

There has been a tremendous number of closings in home health care in Minnesota. The cuts we made were extreme. People who could be taken care of at home are now kept longer in the more costly hospital setting simply because there is no one to provide the home care.

But let me focus on the White Community Hospital in Aurora, Minnesota. This is a hospital that serves an iron ore mining community in Northeast Minnesota. The miners in this community and others in communities across Minnesota's iron range mined the ore that was turned into steel and built our cities in the twentieth century, made the cars, and the rails. They are the hear and soul of America. They or their parents came to this country, fleeing oppression in many European countries, they have a strong patriotism, a powerful work ethic and a community second to none in the United States. When I visited them last week to hear about the struggle they are engaged in to keep their hospital open I didn't over promise, but I did promise I would do everything I could to help them in their fight. And I will. The BBA is hurting them. It is an anchor around the neck of their hospital. They are fighting for their hospital and we can't turn our back on them.

I have co-sponsored numerous pieces of legislation to restore additional funds to Medicare providers, but what we need is comprehensive BBA relief and our constituents, our hospitals, our nursing homes, and our home health agencies cannot wait.

When Medicare fails to pay its share, it threatens health care for all patients. Reduced Medicare payments are contributing to decisions by many providers and insurers that threaten Medicare beneficiaries' access to care, including staff layoffs, reductions in services, or even outright facility closures or decisions to withdraw from the Medicare program. As we all know, entire communities suffer when such actions take place.

We need comprehensive and substantial relief for community hospitals, teaching hospitals, rural hospitals, home health agencies, and skilled nursing facilities, among others—and we need it now, before Congress adjourns before the August recess.

This amendment simply states that it is the sense of the Senate that by the end of the 106th Congress, Congress shall revisit and restore a substantial portion of the reductions in Medicare payments to providers caused by enactment of the BBA of 1997.

I wish to let colleagues know that I am going to call for a vote on an amendment Monday evening that deals with the drastic reduction of Medicare payments in the areas of hospital and home health care, and also skilled nursing care.

In 1997, we passed the balanced budget amendment, and the reductions in

Medicare over a 5-year period were estimated to be around \$100 billion. The recent figure is going to be about \$200 billion.

Last year, we tried to do a "fix," and we passed what was called the Balanced Budget Refinement Act. But basically what it did was restore about 10 percent of the actual cuts that we have made. I could say this in a more complete way, but what I want to do right now is just say to colleagues that my amendment is going to deal with these cuts. Either it is going to be a sense of the Senate that says by the end of the session, we have to restore some of this assistance, some of this money to our providers and to our patients and to the consumers, and/or I could have another amendment that says if we do not do that, there needs to be a freeze in the cuts.

I am sure the Presiding Officer has heard of this in Alabama. I think you hear it in Nevada. I hear it in Minnesota. You hear it all across the country. In Minnesota, especially in our rural communities, whether it is White Hospital in the Iron Range in the White Lakes, whether it is southwest Minnesota, whether it is west central Minnesota, especially in our rural communities—we are going to lose these hospitals. They lost anywhere from 50 to 70 percent of their payment on Medicaid and Medicare.

Colleagues, in 1997, I don't know what we were thinking when we voted for this. I think it was a big mistake. I did not vote for it. Others voted for it in good faith. Right now, what we are hearing is that these hospitals are not going to be able to provide the care. They are going to go under. These nursing homes are not going to be able to make it. We have seen severe cuts and cutbacks of services in home health care.

The point is this: Yes, it is true the hospitals and nursing homes are important employers in these communities, so there are jobs. Yes, it is true the same thing could be said for home health care. But the worst part of it is we are talking about a dramatic decline in the quality of care for people. In a lot of communities, especially in rural America, this is the death knell for our communities. It is hard enough for people to struggle to earn a decent living, but people can't stay in the communities if there is not good health care and if there is not good education available. Right now, we do not have that, if these hospitals shut down.

