committee, which included former Secretary of Transportation William Coleman and the former Director of the FBI and CIA, Judge William Webster.

According to every authorative study of the situation, restricting car traffic around the White House is more than reasonable. It is essential.

Many argue that Secretary Rubin's actions have had a negative effect on America's enjoyment of the White House. However, tours have continued as scheduled, and visitors can now enjoy walking and biking down Pennsylvania Avenue without danger of vehicular traffic. The White House is still the people's house and many would say that enjoyment has been increased by the evolving pedestrian mall.

Perhaps the strongest argument against closure of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House is that it causes traffic problems for city motorists. While it is true that closure of this area has increased an already bad traffic problem, the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration and the District of Columbia's Department of Public Works are examining short-term and long-term measures to reduce traffic problems in the city.

Again, inconvenience of drivers around the White House cannot take precedent over the safety of the public who visit the White House, the public servants who work in the White House and, of course, the President and his family. Our Government and society places a high value on human life and I think even the most anxious D.C. driver would not want their zeal to get around town to result in harm to another American.

It is also valuable to note that the creation of a pedestrian mall is consistent with President Washington's vision for the White House, and it is similar to a proposal that President and Mrs. Kennedy endorsed a generation ago.

Mr. President, Americans have long been known for their freedom, but I like to think Americans are also known for their common sense. While I realize that restricting access to any public building is not consistent with America's sense of freedom, I would argue that reopening Pennsylvania Avenue is contrary to our good common sense.

Mr. President, Secretary Rubin made a wise decision a year ago. He used his common sense and decided that closing Pennsylvania Avenue was the right thing to do. Let's not overrule his good judgment or jeopardize the people's house by reopening Pennsylvania Avenue.●

RECOGNITION OF CHISHOLM TRAIL ROUNDUP, FORT WORTH, TX

● Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, more than a hundred years ago, cattle drives made their way across the Texas plains toward the railhead of Abilene, KS, along what came to be known as the Chisholm Trail. Within a span of only two decades, the Chisholm Trail not only transformed settlements and towns, like Ft. Worth, into major centers of commerce, it also produced one of our Nation's most enduring folk heroes—the cowboy.

Since 1976, the Chisholm Trail Roundup has been held in the historic Stockyards District of Fort Worth, TX. The Roundup celebrates the Western spirit of adventure and perseverance and honors the cultures of tribe and Nation that forged a new way of life on the American frontier. From native American dances to cowboy gunfights, the roundup displays all aspects of frontier life and creates an atmosphere in which learning about our history and enjoying the festival come together.

As one of the country's largest annual festivals, the Chisholm Trail Roundup is nonprofit and benefits Western heritage organizations. For 3 days in June, Fort Worthians will gather once again to celebrate the city's rich heritage and to relive one of the most memorable times in American history.

As a Senator from the State of Texas, I would like to recognize the Chisholm Trail Roundup and its efforts to remind us of our pioneering heritage. I appreciate the thousands of hours of work that have gone into planning this year's event, and I am looking forward to many more roundups in the years to come.●

LARGE BINOCULAR TELESCOPE ON MT. GRAHAM IN ARIZONA

● Mr. INOUYE. Mr. President, I rise to express my serious concern with language contained in the final fiscal year 1996 appropriations measure which addressed the construction of the Large Binocular Telescope on Mr. Graham in Arizona, which is a sacred place to the Apache Nation and home to the endangered Mt. Graham red squirrel. The Apache tribal and religious leaders have urged the Congress and the administration to protect their historic holy land. They are joined by national Native organizations and by a broad cross-section of the religious and environmental communities internationally. I am also troubled that because there has been no hearing in the Congress on this matter, the Apaches have not been afforded an opportunity to be heard on this important matter of religious freedom.

It is my understanding that the administration has stated its position that construction should not proceed until and unless there is full compliance with standard environmental and cultural reviews. This position is consistent with the recent ruling by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and it would appear that the language addressing Mt. Graham telescope contained in the appropriations Act is not contrary to this position. I can only assume that the administration and many of my colleagues who have concerns both for the environment as well as Native American rights have not insisted on the removal of this language because they also read it as allowing for the customary environmental and cultural reviews to be completed before construction on the telescope is allowed to proceed.●

SALUTE TO ELIZABETHTON AND CARTER COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

● Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today, I would like to commend the city of Elizabethton and Carter County, TN, for their innovative work in helping attract businesses and residents to their community through the use of the Internet. Last November, the Elizabethton and Carter County Economic Development Commission established a World Wide Web home page to provide corporations looking to relocate or select sites for expansion with instant access to the information they need on this region in upper east Tennessee.

The Elizabethton and Carter County Community Profile is an online listing that offers viewers demographic information on the area, including labor statistics, tax rates, education levels, population, housing data, types and availability of transportation, and locations of business complexes and industrial parks. It encompasses more than 120 pages of detailed community and economic information for consultants, site selection, real estate and corporate executives throughout the world and is a fine example of how advanced technology can aid in the growth and development of every American city.

As a physician and a U.S. Senator, I know firsthand how useful the Internet has become in the last few years. When I was a heart transplant surgeon in Nashville, I considered access to the Internet as vital to my work as any surgical instrument because it allowed me to obtain up-to-the-minute information on the latest medical techniques and procedures. It also allowed me to communicate easily with my colleagues in transplant surgery throughout the country and across the globe.

Since coming to the U.S. Senate, I have found a new use for the Internet—constituent communications. My World Wide Web home page—the first established by a Republican Member of Congress—now allows Tennesseans to view legislation that I have introduced, as well as my press releases, flow statements, biographical information, committee assignments, and voting record with the click of a mouse. And I am able to communicate via e-mail with thousands of Tennesseans and Americans who contact my office through my home page seeking further information on specific issues. The Internet has revolutionized the way my Senate office functions.

