SHOWCASING OUR STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, when I came here to Washington, it was for the purpose of trying to bring some common sense to this institution and to this city. I believe that it is infinitely better for my children and for the children of this country and our grandchildren if we can have a Federal Government that is more efficient, that is more responsive, that is smaller, and if we can restore discussion and debate about values to our culture.

Somehow we have gotten to a point in this country where we can accept the fact that if we are willing to write a check to the IRS, it removes us from the responsibility that we have to be good citizens, to work in our communities and our churches, to be good strong family leaders. That is a trend that I believe we need to change and something that we are making progress on. Significant progress.

Progress on issues like welfare reform; the first balanced budget for some 30 years; the first tax cuts in 16 years, since 1981; Medicare reform; important reforms in the area of education that address values that we share, values like parental choice, like trying to give the taxpayers the best value for their dollar and provide the very highest quality education that we can for our young people.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend I had the opportunity to go back to my home State of South Dakota and to hunt pheasants on a beautiful, crisp, clear day. I should not say it was entirely clear; it was crisp. We were out in the fall of our State and enjoying something that has become a ritual and tradition in South Dakota, and something where government has worked together in a constructive way with landowners, with conservationists, with sportsmen's groups, with our State government, local government, farmers, ranchers to do something that has been very, very important to the economy of our State of South Dakota.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen growth in that industry that has nearly doubled the revenues that are generated in our State; some $70 million a year from the process of pheasant hunting in South Dakota. And $70 million in South Dakota is a lot of money. I think that stands as a model of the way we can work together to address some of these issues on areas where we have common conflicts.

Sometimes we get crosswise between environmental groups and between landowners in certainly our State of South Dakota, but it was a great experience and we had a wonderful time and we had an opportunity to showcase our State.

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We have a number of other important challenges ahead of us, if we are going to complete the task of trying to make government simpler and less complicated for the people of this country.

I had an opportunity to visit with someone in my State who is a small business person whose business was just acquired by another business. I was listening to, as a condition of the sale, I was listening to the discussions that he held that they had to do an environmental analysis. In this environmental analysis they found that the air conditioner that was sitting outside the building was dripping onto the ground and they decided that that was causing distress to vegetation. So what was the solution?

Because it was dripping onto the ground in one spot, they decided to take a 12-inch-by-12-inch concrete slab, 2 inches thick, and to place it on the ground there. And somehow that was the solution that there would be less distressed vegetation with a 12-by-12 concrete slab than there would be with the drip drip that was a pinpoint drip from the air conditioner. I thought to myself, that is a perfect example of a regulation that certainly goes beyond the pail in terms of any rationale or common sense that might be there.

One of the areas that we are going to talk about in the next few weeks and something that I think is long overdue is a discussion of how we can reform the IRS, restructure it and generate a long-term discussion about how we make our Tax Code simpler, less complicated and fairer and hopefully eliminate the enormous amount of time and energy and resources that are spent each year by the people of this country in trying to comply with a Tax Code that clearly has gotten out of control.

Just as an example, we have 480 tax forms in this country. The form EZ, which is the simple form, that has some 31 pages, 7½ million words in our Tax Code. In fact, the estimates have been, the Kemp Commission found that we spent over 5 billion man-hours a year doing nothing but filling out tax returns, some 3 million people in the process of filling out returns which, interestingly enough, is more people than we have in our entire armed services, which means one thing, that is, we spend more time, energy and resources and dollars defending ourselves from our own Tax Code than we do from foreign enemies.

I think that is ironic. I think it speaks volumes for the need for change in this country. I think that one of the reasons we have this complicated Tax Code is that command and control here in Washington, DC; there is so much internal resistance to change in this city.

I was reading recently, as well, that in 1964 there were some 16,000 lobbyists in Washington. Today there are over 64,000. The proliferation of lobbyists, in my view, I believe supports the fact that we have a complicated government and a complex Tax Code and most lobbyists spend their time trying to figure out loopholes and exemptions from our current Tax Code.

So it is high time we engage in this debate. It is happening around the country. It is happening in a way which I think hopefully will give us some solutions that come from the ground up, where the people of this country engage in this issue and say, this is what we want to do. I am proud to be a part of that debate. I look forward to having some discussions of that in my home State of South Dakota.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BLUNT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KUCINICH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. KUCINICH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Washington [Mrs. LINDA SMITH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. LINDA SMITH of Washington addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. CLAYTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. KINGSTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Puerto Rico [Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. MCNULTY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. MCNULTY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. SMITH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. SMITH of Michigan addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. PELOSI] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. PELOSI addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks].