This amendment is an amendment that speaks to these cuts. It will be an amendment based upon many meetings I have had with community people all across Minnesota. I think it is an amendment that all my colleagues, hopefully, will support because when Medicare does not pay its share, it is a threat to the health care for patients and it also has a dramatic negative effect on our communities as well.

I want to bring this to the attention of colleagues. I hope there will be a strong vote for this amendment. There is some discussion we are not going to do anything about this. But we never should have voted for cuts that are this severe. This has had just the harshest consequences. It was a mistake and we have to restore this funding.

#### MASSACRES IN COLOMBIA

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I want to bring something to the attention of the Senate today. Even though most Senators are gone, I want to do this because I think it should be done in as public a way as possible. I bring to the attention of colleagues a piece in the New York Times. It is a front-page story, "Colombians Tell of Massacre, as Army Stood By."

When you read this story, there will be tears in your eyes. I don't know whether they will be tears of sadness or tears of anger. I will read just the first few paragraphs:

EL SALADO, Colombia.—The armed men, more than 300 of them, marched into this tiny village early on a Friday. They went straight to the basketball court that doubles as the main square, residents said, announced themselves as members of Colombia's most feared right-wing paramilitary group, and with a list of names began summoning residents for judgment.

A table and chairs were taken from a house, and after the death squad leader had made himself comfortable, the basketball court was turned into a court of execution, villagers said. The paramilitary troops ordered liquor and music, and then embarked on a calculated rampage of torture, rape and killing.

"To them, it was like a big party," said one of a dozen survivors who described the scene in interviews this month. "They drank and danced and cheered as they butchered us like hogs."

By the time they left, late the following Sunday afternoon, they had killed at least 36 people whom they accused of collaborating with the enemy, left-wing guerrillas who have long been a presence in the area. The victims, for the most part, were men, but others ranged from a 6-year-old girl to an elderly woman. As music blared, some of the victims were shot after being tortured; others were stabbed or beaten to death, and several more were strangled.

Yet during the three days of killing last February, military and police units just a few miles away made no effort to stop the slaughter, witnesses said. At one point, they said, the paramilitaries had a helicopter flown in to rescue a fighter who had been injured trying to drag some victims from their home.

Instead of fighting back, the armed forces set up a roadblock on the way to the village shortly after the rampage began, and prevented human rights and relief groups from entering and rescuing residents.

While the Colombian military has opened three investigations into what happened here and has made some arrests of paramilitaries, top military officials insist that fighting was under way in the village between guerrillas and paramilitary forces—not a series of executions. They also insist that the colonel in charge of the region has been persecuted by

government prosecutors and human rights groups. Last month he was promoted to general, even though examinations of the incidents are pending.

I ask unanimous consent the entire article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the New York Times, July 14, 2000]  
VILLAGERS TELL OF A MASSACRE IN COLOMBIA,  
WITH THE ARMY STANDING BY  
(By Larry Rohter)

EL SALADO, COLOMBIA.—The armed men, more than 300 of them, marched into this tiny village early on a Friday. They went straight to the basketball court that doubles as the main square, residents said, announced themselves as members of Colombia's most feared right-wing paramilitary group, and with a list of names began summoning residents for judgment.

A table and chairs were taken from a house, and after the death squad leader had made himself comfortable, the basketball court was turned into a court of execution, villagers said. The paramilitary troops ordered liquor and music, and then embarked on a calculated rampage of torture, rape and killing.

"To them, it was like a big party," said one of a dozen survivors who described the scene in interviews this month. "They drank and danced and cheered as they butchered us like hogs."

By the time they left, late the following Sunday afternoon, they had killed at least 36 people whom they accused of collaborating with the enemy, left-wing guerrillas who have long been a presence in the area. The victims, for the most part, were men, but others ranged from a 6-year-old girl to an elderly woman. As music blared, some of the victims were shot after being tortured; others were stabbed or beaten to death, and several more were strangled.

