

just talking about? It means that they lost in the last 3 years somewhere between \$2,000 and \$2,600 per year less in their checking account which was already under duress.

The result of this tax increase is that we now pay 30.4 percent of the gross domestic product in taxes. This is the highest that it has ever been in American history. The tax burden has never been higher, and under the current economic plan as proposed by President Clinton it will rise to its highest level ever, 19.3 percent of the gross domestic product.

The point I am making here is that for Senator Dole to come forward and say we ought to lower this burden, it means that this family that has lost \$2,000-plus per year under the 15 percent across-the-board tax relief will get about \$1,200 to \$1,400 of that back. That makes a lot of sense. If a family cannot even keep half the wages they earn, I think it is sound policy to try to reverse that and get some of those resources back in that family's checking account so that they can see to the raising of the children, the education, the housing, the transportation, the food, all of that which we depend on the American family to do. We have made it almost impossible for the American family to do that which they are supposed to do.

In addition, that plan embraces a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. I might point out that Senator EXON of Nebraska was one of the seven that changed his vote which caused the failure of passage of the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

Senator Dole has embraced that. We have talked about the IRS here, saying we are going to get into that agency and produce a cultural attitude that is consistent with being a partner to America and not a boss over America, saying that you are going to balance the budget by the year 2002 which will lower interest rates—it will lower what this American family has to pay on the mortgage for their home, car, refrigerator, their credit card.

All of these proposals make a lot of sense, and it is all right that we disagree and debate about the conditions of these, but we ought to do it in a very civil and appropriate way. There ought not to be any name calling on either side of the aisle. The American people expect that of this body.

In closing, Madam President, I cannot think of any policy that is more important for our working families than to try to get this burden down to a more rational level. If you ask all our families, it does not matter what walk of life they come from, what their income strata is, their education, they all say that the appropriate tax burden should be about 25 percent. It is double that. And so I think Senator Dole's suggestion that we ought to pass a little relief back to those family checking accounts makes every bit of sense.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that in the intervening time

on the schedule, the Senator from Minnesota be added to the end of our time. I think it will take us until about 2:17, or something like that.

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

CONSTITUENT'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. COVERDELL. Madam President, just as an aside, one of my constituents is in the gallery with his 80-year-old mother celebrating her birthday.

I want to share in her birthday celebration.

At this time, I yield back whatever time is remaining. I yield the floor.

Mr. GRAMS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK

Mr. GRAMS. Madam President, I rise today to discuss an issue of great importance to the people of northern Minnesota and others who care about Voyageurs National Park.

In 1971, Voyageurs National Park was created in northern Minnesota after years of contentious debate in my home State and within the halls of the Federal Government. While there were some who were opposed to the park's creation, many others supported it under the promise that it would not only protect the area for future generations but would also be an economic benefit for northern Minnesota as well.

Federal officials estimated the park would attract 1.3 million visitors annually, yet 25 years later the National Park Service estimates that the actual number of visitors is 200,000 per year. That is less than one-sixth of its initial projection. Why is the visitor rate so low in Voyageurs? Ask the National Park Service. Ask them about the countless numbers of regulations that they have imposed that would limit the ability of recreationists to enjoy the park such as the restriction under the Endangered Species Act recently repealed by a district court judge and a de facto wilderness designation never approved by Congress.

Perhaps the most significant example of how the Federal Government has failed in its mission to promote visitor use is the Park Service's continued reluctance to conduct a visitor use and facilities study mandated by Congress 13 years ago.

This study, supported by the Park Service back in 1983, was to be a tool that would help the Park Service determine why its visitor-rate projection had not been met. Yet, to date, this study has still not been completed—at the expense of the people of northern Minnesota and those who seek reasonable access to their public lands.

Now, I am not suggesting that economic interests should be the determining factor in the management of this national treasure, but there is no question that the economic survival and security of the men, women, and

children who live in the communities surrounding the park must be taken into consideration. More importantly, when the Federal Government gives its word to the people, it must live up to it.

For this reason, I intend to offer an amendment to Interior appropriations which will help restore one of the unfulfilled promises made to the people of northern Minnesota. My amendment, which I will not offer today, would require the Park Service to begin its comprehensive visitor-use and facilities study in consultation with appropriate private and public entities. It does not set a rigorous timetable on when the study must be completed and in no way micromanages the Park Service's activities; it simply requires the Park Service to work with the State of Minnesota, the park's surrounding counties, and individuals to develop a framework under which the study will be completed.

Madam President, the groundwork is set for a team effort to develop this study. I have spoken with county commissioners in northern Minnesota who have expressed strong support for this study and stand ready to help the Park Service develop it. The study was discussed during five hearings before the 104th Congress—both in Minnesota and Washington—and the strong, majority opinion during those hearings, including that of the Park Service, was in favor of the study. It is also my understanding that the Voyageurs Park Superintendent has mentioned that some funding may be available in the coming months to begin the study—for which I commend her. All of these developments make me optimistic that this study can be done. Again, after 13 years that it was directed to do so, the study finally may be done. The time has come for this study to be done.

My amendment will create the framework to accomplish this task and to begin restoring the commitments made long ago to the people of northern Minnesota. I certainly hope that my colleagues in the Senate—including my fellow Senator from Minnesota—will lend their support to this amendment and for doing what is right for the Voyageurs National Park and those who love it.

I yield the floor.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, September 12, the Federal debt stood at \$5,216,902,015,633.76.

One year ago, September 12, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,964,466,000,000.

Five years ago, September 12, 1991, the Federal debt stood at \$3,624,056,000,000.

Ten years ago, September 12, 1986, the Federal debt stood at \$2,106,281,000,000. This reflects an increase of more than \$3 trillion (\$3,110,621,015,633.76) during the 10 years from 1986 to 1996.