In much the same way, the information superhighway is revolutionizing the way companies do business and the way cities and counties approach economic development. Mr. President, Elizabethton and Carter County are on the frontlines in this revolution. There are many much larger cities that will have to struggle to obtain the technological advancements that have been made in this community. Mr. President, I commend the Elizabethton and Carter County Economic Development Commission for their foresight, innovation and creativity, and I look forward to seeing other cities and counties follow Elizabethton's and Carter County's lead.●

WHY DO WE CALL TAXES A BURDEN

●Mr. PELL. Mr. President, there is a commonly held belief abroad in the land that all taxes are inherently burdensome. This is implicit in an event recently noted, known as ''Tax Freedom Day.'' I was moved to ponder this matter after reading an article in The Washington Post, entitled ''Why Do We Call Taxes a Burden'?'' by Professor Rashi Fein. Professor Fein makes the point, most excellently, that our language shapes our actions.

A ''burden'' is by definition oppressive. Our facile use of the term in connection with our taxes thereby encourages us to act to ease those taxes. By such thinking, in fashioning a budget resolution, all manner of actions become justified. Let us jettison support for Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, hiring of police officers, heating assistance to the poor, protection of our environment, education loans, United States humanitarian operations, civilian and military retirement pensions, national defense, prosecution of drug smugglers, and Amtrak. Thus, so this form of reasoning goes, will our ''burden'' be lifted. Yet who among us would not assert that some, if not all of the aforementioned programs are worthy in motive and intent, albeit perhaps not flawless in execution?

Professor Fein posits that the weighing of appropriate tax and expenditure policies is difficult when our language encourages us to think of our taxes as burdens not connected to the benefits we derive from them. Police protection, clean air and water, an educated populace, and a strong national defense benefit each and every one of us. Moreover, Federal entitlements—benefits citizens are entitled to collect if they meet certain demographic or income definitions—reach 49 percent of U.S. households, including 39 percent of families with children and 98 percent of the elderly.

As a moral proposition, we must be careful of our words, for our words become our actions. And, as the adage goes, actions become character, and our character becomes our destiny. In considering amendments to the budget resolution, let us not join in vying to reduce our tax ''burden'' lest our destiny become a society ''less organized and less civilized.''

Mr. President, I ask that the article entitled ''Why Do We Call Taxes a Burden'?'' be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows.

[From the Washington, Post, May 17, 1996]

WHY DO WE CALL TAXES A 'BURDEN'?

(By Rashi Fein)

I learn a lot watching C–SPAN. The other night, one of Washington's leading economists was asked about using the tax system to help reduce environmental damage. The response? It certainly would be difficult, because it would increase the ''tax burden.''

''Tax burden'' is a phrase with which we are all so familiar that we don't stop to think what it means—nor what it implies. At first blush it seems value-free. But plainly a ''burden'' is something to be lifted. We don't refer to the monies we spend on movies, popcorn, milk or shoes as ''burdens.'' We refer to them—and think of them—as expenditures, some (movies and popcorn) optional, others (food, shoes) necessary. We don't speak of our ''consumption burden.'' Why, then, a ''tax burden''?

Is it that our tax payments are not optional but our food expenditures are? That can't be it: We have to buy food. We can choose between steak and hamburger (or yogurt and tofu), but we can't choose between eating and starving. Indeed, the penalty for not eating far exceeds the penalty for nonpayment of taxes. yet we do not speak of the ''food burden.''

More likely, we think of taxes as a burden because we're not quite certain what it is we're buying when we pay them. We miss, somehow, the connection between our tax dollars and the fire protection, the highways, the security against foreign powers and the biomedical research that our dollars buy. The problem is that few of the benefits we derive can be seen, touched or smelled. Moreover, the benefits we derive from government expenditures most often accrue to everyone; they do not come packaged in discrete units—this box of defense for me, this piece of highway for you.

And many of us assume that we'd continue to get whatever it is we're getting from government even if we didn't pay our taxes. Without spending our dollars, we'd have no milk on our tables, but we can't really imagine that schools and roads would disappear if you and I didn't buy them with our tax dollars. Clearly, government doesn't determine how many potholes to fill only after it deposits our tax dollars. If I don't buy that book, that restaurant meal, that aspirin—or if I cheat on my taxes—does government really subtract from the pothole-fixing budget or the salaries of judges? That's a tough connection to make—but without that connection, my taxes come to seem irrelevant, hence unnecessary, hence a ''burden.''

Of course, no government program would suffer if you or I consumed less (and thus paid less in sales tax) or if I cheated on my return (and thus paid less in income tax). But if you and I both underpaid, everyone else would have to pay more. And it surely stretches language beyond acceptable usage to call not taking advantage of one's neighbors a ''burden.''

Burdens are by definition oppressive, and our facile use of the term in connection with our taxes thereby encourages us to do everything we can (within the law) to ease them. Cheating on our taxes comes to seem acceptable (at least understandable), even though tax evasion is precisely analogous to shoplifting. If we take fire protection, guarantees on educational loans, clean air and water but fail to pay for them, we are stealing.

Our language shapes our attitudes. To weigh appropriate tax and expenditure policies in difficult when our language encourages us to think of our taxes as burdens not connected to the benefits we derive from them.

Some weeks ago, I received a brochure encouraging me to open an IRA. In that brochure, a 1040 tax return was labeled ''pain,'' while the application for an IRA was labeled ''pain killer.'' By implication, taxes (like pain) are to be avoided. By implication, I can continue to enjoy the benefits of government expenditures without paying for them.