

Security. I would point out that \$137 billion of the Social Security surplus under our lockbox will stay in Social Security.

Now, the President talks about 62 percent of the surplus for Social Security, and what the President and Vice President Gore are talking about doing is spending 38 percent of Social Security on other things. That is what the folks back home call raiding the Social Security Trust Fund.

Republicans say 100 percent of Social Security for Social Security. Clinton-Gore, they say 62 percent and spend the rest on other things. We want to put a stop to that, and that is why the lockbox proposal Republicans are moving through the Congress is so important, because it is the first step we should take as we work to save Social Security. Let us lock away Social Security first before we consider any other reforms.

Another question I am often asked is no one ever talks about the national debt. Let me point out that in this budget this year, we are in a position where we are going to be able to pay down \$1.8 trillion of the national debt. Last year we paid off \$50 billion; this year we are projected to pay off \$100 billion of the national debt, and under our budget we propose the potential of paying down \$1.8 trillion of the national debt. Saving Social Security, paying down the debt.

I am also asked at the union halls and the VFWs and the other community centers and the grain elevators in the district that I represent, when are we going to do something about the tax burden on families? Today the average family in Illinois sends 40 percent of their income to Washington and Springfield and the local courthouse in taxes.

The tax burden today for the middle class is at its highest level ever in peacetime history. Twenty-one percent of our gross domestic product goes to Washington. That is the highest level ever in peacetime history, and it is putting a tremendous squeeze on middle class families.

I believe as we work to lower the tax burden on middle class families we should simplify the Tax Code; we should work to bring fairness to the Tax Code, beginning with the elimination of the marriage tax penalty. It is simply wrong that under our Tax Code 21 million married working couples on average pay \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married. Let us lower taxes by simplifying the Tax Code by eliminating the marriage tax penalty, let us pay down the national debt and let us save Social Security.

ISRAEL'S COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC VALUES CONTINUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of Jan-

uary 19, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, yesterday the people of Israel demonstrated their commitment to democratic values by electing a new Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, a highly respected, decorated soldier and former leader of the Israeli Army. Despite the strong differences voiced during the campaign, both Mr. Barak and Prime Minister Netanyahu deserve our congratulations for articulating thoughtful visions for the people of their country.

As he prepares to leave office, I commend Prime Minister Netanyahu's accomplishments. He stood by his commitment to take Israel down a road of less reliance on U.S. economic assistance and a greater reliance on the powerful forces of capitalism and free markets. I commend him for setting his nation on a course of economic independence. Because of his willingness to work with his fellow citizens and his demonstrated leadership, Israel is a vibrant, strong, self-reliant nation.

The Prime Minister-elect, Ehud Barak, left the ranks of the military just four years ago after a highly distinguished 36-year career as a platoon leader, tank battalion chief, senior intelligence analyst and head of the Israeli Army. As Israel's most decorated soldier, Ehud Barak is perhaps best known as the catalyst of the 1972 storming of a Sabena airliner hijacked by guerrillas at Tel Aviv's airport.

Following his retirement from the military, Mr. Barak served as the Army Chief of Staff and Interior Minister under former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, then Foreign Minister under Prime Minister Shimon Peres. When I traveled to Israel in 1997, I had a chance to meet with Mr. Barak, who was serving as the leader then of the Labor Party. I was impressed with Mr. Barak's meticulous attention to detail, commitment to important issues, and his construction of an aggressive grassroots political operation. Throughout the campaign, Barak promised, if elected, to continue Yitzhak Rabin's legacy of reviving negotiations with the Palestinians and making an impassioned personal commitment to the peace effort.

I am also impressed with Prime Minister-elect Barak's appreciation and understanding of the American-Israeli partnership, a partnership that goes beyond common political and strategic bonds. Both nations share a common set of values: freedom, individual responsibility, hope and opportunity. It is no coincidence that the birth of Israel coincided with the rise of the United States as the world's pre-eminent power. Our futures, both the United States' and Israel's, are tightly intertwined. Our shared traditions,

which respect and value human rights, democracy, free speech, religious tolerance, are the seeds of a lasting peace throughout the world and in the Middle East.

The elections held yesterday are proof that the people of Israel are determined to withstand pressures and maintain a democracy, build a vibrant economy and achieve peace and security in the entire region. Our Nation has watched and admired a brave, determined and sometimes very divided people build a democracy under difficult circumstances that often have tested their resolve.

Throughout the past decade, Israel has lived and thrived through especially difficult circumstances: the assassination of Israel's great leader Yitzhak Rabin, repeated terrorist attacks, waves of immigrants challenging Israel's complex and the very contentious national elections. Through it all, the people of Israel stood strong, holding to its values and its belief that their country will remain strong and at peace.

I have also been encouraged by Mr. Barak's willingness to return to the land-for-peace Israeli commitments under the Wye River Peace Agreement brokered by President Clinton last October. As the Israeli government now changes hands, I am hopeful that the Middle East peace process can take meaningful steps forward.

It is critical that the United States continue to support Israel's commitment to see an end to terrorist aggression and State-sponsored attacks against its citizens and cities. We must also support Israel's desire to move the peace process by requiring that existing peace agreements be respected by all sides. We should embrace these conditions, for they have at their core the values of any true democracy, the values of personal freedom.

Now that the citizens of Israel have spoken again, we must work to ensure that the Nation of Israel remains on course towards peace. Because of the perseverance, ingenuity and faith of its people, Israel has overcome the most daunting of challenges and become one of the world's great nations. I am confident that the people of the United States stand ready to help the people of Israel as they continue moving down a road of peace, security and economic self-reliance.

ENFORCE THE WAR POWERS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, 56 days ago President Clinton launched a massive offensive air campaign against Yugoslavia. Over the