rich people.'' Have you ever noticed that everything Democrats are against supposedly helps rich people? They did not want to cut taxes on working families, a $500 tax credit per child, because they say that helps rich people. If they want to raise taxes, of course, they claim they are taxing only rich people.

In any case, do rich people care about this? What difference does it make to rich people whether they buy a low-deductible or high deductible policy? By definition, if you are rich, you have a lot of money. It cannot make possibly any difference.

But let me tell you who it makes a difference to. I have a son who just turned 23 years old. He is off my insurance policy. For the first time in his life, he is trying to decide how he is going to get health insurance and how he is going to buy it. He is as healthy as most 23-year-old males and females are. Why not allow him to buy a high-deductible policy and take the savings, put them into a medical savings account and build up a nest egg to go to graduate school, or to try to start a business, or to buy a home when he gets married?

When we debated this subject before, I had quotes from two so-called rich people who use medical savings accounts. One of them was a united mine worker, because the United Mine Workers Union has medical savings accounts, but they do not get fair tax treatment on them. They have to pay taxes on them. The other was a part-time bus driver. They were arguing they ought to be treated fairly, and I agree with them and not with the Senator from Massachusetts, who is objecting to letting us appoint conferees and bring this bill up.

The second argument is, well, look, this helps young people and healthy people. Who does not have health insurance? Basically, young healthy people are not buying health insurance because, A, they do not think they need it right now and, B, they cannot afford it. Why not have a policy available that may not be used by everybody, but that will be used by young people so that they can buy basic coverage. The Democrats' solution is to guarantee that they can buy insurance in the future once they get sick rather than now when they are young and healthy, but at the cost of charging everybody else higher rates.

We need medical savings accounts, and this is about freedom. The Democrats want the Clinton-type health care bill. That is what they want. And they know medical savings accounts move us toward private family decisions. They want Government decisions. That is what this debate is about, and if you believe in freedom, you are with us.

INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURE TAX

Mr. GRAMM. Now, I want to turn to another subject. The President has put out a new list of savings measures, and among the savings measures is an international departure tax increase—$2.3 billion of savings. Now, you might ask, what does a tax increase have to do with savings? The answer is, nothing. We have, in this administration, a new language where everyday words are changed into new words and they have nothing to do with each other. But this is basically a proposal to raise taxes on international travel by imposing a $10 per passenger tax on everybody buying a round-trip ticket in international travel, coming to the United States and going back, or leaving the United States and coming back. Now, if you have Americans traveling, some people assume they must be rich. So you want to tax them. So I am not going to get into that argument. I think it is absurd. We know that not everybody who travels internationally is rich.

Let me talk about the 42,983,000 foreigners who come to the United States. Well, you might say, why not tax them? They cannot vote here, so why not tax their money while we have them? What do they come here for? Well, they come here to invest, to create jobs, and to be tourists. In fact, as tourists, they spent $76.485 billion last year. Why, I ask, should we be trying to raise barriers against people who want to come to Atlanta, or who want to come to Houston or who want to go to San Antonio to see the Alamo? Why should we want to raise barriers to people who want to come and see where great Americans come from, like South Carolina, and who came to the Alamo to defend freedom—especially when they are spending $76.485 billion on the trip? To save my life, I do not understand that.

We did a little check in asking just one hotel manager that we happened to be having a conversation with, who works for Marriott Hotels in Houston, what percentage of the people staying in his hotels, on an average night, are foreign nationals. He estimated that 40 percent of the people staying in Marriott Hotels in Houston are foreign nationals. Now, why would we want to discourage all these people from coming to America to spend money? Well, it is interesting that by a fairly conservative estimate, in international tourism alone, this tax would cost us twice as much as the Government is claiming to collect. I know some people will make an argument that these people who would make this money from international tourism will squander it. They will spend it on their children, they might go to Disneyland, they might invest in some private business; and that the Government, collecting half as much money from this tax as these private citizens would earn, will spend it wisely—on the National Endowment for the Arts or the Legal Services Corporation—but not getting into those arguments, I am opposed to this departure tax increase.

