

protecting Social Security, knowing full well that Social Security is a pay-as-you-go system with the money going out as fast as it comes in. They are counting on the fact that most people will have no idea exactly how a pay-as-you-go system works.

But American taxpayers should be the happiest of all, because a balanced budget means lower interest rates, which means people can buy houses more easily, and cars. It is a good day for the American people.

WELCOME TO THE LAMP-LIGHTERS, EL PASO SINGING GROUP

(Mr. REYES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, this morning I stand here proudly and would like to welcome a group of young people from El Paso, Texas. This is a group of singers that is called the Lamplighters, that sings a positive message about life.

This group was formed in 1987 at Henderson middle school through the vision of Mr. Jim Marshall and the support of the principal, Mr. Ralph Chavis. The Lamplighters are a group that is made up of 40 middle school students ages 11 to 15, and they are sitting in the gallery to my left. They are here getting a firsthand look at democracy in action.

The Lamplighters sing a collection of 25 songs that include themes such as biculturalism, success, friendship, search for the truth, believing in themselves and understanding God. Their mission is to light up life with positive themes through song, a goal they always accomplish with every performance, such as this morning performing for the Texas delegation.

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Today I welcome the Lamplighters to Washington, D.C., where I am pleased they are here, and I know that they will experience firsthand and appreciate the excitement of democracy in action. Welcome.

SUNSET THE CURRENT TAX CODE

(Mr. THUNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed this week to hear the President label Republican efforts to sunset the Internal Revenue Code as irresponsible. I want to tell you my definition of irresponsible. Last year only one in five calls to the IRS customer hotline got through. That is irresponsible.

The IRS sends out 8 million pages of forms and instructions each year, enough to circle the Earth 28 times. That is irresponsible.

Every year, Money Magazine asks 50 different tax preparers to prepare a 1040 form for a sample family. No two preparers ever arrive at the same answer,

and the results vary by thousands of dollars. That is irresponsible.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of legislation to sunset the Internal Revenue Code. There is nothing radical about accountability from a government agency or working towards a fairer, flatter Tax Code. If you want a true definition of irresponsibility, look at our current Tax Code. Maintaining the status quo is the most irresponsible thing that we could do to our Nation and to our future.

REFORM THE IRS

(Mr. ETHERIDGE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, this House must reform the IRS. The outrageous recently released GAO report documents that the IRS unfairly singles out taxpayers in the South for random audits. The GAO reports that 47 percent of the random tax audits during the past 3 years were in 11 Southern states that represent only 29 percent of the population. More than 85 percent of those audits had incomes of less than \$25,000, many of whom depend upon the Earned Income Tax Credit for our working poor.

Why should an individual be three times more likely to be audited in North Carolina than in the State of Massachusetts? North Carolinians are honest people. Why should they be subjected to this kind of treatment? As a former small businessman and a Southern taxpayer, I am outraged at this report and call for immediate action to reform the IRS.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues on the Democratic side and those on the Republican side in passing IRS reform last year. The findings of that report provide some clear examples of why our esteemed colleagues in the other body should quit dragging their feet and join the House in passing reform.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES CONTINUE IN SUDAN

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the massive human rights abuses occurring in Sudan. The Khartoum Government, the National Islamic Front, is waging a war on the Christian and Animist South. The Northern army has committed horrifying atrocities against individuals and communities, including moderate Muslims who do not adhere to the Khartoum agenda. Women and children are sold into slavery. Young boys are conscripted to combat their own villages. Pastors often are thrown into wells, doused with oil, and lit on fire to burn to their death.

Much of the humanitarian aid in Sudan is distributed through Khar-

toum Government forces, who force conversion to extremist Islam in exchange for food.

On May 23, 1997, Northern authorities detained and imprisoned Mr. Faisal Abadallh, a Sudanese Christian accused of evangelism. In January of 1998, authorities charged Mr. Abadallh with 12 offenses, three of which could lead to the death penalty.

Mr. Speaker, the President acted wisely in imposing sanctions on Sudan in 1997. However, we must not leave the issue at that point. It is outrageous that this terrible suffering continues. Our Nation should continue to speak out.

SUPPORT THE SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate this morning that we had in our chamber students from El Paso, Texas, the Lamplighters, formed from Henderson Middle School, the constituents of my colleague from Texas, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES), because today is an important day for Americans. We heard just recently a disturbing study about the imbalance of the performance of our students in America in math and science. Well, today we stand on the side of our students and on the side of learning by offering to the American people a school infrastructure bill that will begin to go throughout this Nation and fix the leaking roofs, the falling roofs, the expanded crowdedness that we have in our school districts across the Nation.

The school infrastructure bill that the Democrats will be offering today will say once and for all that we want our children in America to learn in safe and secure conditions. Then we will add another 100,000 teachers to our communities, 100,000 trained individuals committed to teaching our children, committed to preparing them for the 21st century.

I ask my colleagues in this body to support this legislation and stand on the side of our children.

LIBERALS OPPOSE TAX REFORM

(Ms. PRYCE of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, what does a liberal do when confronted with a tax cut? He opposes it. He condemns it. He becomes outraged at the very idea that Washington could get along with a little less and a family could do with a little more.