Yet during the three days of killing last February, military and police units just a few miles away made no effort to stop the slaughter, witnesses said. At one point, they said, the paramilitaries had a helicopter flown in to rescue a fighter who had been injured trying to drag some victims from their home.

Instead of fighting back, the armed forces set up a roadblock on the way to the village shortly after the rampage began, and prevented human rights and relief groups from entering and rescuing residents.

While the Colombian military has opened three investigations into what happened here and has made some arrests of paramilitaries, top military officials insist that fighting was under way in the village between guerrillas and paramilitary forces—not a series of executions. They also insist that the colonel in charge of the region has been persecuted by government prosecutors and human rights groups. Last month he was promoted to general, even though examinations of the incidents are pending.

What happened in El Salado last February—at the same time that President Clinton was pushing an aid package to step up antidrug efforts here—goes to the heart of the debate over the growing American backing of the Colombian military. For years the United States government and human rights groups have had reservations about the Colombian military leadership, its human rights record and its collaboration with paramilitary units.

The Colombian Armed Forces and police are the principal beneficiaries of a new \$1.3

billion aid package from Washington. The Colombian government says it has been working hard to sever the remnants of ties between the armed forces and the paramilitaries and has been training its soldiers to observe international human rights conventions even during combat.

"The paramilitaries are some of the worst of the terrorists who profit from drugs in Colombia, and in no way can anyone justify their human rights violations," said Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, the White House drug policy director. But he said "the Colombian military is making dramatic improvements in its human rights record," and noted that the aid package includes "significant money, \$46 million, for human rights training and implementation."

But human rights groups, pointing to incidents like the massacre here, say these links still exist and that mechanisms to monitor and punish commanders and units have had limited success at best.

"El Salado was the worst recorded massacre yet this year," said Andrew Miller, a Latin American specialist for Amnesty International USA, who spent the past year as an observer near here. "The Colombian Armed Forces, specifically the marines, were at best criminally negligent by not responding sooner to the attack. At worst, they were knowledgeable and complicit."

The paramilitary attack on El Salado killed more people and lasted longer than any other in Colombia this year. But in most other respects it was an operation so typical of the 5,500-member right-wing death squad that goes by the name of the Peasant Self-Defense of Colombia that the Colombian press treated it as just another atrocity.

The paramilitary groups were founded in the early 1980's, mostly funded by agricultural interests to protect them from extortion and kidnapping by the left-wing guerrillas. The groups were declared illegal over a decade ago, but have continued to operate, often with clandestine military support and intelligence, and in recent years have become increasingly involved in drug trafficking.

Over the past 18 months, more than 2,500 people, most of them unarmed peasants in rural areas like this village in northern Colombia, have died in more than 500 attacks by what the Colombian government calls "illegal armed groups" involved in the country's 35-year-old civil conflict. And according to the government, right-wing paramilitary groups are responsible for most of those killings.

Since the El Salado massacre, nearly 3,000 residents of the area have fled to nearby towns, including El Carmen de Bolivar and Ovejas, as well as the provincial capital, Cartagena. Early this month, more than a dozen of the survivors were interviewed in the towns where they have taken refuge under the protection of human rights groups or the Roman Catholic Church.

Despite efforts to protect them, however, some have recently been killed in individual attacks or have disappeared, actions for which the same paramilitary group that attacked their village has been blamed. As a result, all of the survivors interviewed for this story spoke on condition that their names not be used.

Their accounts, however, coincide with investigations conducted by the Colombian government prosecutor's office and by the Colombia office of the United Nations high commissioner for human rights.

Members of a paramilitary unit had attacked this village in 1997, killing five people

and warning that they would eventually come back. Many residents fled then, but returned after a few months believing that they were safe until the death squad suddenly reappeared on the morning of Feb. 18.

"I looked up at the hills, and could see armed men everywhere, blocking every possible exit," a farmer recalled. "They had surrounded the town, and almost as soon as they came down, they began firing their guns and shouting, 'Death to the guerrillas.'"