I want people to come to America. I want people from all over the world to come here and see the Alamo and see the Capitol and get to know our country and understand, personally, its greatness, get to know Texans and Americans, and bring that $76 billion a year with them and spend it here.

This is a poorly designed tax that will cost us jobs. It is a bad idea. I just want to remind people that taking the whole travel industry in America, we have almost a million people employed—about 960,000 people—because of international travelers. In fact, hundreds of thousands of people are going to come, for example, to Atlanta to the Olympics. People are coming to many different places around our country. My view is, let them come, let them spend their money when they get here. But the idea of erecting barriers to them coming, to collect a tax, it seems to me, is foolhardy and should be rejected.

This is part of something bigger. The Securities and Exchange Commission now collects twice as much in their taxes on securities as it spends to run the SEC. None of this money the President calls savings through this new tax would go to support the Federal Aviation Administration—not one penny of it. It would go to fund Government programs in general. We have fees on the transportation of hazardous materials that began as a relatively low figure. It is now $300. It was initially applied to trucks, railroads, and barges hauling things like crude petroleum. It is now being applied in Texas to 10,000 independent oil producers, who do not even transport the crude oil themselves. The administration has proposed to raise it to as much as $5,000 a year and collect as much as $50 million out of my State just from independent oil producers. Why? Because these increased fees could be used as taxes to fund Government in general. They would not be used for the purposes they were set out for. Just like this gasoline tax we have been trying to repeal, which is not going to build roads, it is going to general revenue.

My view is—and I will conclude on this—when you collect taxes on gasoline, motor fuel, it ought to go to roads. When you collect taxes on airline tickets, it ought to go to the FAA to build airports, to support the infrastructure. What is happening in this administration is all these fees are being raised because they want to spend the money and they want to hide the tax. This departure tax increase on airline tickets is wrong. I wanted to come down today to say I am opposed to it, and I do not intend to see it become the law of the land.

I thank my colleague from Georgia. When all those millions of tourists coming through Atlanta and spend all that money, remember, I did not want to erect the barrier.

(Mr. INHOFE assumed the chair.)

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I see the Senator from Missouri appears to be requesting up to 5 minutes. I yield up to 5 minutes to the Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. I thank my colleague from Georgia. I particularly commend my good friend from Texas for pointing out what we in the Midwest, as well as the Southwest, feel so strongly about, which is that when you raise fees on people who use highways, it is not pleasant. But when they go to highways, we can understand what they are being used for. If you raise fees on people who generate hazardous waste, if it goes to clean up hazardous waste, that is a reasonable argument. But when it goes to the general revenue fund, permits spending and overspending in many areas, it is a real problem.

FEDERAL RESERVE NOMINEES

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, the reason I rise today, I want to address a couple of related subjects, things that we are working on, and they have to do with some of the debates that have been going on about the nominees for the Federal Reserve.

I have the pleasure of having as one of my constituents a fellow Missourian, Dr. Laurence Meyer, who has been nominated to the Federal Reserve Board. When we get to the discussions of the Federal Reserve nominations next week, I want to make the case very strongly that Dr. Meyer has justly earned a reputation as a leading economist. He has played a key role in the development and expansion of the economics department of Washington University. He has been recognized repeatedly by faculty, students, by the public at large, and by his own colleagues as a leader in these fields. His is an excellent nomination. I also say that we are very fortunate that the President has proposed renomination and he has agreed to accept the current Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Chairman Alan Greenspan. During his 8-year tenure, economic performance through administrations, Republican and Democrat, has been outstanding because inflation has been kept under control.

Again, I want to address more of Chairman Greenspan's accomplishments later on. But I want to straighten out a couple of misconceptions that have been raised by others on this floor yesterday in their debates about the Federal Reserve. They seem to think that growth in this country is slow because of the Federal Reserve. Mr. President, the Federal Reserve job, as the chief monetary regulator, is to deal with monetary policy. Monetary policy can be a brake or an accelerator, but it is not the essential engine that drives the economy of this country. That is fiscal policy and the opportunity for this economy to grow. We have had a major hit to the engine of our economy. It is a hit that has happened over the years in terms of running up the deficit. This deficit has been out of control. We have raised $5 trillion worth of debt that sits on the backs of our children, our grandchildren, and future generations, and it serves as a great drag on the economy right now.

