

in promoting reliable electricity supplies through FERC and by ensuring wholesale markets are transparent and functioning efficiently.

A second immediate issue that needs attention is the LIHEAP program, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. High energy prices this past winter have left many working families unable to pay their heating bills and are having their utility service cutoff. The Senate has acted to increase the authorization for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program but the President's support and action is needed if we are going to put additional funds in this program. I hope it will be addressed by the Vice President's task force. Summer cooling bills will be arriving soon and the states have no funds left to help with those costs either.

Fuel specifications is another issue. The President could act immediately to help sort out the welter of gasoline specifications around the country that has balkanized the fuel market and rendered regions highly vulnerable to shortages of gasoline if a piece of the local energy infrastructure goes down. We saw gasoline price spikes in the Midwest and West Coast last summer because of this problem, and we will likely have similar problems again this summer.

If the Vice President's answer on these specific, pressing needs is that nothing much can be done about these problems this year, and that folks who are unfortunate enough to live in California, or folks who live in a region that is experiencing a gasoline price spike due to lack of availability of the right blend of gasoline, or working class families who cannot pay the high electricity bills for air conditioning, will just have to do without while we are working on some long-term energy fix, then we don't have a truly comprehensive and balanced energy strategy.

In conclusion, there has been a lot of interaction within the administration, perhaps, on this issue, but there has not been interaction between the administration and the Congress, at least that I am aware of, on what the Vice President is getting ready to recommend. By contrast, the Senate is now engaged in discussing an education bill where we did have very intense bipartisan discussions with the administration and among ourselves. Energy, in my view, is important in this country, just as education is important. There are real opportunities for bipartisan progress on the issue of energy as well as in the area of education.

I hope the administration sees this and puts away some of the hot button issues that are not likely to command support in the Senate, such as the opening of ANWR. They should put those away in favor of proposals that will command broad bipartisan support.

In the end, that may be the strongest indication of whether the administra-

tion wants to pursue a consensus bipartisan energy policy which will serve the interests of the country.

COMMEMORATION OF TAX FREEDOM DAY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to apprise the Senate of a very distressing development. Today marks Tax Freedom Day, the day when Americans will finally have earned enough money to pay off their tax bills for the year.

This year's Tax Freedom Day marks the longest period Americans have ever had to work to pay their taxes. It is astounding that every hour worked since the beginning of this year will go solely to pay America's tax bills.

The average American is shouldering a heavier tax burden than ever before. This year, Americans will work longer to pay for Government than they will to pay for food, clothing and shelter combined.

Congress has got to put a stop to this. I am pleased to report that Senator BAUCUS and I, and the other members of the Senate Finance Committee, are right now working on a tax cut bill that will provide a real reduction in income taxes. With \$1.35 trillion, we can now produce income tax cuts large enough that working Americans will actually see a difference in their paychecks.

So what has caused the lengthiest Tax Freedom Day in our Nation's history? It was the Federal individual income tax increases enacted in 1993. And here is the proof.

The Tax Foundation is the non-partisan, nonprofit policy group that calculated today's Tax Freedom Day. The Tax Foundation's analysis shows that the Federal tax burden grew by 14 days' pay between 1992 and 2001. That means that because of the 1993 tax increases, Americans now have to work an additional 2 weeks just to meet their Federal tax burden. That is equal to some Americans' vacation pay.

In stark contrast, the Tax Foundation says State and local tax burdens remained virtually unchanged during this period. So the culprit in creating the longest Tax Freedom Day in history is the Federal Government.

The biggest source of Federal revenue is the individual income tax. Over the past decade Federal tax collection levels for payroll taxes, corporate taxes, and all other taxes have been relatively stable. Collections of individual income taxes, however, have soared.

In 1992, tax collections from individual income taxes were 7.7 percent of our gross domestic product. That percentage has risen steadily each year, and as of the year 2000, it was an astounding 10.2 percent of GDP. Individual income taxes now take up the largest share of GDP in history. Even during World War II, collections from individuals were 9.4 percent of GDP, nearly a full percentage point below the current level.

The source of the current and projected tax surpluses is from the huge runups in individual tax collections. And that has given us the lengthiest Tax Freedom Day in our Nation's history.

Yesterday, the members of the Finance Committee met informally to discuss what everyone thinks should be in the tax cut package. I think there was a nearly unanimous agreement that individual income tax rates are simply too high.

Senator BAUCUS and I are working hard to put together a bipartisan tax cut package. I ask Members of the Senate and the American public to support our efforts. Our quest for real tax rate reduction is sincere and urgent. With an uncertain economy and excessive Federal tax collections, America needs action and it needs it now. American taxpayers expect us to deliver tax relief and we must not fail them.

As I stand here today, I pledge to you that as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, I will do everything in my power to ensure that next year's Tax Freedom Day will not mark the longest period Americans have to work to pay their taxes. And I am confident that my Democratic colleagues will join us in supporting this goal.

SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION HOT LINE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the Michigan State Police recently introduced a 24-hour school violence prevention hot line to allow students, parents, teachers and others, to report school violence or suspicious criminal conduct to the State Police. The hot line, 800-815 TIPS, offers young people and others in Michigan a way to reach out to law enforcement anonymously, if desired, and in a non-confrontational environment.

In the past month, students and citizens from across the state have given the State Police approximately 60 tips, including tips about bullying, harassment, sexual assault, as well as tips about knives and guns in school. The State Police then passed these tips on to the appropriate local law enforcement agency for investigation. Michigan is the thirteenth state to implement such a hotline and we hope it will help keep our schools safer for students and teachers.

We also hope that other preventative measures will be taken to keep our schools safer, such as legislative initiatives to keep firearms out of the hands of juveniles and prohibited persons. Together, we can work toward preventing the disturbing number of violent acts in school that we have seen far too much of in the last few years.

U.S.-JORDAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today in the Senate to offer a way out of the stalemate we have on trade policy.