The death squad troops, almost all dressed in military-style uniforms with a blue patch, made their way to the basketball court at the center of the village. They took tables and chairs from a nearby building, pulled out a list of names and began the search for victims.

"Some people were shot, but a lot of them were beaten with clubs and then stabbed with knives or sliced up with machetes," one witness said. "A few people were beheaded, or strangled with metal wires, while others had their throats cut."

The list of those to be executed was supplied by two men, one wearing a ski mask. Paramilitary leaders, who have acknowledged the attack on El Salado but describe it as combat with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known as the FARC, said the two were FARC deserters who had dealt with local people and knew who had been guerrilla sympathizers.

"It was all done very methodically," one witness said. "Some people were brought to the basketball court, but were saved because someone would say, 'Not that one,' and they would be allowed to leave. But I saw a woman neighbor of mine, who I know had nothing at all to do with the guerrillas, knocked down with clubs and then stabbed to death."

While some paramilitaries searched for people to kill, others were breaking into shops and stealing beer, rum and whisky. Before long, a macabre party atmosphere prevailed, with the paramilitaries setting up radios with dance music and ordering a local guitarist and accordionist to play.

In addition, a young waitress from a cantina adjoining the basketball court was ordered to keep a steady supply of liquor flowing. As the armed men grew drunk and rowdy, they repeatedly raped her, along with several other women, according to residents and human rights groups.

As night fell, some residents fled to the wooded hills above town. Others, however stayed in their homes, afraid of being caught if they tried to escape, unable to move because they had small children, or convinced that they would not be harmed.

Saturday was more of the same. "All day long we could hear occasional bursts of gunfire, along with the screams and cries of those who were being tortured and killed," said a woman who had taken refuge in the hills with her small children.

Of the 36 people killed in town, 16 were executed at the basketball court. And additional 18 people were killed in the countryside, residents and human rights workers said, and 17 more are still missing, making for a death toll that could be as high as 71.

By Friday afternoon, however, news of the slaughter had spread to El Carmen de Bolivar, about 15 miles away. Relatives of El Salado residents rushed to local police and military posts, but were rebuffed.

"We made a scandal and nearly caused a riot, we were so insistent," said a 40-year-old man who had left El Salado early on Friday because he had business in town. "But they did nothing to help us."

Besides not coming to the aid of villagers here, the armed forces and the police set up roadblocks that prevented others from entering the town to help. Anyone seeking to enter the area was told the road was unsafe because it had been mined and that combat was going on between guerrilla and paramilitary units.

In a telephone interview, three Colombian Navy admirals said that residents of El Salado were accusing the military of complicity in the massacre because they have been coerced by guerrillas. The roadblock was set up, they said, to prevent more deaths or injuries to civilians.

"At no point was there collaboration on our part, nor would we have permitted their passage" through the area, Adm William Porras, the second in command of the Colombian Navy, said on the death squad unit. "We never at any point were covering up for them or helping them, as all the subsequent investigations have shown."

But local residents, Colombian prosecutors investigating the massacre and human rights groups say there was no combat. Villagers say that the armed forces had not been in the center of El Salado recently, and that they had left the outlying areas a day before. Residents also say they had passed over the dirt road that Friday morning and there were no mines.

"The army was on patrol for two or three days before the massacre took place, and then suddenly they disappeared," recalled a 43-year-old tobacco farmer. "It can't be explained, and it seems very curious to me."

What has been established is that the villagers were simple peasants, and not the guerrillas the paramilitary leader says his troops were fighting. "It is quite clear that these were defenseless people and that what they were subjected to was not combat, but abuse and torture," said a foreign diplomat who has been investigating.

Residents said the paramilitaries felt so certain that government security forces would stay away that late on Friday they had a helicopter flown in. It landed in front of a church and picked up a death squad fighter who was injured when a family he was trying to drag out of their house to be taken to the basketball court resisted.

In a report published last February, Human Rights Watch found "detailed, abundant and compelling evidence of continuing close ties between the Colombian Army and paramilitary groups responsible for gross human rights violations." All told, "half of Colombia's 18 brigade-level units have documented links to paramilitary activity," the report concluded.

