

Instead of sound budget policies aimed at preparing for the imminent retirement of the baby-boom generation, the Bush administration and the majority in Congress have refused to adopt the kinds of budget enforcement rules that helped achieve fiscal discipline in the 1990s; have pursued an open-ended commitment to rebuilding Iraq that relies on supplemental appropriations rather than the normal budget process; and have remained committed to extending irresponsible tax cuts that will add further to the budget deficit. All of this comes at the cost of destroying greater economic opportunities for most American families.

That, of course, is not what we are hearing from the administration and its supporters, who keep telling us that the economy is doing well, that their tax cuts are an important reason why, and that everyone is benefiting. It should not be surprising that this is not a message that resonates with the American people because, in fact, the current economic recovery has been weaker than the typical business-cycle recovery since the end of World War II, and large numbers of Americans are still waiting to benefit from any economic growth.

This administration touts its tax cuts, but these cuts haven't made a dent in the pocket books of most American families.

The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center estimates that this year's tax cut will only save middle-income families about \$55—about what it now costs to fill the gas tank of their minivan. But taxpayers making over \$1 million will receive a cut of nearly \$38,000—enough to buy a new Mercedes.

Middle and lower income families are paying the price for the President's tax cuts for the wealthiest, as investments in programs that promote greater economic prosperity for ordinary Americans have become candidates for budget cutting.

Regrettably, it is not surprising how under the Republican leadership, low-income families have been abandoned but what is surprising is how the administration and Republican majority in Congress have also squeezed the middle class.

The President has proposed cuts to elementary and secondary education, student aid and loan assistance for higher education, job training for displaced workers, childcare assistance so that parents can go to work, and community development grants aimed at expanding small businesses. The President is also shortchanging investments in research and technologies that will create the high-wage jobs of the future.

Unfortunately, the rising tide is no longer lifting all boats. The benefits of this economic recovery are simply not going to ordinary Americans. Most Americans are concerned that this is as good as economic conditions will get under the Bush economic policies. Our focus should be on strengthening the safety net for American families—

whether it is raising the minimum wage or preserving Social Security, pensions, and health insurance coverage.

That is why we need a new direction for America—one that focuses on creating greater economic opportunities for all families.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the Washington Post editorial dated September 4, 2006.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MR. BUSH AND LABOR DAY—WORKERS AREN'T BENEFITING FROM GROWTH

Emerging from a meeting with his economic team at Camp David on Aug. 18, President Bush declared that "solid economic growth is creating real benefits for American workers and families." This assertion was false. Mr. Bush should use this Labor Day to rethink his rhetoric and adjust his policies.

The latest evidence on what the economy is doing for workers comes from last week's Census Bureau report. This showed that the growth cycle that began at the end of 2001 has in fact created remarkably few benefits for most Americans. Between 2001 and 2005 the income of the typical, or median, household actually fell by 0.5 percent after accounting for inflation, even as workers' productivity grew by 14 percent.

The picture is hardly any better if you consider 2005 alone. Workers' pay usually takes a while to pick up after a recession: In the first stage of a recovery, unemployment falls; in the second stage, a tight labor market pushes up wages. But this second stage is taking an awfully long time to arrive. In 2005, the fourth year of the expansion, the median income did rise slightly, but that reflected a gain for retirees. The typical full-time worker continued to fall backward.

Since 1980 the wages of the typical worker have tended to decline during bad times and recoup the losses during good ones, with the overall result that they've been stagnant. That stagnation, which contrasted with rapid gains for workers at the top, was bad enough. But the recent phenomenon of wages falling even during good times is disturbing and exceptional. In the first four years of the last expansion, from 1991 to 1995, median income rose 2.9 percent; in the two upswings before that, the first four years delivered gains of more than 8 percent. So whereas past presidents could declare that a rising tide lifted all boats, Mr. Bush cannot honestly do so.

The current growth cycle has also failed to dent poverty. In fact, between 2001 and 2005, the poverty rate rose from 11.7 percent to 12.6 percent. Again, this is exceptional: In the previous five economic cycles, the poverty rate fell during the first four years of the recovery. Moreover, 5.4 percent of the population now occupies the ranks of the extremely poor, with incomes less than half the poverty line. That's the highest rate of deep poverty since 1997.

In a speech at Columbia University on Aug. 1, Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson, Jr. rightly acknowledged that "amid this country's strong economic expansion, many Americans simply aren't feeling the benefits." Mr. Paulson needs to explain this point to Mr. Bush, who appears to see things differently. But beyond a change of language, the president needs to understand that his tax and spending policies must do more than target growth. If policies do not take inequality into account, the majority of Americans won't benefit from economic expansion—and popular support for free trade

and other pro-growth ideas will continue to deteriorate.

VERMONT LAKE MONSTERS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today I wish to applaud the Washington Nationals and the Vermont Lake Monsters for extending their player development contract for the next 2 years. This new agreement will keep Vermont as the New York-Penn League affiliate for Washington through at least the 2008 season.

Vermont has been the NY-Penn League affiliate of the Montreal Expos/Washington Nationals since joining the league in 1994, and the Vermont-Montreal/Washington affiliation is now the longest current partnership in the league. The Vermont team's on-field success is highlighted by winning the New York-Penn League championship in 1996.

Since beginning the partnership in 1994, Vermont has seen 46 of its players reach the Major Leagues. Eighteen of those 46 players were on Major League rosters during the 2006 season. On top of that, two players have been part of World Series championship teams—Geoff Blum for the Chicago White Sox in 2005, and Orlando Cabrera for the Boston Red Sox in 2004.

While the teams have struggled on the field of late, I am confident that the new Washington ownership will make a firm commitment to bolstering their player development program. The Lake Monsters' owner Ray Pecor and general manager C.J. Knudsen also should be commended for their hard work and dedication in running a top-notch franchise in Vermont. In short order, the Lake Monsters should get back to its winning ways and fans in Vermont and Washington will benefit.

TRIBUTE TO KEN CUNNINGHAM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity at the end of a Congress to express my gratitude and best wishes to Ken Cunningham, a long-time friend and staffer who has been like family to my wife Barbara and me for more than 25 years and left my staff a few months ago.

He served me in a number of positions during those years, including chief of staff general counsel, legislative director, and legislative assistant—sometimes juggling multiple positions at once. I used to joke with him about all the titles that he had accumulated.

But now faced with growing family obligations, he has left my staff to set up his own government relations firm.

After 2 years working for former Congressman Tom Tauke, Ken joined my new Senate staff in 1981 to handle several legislative and regulatory areas initially focusing on commerce, telecommunications, transportation, and agriculture. In fact, my very first Senate legislative victories came with Ken's help on the 1981 farm bill.