

leadership has agreed on one thing: The only way they will permit any Democrat or any Republican to discuss and debate the issue of campaign finance reform is in a contrived procedure designed for one purpose and one purpose only, and that is to ensure that campaign finance is dead and gone for this session, that nothing will happen.

Mr. Speaker, why is this issue, which frankly, as we travel around the country, we do not hear on the tips of the tongues of the ordinary working people of this country, why is it so important? Well, the reason that it is so critical that we have a full debate is that it goes to every other issue that occurs in this Congress. Because increasingly, there are Americans out there who say that in this Congress we do not decide issues, whatever they might be, in terms of what is good for America. Rather, we decide them principally on the basis of who gave how much to whom and how often they did it.

It is that kind of corrupting influence in our democracy, to the extent it actually occurs, and more importantly perhaps to the extent that that is the way the American people feel about this system and they lose faith and confidence in our democracy because of the role of big money and corrupting this system, that this is so critical.

Perhaps some in America are concerned with our tax system or with Social Security or education or child care. If we are to deal with any of those issues constructively, we have to reform this system, and that is why today's action is so disgraceful.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TIAHRT 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 Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SAXTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WHO ARE WE REALLY PUNISHING: THE TOBACCO COMPANIES OR PEOPLE WHO CAN LEAST AFFORD THE TAX INCREASE?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. LEWIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind my colleagues of those Americans who are being pushed aside in our zeal to punish the tobacco companies and curb youth smoking. The rhetoric and demagoguery waged against tobacco gives new meaning to the "politics of fear." If only there was the same commit-

ment to wipe out illegal drugs, violence and illegitimacy, the hypocrisy of this campaign would not be so blatant.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, here we go again. From no new taxes to lining up for pushing to the limits the most regressive tax in America. Mr. Speaker, let me say it once and say it loud and clear: A tax is a tax is a tax.

The Senate Budget Committee resolution to raise tobacco excise taxes by \$1.50 is far from an act of courage and wisdom. Rather, the decision is borne out of fear, expedience, and illusion. This tax is income redistribution at its worst, pure and simple. The very defenders of our poor and middle-class citizens prefer to ignore the ugly truth of the proposed excise tax increase. Instead, they have convinced themselves that they know what is best for Americans. Once again, these Members of Congress will look the other way because they know that already over 50 percent of the Federal cigarette excise tax is paid by American taxpayers who earn less than \$30,000 a year. Even worse, only 7 percent is paid by folks with incomes over \$75,000.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot hide from the burden that this huge tax increase will have on our lower-income families. For someone who smokes a pack of cigarettes a day, our Federal Government will be taking an additional \$550 a year, and this is no small change if someone is making less than \$20,000 a year.

And where is all the money going? For starters, the antitobacco trial lawyers are lining up at the trough, when and if the States ever receive their portion of the new taxes and direct payments from the tobacco companies. But that is not all. We also have the Conrad and Kennedy bills, among others, that are ready to launch a new era of big government with hard-earned dollars from low-income taxpayers.

Even worse, there are some Members who believe we can use this tax increase on smokers and pay for other Americans to enjoy a tax cut.

Mr. Speaker, I will be among the first to support a much-needed tax relief bill. But the excise tax is an income transfer, not a tax break. Who are we really punishing? The tobacco companies? Or people who can least afford the tax increase?

The fact is that this new cost will be passed on to the consumer by the companies, whether it is from a tax or a national settlement. Twenty-five percent of American adults who choose to buy a legal product, albeit one that causes serious health problems, may soon be lining the pockets of trial lawyers and funding new Federal programs that have precious little to do with stopping kids from smoking.

We are told that smokers must be held accountable for the increased medical cost brought on by smoking-related illnesses. There is a myth that smokers impose higher medical costs on society and this justifies the in-

crease in our Federal excise tax. A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* tells us otherwise. The uncomfortable truth is that the lifetime medical costs of smokers are smaller than those of nonsmokers.

No doubt that many of us have encountered the suffering of a friend, a relative or a loved one who has been diagnosed with lung cancer or perhaps emphysema. I believe there are more effective ways, however, that will help us convince young and older Americans alike that smoking does have dire consequences for them, and for themselves and for the people that care for them.

One young man from Murray, Kentucky, said it best during his recent testimony to the House Committee on Commerce. The answer to reducing teen smoking lies with the family, and I quote, "This can be done in the home, not in Washington." His answer is hard to argue with, but I would add that our Federal Government can play a valuable role in supporting this message at home by helping to educate our youth through the media and the classroom.

We have made tremendous progress in this country in reducing the prevalence of smoking, and we can do even more with realistic constructive policies. Are we going to further punish adults who choose to smoke with higher taxes? Or is it time to embrace an imperfect but comprehensive settlement that, in the words of the Louisville Courier Journal Editorial Board, seeks an opportunity to make smoking more expensive and less attractive, especially to kids?

Congress must find the courage to adopt sensible national tobacco legislation. Ample evidence here at home and around the world shows the folly of taxing cigarettes out of the marketplace. Look no further than to our Canadian neighbors to understand the very real possibility of black market imports of cigarettes that will elude high Federal tax. Despite the fact that Canada doubled its tax on cigarettes in 1983, the increased levy has failed to reduce youth smoking and may have even made it more difficult to control because of smuggling. In our own Nation's history, we need to look no further than the era of prohibition to see how our government can create black market windfalls for criminals.

If we follow the mad rush towards another new tax, we will begin to destroy the livelihood of thousands of small family farms. Yes, we can spend millions of dollars to retrain these farmers, but I assure my colleagues that Congress cannot replace the way of life and culture they have cherished in our State for generations.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, Americans and people throughout the world will continue to smoke for years to come despite all our efforts to tax tobacco to death. I urge my colleagues to seek a solution that strives for prevention and cessation, not the punishment of fifty million Americans and thousands of tobacco farmers and workers.