"Far from moving decisively to sever ties to paramilitaries, Human Rights Watch's evidence strongly suggests that Colombia's military high command has yet to take the necessary steps to accomplish this goal," the report stated.

At the time of the El Salado massacre, the senior military officer in this region was Col. Rodrigo Quiñones Cárdenas, commander of the First Navy Brigade, who has since been promoted to general. As director of Naval Intelligence in the early 1990's, he was identified by Colombian prosecutors as the organizer of a paramilitary network responsible for the killings of 57 trade unionists, human rights workers and members of a left-wing political party.

In 1994, Colonel Quiñones and seven other soldiers were charged with "conspiring to form or collaborate with armed groups." But after the main witness against him was killed in a maximum security prison and the

case was moved from a civilian court to a military tribunal, the colonel was acquitted.

According to the same investigation by Colombian prosecutors, one of Colonel Quiñones's closest associates in that paramilitary network was Harold Mantilla, a colonel in the Colombian Marines. Today, Colonel Mantilla is commander of the Fifth Marine Battalion, which operates in the area around El Salado and is one of the units said by residents and human rights workers to have failed to respond to appeals for help.

After the paramilitary unit left El Salado, the police captured 11 paramilitaries north-east of here on the ranch of a drug trafficker who is in prison in Bogotá. Along with four others who were arrested separately, they are facing murder charges, but their leaders and most of the others who carried out the killings remain free.

More than four months after the massacre, El Salado is virtually deserted. Only one of the town's 1,330 original residents was present when a reporter and human rights workers visited early this month, and he said the village remains as it was the day the death squad left, except for the two mass graves on a rise near the basketball court where the bodies were buried and later exhumed for investigators.

The tables and chairs used by the paramilitary "judges," smashed or overturned as they left, are still strewn across the basketball court.

"I don't know if the people are ever going to want to come back again," the resident said. "What happened here was just too terrible to bear, and we didn't deserve it."

Mr. WELLSTONE. We just voted, with essentially no strings attached, to be involved in a military operation in Colombia with the money going for a military operation, to a military that does not lift a finger while these paramilitary death squads go in and massacre innocent people. I say to Senators, Democrats and Republicans, this is no longer Colombia's business. This is our business because we now have provided the money for just such a military, which is complicit, not only in human rights violations—I spoke about this on the floor of the Senate—but in this particular case in the murder of innocent people, including small children.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter I sent to Secretary Albright.

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

U.S. SENATE,  
Washington, DC, July 14, 2000.

Hon. MADELEINE K. ALBRIGHT,  
Secretary of State,  
U.S. Department of State,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: I write to express my profound concern over the reported murder and disappearance of 71 civilians in February in El Salado and six civilians this past weekend in La Union, Colombia. Both massacres were allegedly committed by paramilitary groups in collaboration with members of the Colombia Armed Forces. I urge you to move swiftly to investigate these claims and to ensure that those involved in these atrocities are brought to justice.

According to a report today in the New York Times, on February 17th a para-

military group killed 36 people in El Salado, sixteen of which were executed in the town's basketball court. Another 18 were killed in the surrounding countryside, and 17 are still missing. At the time of the massacre, the senior military office in the region was Col. Rodrigo Quiñones Cardenas, commander of the First Navy Brigade, who has since been promoted to general. Not only did military and police units in the area not come to the aid of the villagers, they allegedly set up road blocks which prevented others from entering the town to provide assistance to the victims. While the evidence in this case strongly indicates the link between the armed forces and the paramilitaries in the massacre at El Salado, it clearly confirms a negligence of the duty of the Colombian military and police to protect the civilian population. Similarly, on July 8, helicopters and soldiers from the Colombian 17th Army Brigade appear to have facilitated killings of six men by a paramilitary unit in La Union.