In addition, in 1990 and 1993, we put heavy burdens of taxes on the productive sector—taxes on savings and investment, taxes particularly that hit the small businesses that I have the pleasure of serving on the Small Business Committee.

Yesterday, you would have thought that taxes and deficits did not matter, that slow growth was the only burden that was the legacy of the Federal Reserve Board. Well, that is not true. The Federal Reserve has kept inflation under control. We need to deal with the deficit. Then we need to deal with taxes that discourage investment and savings.

That is why the third nominee for the Federal Reserve is important. Dr. Rivlin is currently the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. She has presented, on behalf of the President, a measure, the budget of the President of the United States, so that when the Congressional Budget Office scores it and applies a trigger the Congressional Budget Office said is necessary to get to a balance in 2002, they can claim that under the Congressional Budget Office scoring and applying the trigger that the budget will get to balance in 2002.

The problem is, as I have outlined on this floor before, I, in the role as chairman of the appropriations subcommittee, have asked the agencies that would be forced to make those cuts in future years how they plan to make them, and they have been advised by the Office of Management and Budget that they are not serious about it.

Mr. President, as I have pointed out, we have addressed letters to Dr. Rivlin, questions as to whether the administration is serious about balancing the budget. Do they have a second set of books that has cuts in a lot of other agencies? The Veterans' Administration has told us they are exempt; EPA, NASA, the agencies that I have spoken to have said the cuts are not going to fall on them. Where are they going to fall? Are we serious about the deficit?

We are waiting to hear whether the Office of Management and Budget honestly believes it can implement and will begin planning for the reductions in spending necessary to balance the budget.

That, in my view, will depend upon how I vote, at least for one, on the confirmation of the Budget Director to be a Member of the Federal Reserve Board.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, it is my understanding that the Presiding Officer has some business before the Senate. I am going to suggest the absence of a quorum so I might relieve the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I have a couple of comments to make about the comments that were made previously by the Senator from Texas. Before that I have a little bit of business to take care of of a different nature.

THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION ACT

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, yesterday I introduced legislation to reauthorize the National Environment Education Act. I am joined by most of the members of the Environment and Public Works Committee and will probably have all of those Members as cosponsors of this legislation in a very short time.

The reason I am doing this is that there has been a lot of criticism that we are getting that there is too much emanating from Washington on our environmental laws and environmental education. People have said we are brainwashing our children. I feel that the better way to do this is to have this money going to the local level so that the curriculum can be determined by the local level.

I can remember several scary stories about students coming home from school in the Northwest who happened to be sons or daughters of people working in the lumber industry saying that it is sinful to cut down any tree, and this type of thing. This is the type of thing that has to be stopped. I believe the only way we are going to be able to successfully do this is to reauthorize this legislation so that the safeguards are built in that anything that is used in the education of our young people has to be based on scientific facts and not just the normal scare type of things that we have been getting. So I believe we will be able to control this program.

This, incidentally, was introduced at the same time by Congressman KLUG in the House of Representatives.

Mr. President, yesterday I introduced legislation to reauthorize the National Environmental Education Act. I am joined by my colleagues Senators CHAFEE, LIEBERMAN, FAIRCLOTH, KEMPTHORNE, MOYNIHAN, and REID. And I am joined on the House side by my colleague, Congressman SCOTT KLUG of Wisconsin, who introduced an identical bill in the House yesterday.

This bill will reauthorize the educational efforts at the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation and the EPA's Office of Environmental Education. These programs support environmental education at the local level. They provide grant money and seed money to encourage local primary and secondary schools and universities to educate children on environmental issues.

With the importance of the environment and the continuing debate on how best to protect it, it is vital to educate