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. DELAURO addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Mrs. JOHNSON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

ON SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SANFORD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANFORD. Mr. Speaker, I have before you a bill that I introduced today. It is a bill that would put the worst insomniac in the world to sleep. I look here at 160 or 170 pages that by themselves are long and boring pages. And yet what this bill is about is, in essence, I think something that is very exciting. That is, I think that this bill, which is a bill to save Social Security, is a bill about the American dream.

Because if you were to stop and think about it, I think that what we would all agree upon is that a part of the American dream is tied to ending a lifetime of work with something more than just memories. And yet for many Americans, in fact, we pulled the number at home in my State of South Carolina.

Last year, about 38,000 people died and only about 243 filled out Federal estate tax returns, which says to me that something is wrong, because clearly for that small a number, 38,000 people died but 243 filled out Federal estate tax returns, which means in the eyes of the Federal Government they had accumulated enough in the way of assets to hold an estate that ought to be taxed. It says that something is wrong in fulfilling that part of the American dream that ties straight to ending a lifetime of work with more than something other than just memories.

What is interesting about that is that a lot of people are beginning to recognize it. It has been constantly something that comes up in my congressional district back in South Carolina. Folks say to me, both young and old, the young folks say, I do not think I am going to get my Social Security when I grow up or when I finish working or when I retire. Older folks are saying, what I am hearing from my grandson or my granddaughter is that they do not think they are going to get their Social Security. And not only is it being heard in essence from the right, I guess is where I come from, but from the left.

I mean somebody like Sam Beard, a person who I have been working very hard on this idea of saving Social Security. Sam Beard comes from the opposite political philosophy of my own. He was a staffer for Robert Kennedy. He spent his entire lifetime working, trying to do something about the inner cities. He thinks that one of the only ways that you save the inner city is with this idea of personal savings accounts, which is what is talked about in this bill.

Because right now, though April 15 is a big day, April 15 is really an insignificant day when you think about overall tax rates in this country, because for 70 percent of Americans, the largest tax that they will pay is not income tax but payroll tax. And with Social Security 12 percent or, to be exact, 12.4 percent comes right off the top, not on April 15 but on every single working day.

What the trustees have said is with that 12 percent that is going toward one's retirement plan, what they have said is that if we do nothing to save Social Security, it goes bankrupt in about 30 years and it begins running structural deficits in about 15, such that either you have to look at cutting benefits by about 14 percent or raising payroll taxes by about 16 percent.

Both young people and old people that I talked to at home in South Carolina say neither of those are great options. What the trustees have also said is that the overall rate of return for everybody working and paying into Social Security today is 1.9 percent. And that everybody born after 1948 will get a negative rate of return on their Social Security investment. Again, these are not numbers that tie to people being able to live out the American dream in their retirement years.

So either you can wait and do nothing, which might be the conventional political wisdom in Washington, or you can look at cutting benefits, which I do not think is acceptable, or you can look at raising payroll taxes, which I do not think is acceptable, or you can try one other thing. It has been tried around the world.

That is, letting people earn more than this 1.9 percent or more than this negative number on their Social Security investment. That is what this bill does. What it does is simply offers people a choice. Everybody above the age of 65 would simply stay on Social Security as we know it. But people below that age would simply have a choice. That is, if they thought Social Security made more sense for themselves and their families then they could continue to stay on Social Security as we know it. But if they thought it did not, they could, instead of having their payroll tax go to Washington, it could be redirected into their own personal savings account that they owned and controlled and got a monthly statement on.

That is not such a crazy idea because it has been a well-tested idea. It has been an idea that Great Britain has moved toward. It has been an idea that seven countries down in South America have moved toward. It has been an idea with 3.5 million workers in our own country that has been in essence tested. This is the beginning of a conversation about the American dream.

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE HEALTH CENTER PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DAVIS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, about 30 years ago, there emerged on the American scene, as a result of the civil rights movement, demonstrations, marches, protests, action on the part of the United States Congress, initiation of the war on poverty, there emerged a new set of health service delivery mechanisms, something that we today know as community health centers. They started out with the name neighborhood health centers as part of the OEO antipoverty program.

Every community that OEO would go into, making an assessment to look at the issue of poverty, there would always emerge the issue of a lack of