Yesterday, the President signed a bill that will provide approximately \$1 billion in emergency supplemental assistance to the Colombian government to support its counter narcotics efforts. During the debate in Congress over Plan Colombia, I and many of my colleagues objected to the plan's military component, the "Push into Southern Colombia," given the detailed and abundant evidence of continuing close ties between the Colombian Army and paramilitary groups responsible for gross human rights violations. The final package was conditioned on the Administration and the Colombian government ensuring that ties between the Armed Forces and paramilitaries are severed, and that Colombian Armed Forces personnel who are credibly alleged to have committed gross human rights violations are held accountable.

Instead of moving decisively to sever ties to paramilitaries, some elements in Colombia's military high command continue to work with paramilitary groups and have yet to take the necessary steps to accomplish that goal. For example, Col. Cardenas was the senior military officer overseeing the El Salado area at the time of the massacre, and was identified by Colombian prosecutors in the early 1990's as the organizer of a paramilitary network responsible for the killings of 57 trade unionist and human workers. Nevertheless, since the killings in El Salado in February, he has received a promotion to general. How does this demonstrate the Colombian military's stated commitment to clean up its house? Is it the policy of the Colombian military to offer promotions to officers involved in incidences about which investigations for human rights abuses are pending?

I am very concerned about the credibility of the vetting process used to insure that Colombian soldiers accused of human rights violations will not serve in the battalions scheduled to receive training from the United States military. It is my understanding that the vetting process checks only for those accusations of direct involvement in human rights violations and does not consider the fact that soldiers may indirectly facilitate abuses. This is reported to have been the case in El Salado.

During the debate surrounding Plan Colombia, the Administration and the Colombian government pledged to work to reduce the production and supply of cocaine while protecting human rights. The continuing reports of human rights abuses in Colombia confirm my grave reservations regarding the Administration's ability to effectively manage the use of the resources that will be provided while protecting the human rights of

Colombian citizens. To that end, I respectfully seek answers to the following questions:

(1) How will the Administration ensure a vetting process guaranteeing that Colombians indirectly facilitating human rights violations, as well as those accused of direct violations, will not serve in battalions being trained by the United States military?

(2) What will the Administration do to ensure that the alleged murders and human rights abuses in El Salado are investigated, and that those responsible are prosecuted?

(3) How will the Administration address the needs of the victims at El Salado, including the nearly 3,000 residents displaced by the incident?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

PAUL D. WELLSTONE,  
*U.S. Senator.*

Mr. WELLSTONE. I conclude this letter:

During this debate surrounding Plan Colombia, the Administration and the Colombian government pledged to work to reduce the production and supply of cocaine while protecting human rights. The continuing reports of human rights abuses in Colombia confirm my grave reservations regarding the Administration's ability to effectively manage the use of the resources that will be provided while protecting the human rights of Colombian citizens. To that end I respectfully seek answers to the following questions.

I respectfully seek answers to the following questions from Secretary Albright.

No. 1, How will the Administration ensure a vetting process guaranteeing that Colombians indirectly facilitating human rights violations, as well as those accused of direct violations, will not serve in battalions being trained by the United States military?

I want an answer to that question from the Secretary of State.

No. 2, What will the Administration do to ensure that the alleged murderers and human rights abuses in El Salado are investigated, and that those responsible are prosecuted?

No. 3, How will the Administration address the needs of the victims at El Salado, including the nearly 3,000 residents displaced by the incident?

Mr. President, I want to conclude by thanking my colleague, Senator BRYAN, for his graciousness, but also by saying to Senators, again, this front-page story—and I just wrote the administration about another massacre just a few days ago in Colombia—this is our business.

We support this government. We are supporting the military operation in the south. We are supporting this military with this kind of record, complicity in this kind of slaughter of innocent people.

I hope Secretary Albright will respond to this letter in an expeditious way. I will continue to come to the floor of the Senate and speak out about what is going on in Colombia. Senator DURBIN is very concerned. Senator REED is very concerned. Senator BIDEN is very concerned. He had a different position on this Colombia aid package. All should speak out, whatever our

vote was on this legislation, because this is our business. This is being done, if not directly, indirectly, in our name.