I opened up the Washington Post to find the headline, President Bashes GOP Tax Plan. Then turning to the New York Times, I find this headline: Clinton Attacks GOP Tax Overhaul Plan.

It appears that the days of working on a bipartisan basis with the Republican Congress are over. Liberals are upset. In fact, they are mad at the President for finally helping to pass a tax cut for middle-class families last year. So the liberals will not let the President continue down the road of tax relief, IRS reform, and overhaul of the Tax Code.

I guess the New Democrats at the White House are no longer calling the shots these days. It is too bad. The American people want tax reform.

IMPROVING EDUCATION

(Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, sometimes standing on the floor of the House of Representatives is like standing in an echo chamber. As soon as one member says they want to do something to help rebuild our public schools and provide a better education for our children, everybody starts saying it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is time to stop talking about it and to start doing something about it. That is why we have introduced legislation that would reduce class sizes by hiring an additional 100,000 qualified teachers, and legislation that would give states and local school districts help with new school construction and new renovation.

I believe these bills are a great opportunity for every legislator who says they care about education to follow up their words with actions. If Members are serious about making improvements in our education system, I urge them to cosponsor these bills.

BEING TRUTHFUL ABOUT THE BALANCED BUDGET

(Mr. BLUNT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, we did get good news yesterday, and that good news was that for the first time in 30 years, the Federal Government is about to pay its bills. For the first time in 30 years, we are about to run a surplus, not a deficit.

But we also need to remember that we run two sets of books here in Washington. One is the external set of books, the books that reflect the money that comes in and the money that goes out into all funds, and the second set of books reflects what we are doing to continue to borrow from the Social Security Trust Fund and from the Highway Trust Fund.

Mr. Speaker, we need to not only balance the budget on that one set of books, but we need to balance the budget on the second set of books as well. Do not continue to increase the debt; do not spend this new money, this external surplus, on new programs;

stop borrowing from the Social Security Trust Fund and stop borrowing from the Highway Trust Fund. Pay all the bills and be truthful with the American people, and treat the trust funds like they are truly trust funds.

TARGETED TAX CUTS NEEDED

(Mr. MORAN of Virginia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I came to the well because I have heard one speaker after another from the other side suggest that the President came out against tax cuts and that the natural reaction of the Democratic Party is to be opposed to tax cuts.

I would remind my colleagues that in fact the President has proposed a number of tax cuts, and that in fact a majority of the Democrats voted for tax cuts as part of the balanced budget agreement. What we are opposed to is eliminating the Tax Code, as the other side has proposed, without anything to replace it. That could wreak havoc on our economy.

Imagine when banks and the real estate community have to determine what would be the real cost of homes, for example, if you did not have a mortgage interest deduction, or any number of other assets if you did not have depreciation expenses.

We are in favor of tax cuts, but targeted tax cuts; tax cuts for families who are finding it difficult to afford child care expenses, or higher education expenses. Targeted tax cuts is what we need, not irresponsible elimination of the Tax Code.

CONTRACT WITH AMERICA A SUCCESS

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, in 1994, along the campaign trail, Republicans said that if the Republican Party became the majority, that we would pass a legislative agenda called the Contract with America within the first 100 days of the 1995 session.

Washington pundits and the typical status quo Washington liberals said, number one, they would not; number two, they could not; and then when the process was going on, they said they should not. All the Democrats fought it, kicking and screaming and yelling, saying it was going to lead to economic disaster, and all voted against welfare reform and voted against tax cuts for the middle class.

What happened? Within 100 days, the Contract with America passes, and what is the result? In 1995, the deficit, \$164 billion; 1996, the deficit, \$107 billion; 1997, the deficit, \$22 billion; and in 1998, just announced, a surplus of \$8 billion.

Where are all those Democrats who said that the Contract with America was going to be an economic disaster, who fought tax cuts for the middle class? The proof is that the budget is balanced, it worked, and I hope next time they do not fight us.

IMPROVING AMERICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, last week the Washington Post reported some grim news: The scores of Americans high school seniors ranked near the bottom in a rigorous new international exam in math and science.

This is unacceptable. Our schools clearly need help, and this body needs to get moving. Democrats are eager to get to work to reduce our class sizes, to repair crumbling schools, to put computers in classrooms and to provide an atmosphere in which our children can learn.

But my Republican colleagues, what they want to do is they want to throw out public education, to end public education as we know it. What they want to do is one more time make education the purview of the rich and of the wealthy. They also want to have tax cuts, tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, one more time.

Let us put our kids first, and not last. Education should be our top priority, public education, the great equalizer, which has allowed all of us to be able to live up to and work to our potential, no matter where we are on the socioeconomic scale. Let us get to work on education. Let us improve America's public schools.

MAKING AMERICAN EDUCATION THE ENVY OF THE WORLD

(Mr. ARMEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any disagreement in America that perhaps the most sacred responsibility we have is the education of our children, and I do not think there is any doubt in anybody's mind that the best way to beat the world and to be the envy of the world in the education of our children is to have the very, very best public education system in the world. There is no one I know that wants anything less than the very, very best public education for our children.

But, unhappily, Mr. Speaker, we have some children that are being left behind today. In Washington, D.C., we have some very, very good schools, and in Washington, D.C. we have some catastrophically bad schools.

Just a few months ago, 7,500 families, distressed about what was happening