I thank my colleague from Nevada. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I am always pleased to yield to my friend and colleague from Minnesota. I know how deeply he feels about these issues. I was happy to provide him the time to speak.

#### MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY RELIEF RECONCILIATION ACT

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I preface my comments this afternoon by praising the distinguished public service of the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, the very able and distinguished senior Senator from New York, Mr. MOYNIHAN. Senator MOYNIHAN is not only a treasure for his own State; he is a national resource. This institution and this country will greatly miss his public service.

His years of experience have provided context and perspective for many of the policy debates in which we have been engaged since I have been a Member of this body and, more specifically, since becoming a member of the Senate Finance Committee and having had the opportunity to meet with him. He always acts in a gracious way, with much charm and considerable Irish wit and humor that makes every meeting of the Senate Finance Committee something special because of his wisdom, his insight, and the manner in which he presents his case.

I am pleased to be supportive of the alternative marriage penalty relief measure of which he is the prime architect, and I will discuss that more in just a moment.

My purpose in coming to the floor this afternoon is to oppose the legislation before us today. I do so with regret because it is my view that it would be possible for us to craft a bipartisan measure which would accomplish the result sought by those of us who believe the marriage penalty is unfair and should be eliminated.

Unfortunately, this measure will pass. It will do so on a partisan vote, and, most assuredly, the President will veto this measure and we will, in effect, have missed an opportunity to alleviate a burden that millions of Americans endure, that is unfair, and that we could correct before this session of the Congress concludes. I regret that very deeply, and I am hopeful we may extricate ourselves from the situation we face.

This measure is described as providing relief from a marriage penalty. Let me say that it sails under false colors. No. 1, it does not provide the relief its advocates contend. No. 2, it provides substantial tax relief to those

who are not facing a marriage penalty, who enjoy a marriage bonus, and to at least 29 million others who are not married at all.

Providing relief in these two other categories may be an area of legitimate debate and concern, but it could hardly be argued that this is providing relief from an onerous marriage penalty. I much appreciate the support of our distinguished chairman of the Finance Committee to provide relief to taxpayers who are currently paying the penalty. As I said, this does much more and, I think in doing so, diminishes our effort to solve the problem.

My own view is that as a result of the surpluses that have accrued, we ought to be paying down the national debt and taking care of the Social Security and Medicare problem that is longstanding and that threatens to engulf us in those outyears as more and more people become eligible for that program. We ought to be providing a prescription drug benefit as part of Medicare and, yes, we ought to be providing some tax relief, but we ought to do so in a very targeted fashion. I believe that appropriately one of those targets is eliminating the marriage penalty, and I will talk more about the specifics of the proposal in just a moment.

The proposal before us not only is not targeted and is misdirected, in my view, it is also enormously costly. Although we are debating this matter in the context of reconciliation, a concept that I suspect is lost on most Americans who may be watching the proceedings of the Senate this afternoon, that is in a 5-year constraint. In point of fact, what we are talking about is a 10-year bill and a 10-year cost.

The proposal the majority advances would cost \$248 billion. In my view, we squander much of the surplus that could be devoted to these other priorities and yet fail to achieve what the majority says is its priority, and that is to eliminate the marriage penalty.

Let me talk for a moment about what the marriage penalty is because not everybody perhaps understands it. Because of certain anomalies in the Tax Code, when millions and millions of married couples in which both are wage earners—a situation that has become increasingly frequent in recent years—combine their incomes, some married couples pay a penalty, and that is wrong and we ought to correct that. It is indefensible and, indeed, one can even argue that it is morally improper as well.

Twenty-five million Americans pay a marriage penalty, and that is the target to which I want to address my comments.

Because of the anomalies in the Tax Code, another 21 million Americans receive a marriage bonus; that is, they benefit by reason of the provisions of the Tax Code. In my view, that is not what the target ought to be. Those