

that suffer from the "senior citizens' drug penalty"—the high prices our nation's seniors are forced to pay for prescription drugs.

The amendment that I've offered would force Congress to address these priorities. It simply says that the tax bill before the Senate today won't take effect until Congress has also fulfilled its responsibility to enact a meaningful Medicare prescription drug benefit. My amendment won't prevent Congress from enacting marriage penalty relief this year, nor will it keep a single married couple from enjoying the tax benefits in this bill. What it will do is ensure that we don't backtrack from the Senate's vote to enact a prescription drug benefit before we do major tax cuts.

Let me say, Mr. President, that this isn't just rhetoric. The problems faced by our nation's seniors in affording prescription drugs are immediate and real. I'd like to remind the Senate of a story I heard from a physician in my state recently about a patient who was splitting her doses of Tamoxifen—a breast cancer drug—with two of her friends who also had breast cancer, but couldn't afford the medication. As a result, all three women had inadequate doses of the medication.

Or consider the story of a disabled father of three from Pennington Gap, Virginia, who broke his neck several years ago, and went from making \$50,000 a year to \$800 a month in disability benefits. While he qualifies for Medicare, he's forced to choose each month between spending nearly half of his disability benefit on prescription drugs, or helping out his family, because Medicare offers no coverage for his medications.

These Virginians are not alone in their troubles. The average Medicare beneficiary will spend \$1100 on prescription drugs this year. Most of them won't have adequate prescription drug coverage to help them cover these crushing costs. And the numbers of those that do have coverage are dropping rapidly.

Despite the suggestions of some of my colleagues, this problem isn't limited solely to the poor. One in four Medicare beneficiaries with a high income—defined as \$45,000 a year for a couple—has no coverage for prescription drugs. And while some seniors do have coverage, nearly half of them lack coverage for the entire year, making them extremely vulnerable to catastrophic drug costs.

Complicating this matter for the elderly is the "senior citizens' drug penalty" that seniors without drug coverage are forced to pay. Most working Americans who are insured through the private sector pay less than the full retail price for prescription drugs. This is because insurers generally contract with private sector entities that negotiate better prices for drugs, and pass

on the power of group purchasing to their customers.

Seniors lack this option, however, and must still pay full price for their drugs. One recent study showed that seniors without drug coverage typically pay 15 percent more than people with coverage. And the percentage of Medicare beneficiaries without drug coverage who report not being able to afford a needed drug is about 5 times higher than those with coverage.

This "senior citizens' drug penalty," in my view, is unconscionable. Senior citizens are more reliant on drugs, and have higher drug costs, than any other segment of the population. They deserve to have the same bargaining power that benefits other Americans.

Mr. President, in April, the other side spoke against my budget amendment, claiming that there was already adequate language in the Republican budget resolution to ensure that we pass a prescription drug benefit this year. At the time, they pointed to the \$40 billion reserve fund which was included in the budget resolution that the Committee had reported, arguing that this would provide ample money to enact a prescription drug benefit and offer tax relief.

Republicans asked, in essence, that we trust them that the Senate won't put tax cuts before our nation's seniors. Let me say that I do trust my good friends on the other side of the aisle. But to borrow a line from Ronald Reagan, I believe we should trust—but verify. That requires deeds as well as words.

Mr. President, our nation's seniors deserve better than this. In April, at least fifty-one senators felt the same way. I urge every one of them, as well as senators who opposed my amendment then because they thought the \$40 billion reserve fund would guarantee a prescription drug benefit, to support my amendment now. With its passage, we'll be able to eliminate both the true "marriage penalty" and the "senior citizens' drug penalty."

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

Ms. COLLINS. I believe under the previous order I will be recognized to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 15 minutes.

CONCERN FOR SENATOR PAUL COVERDELL

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I want to express the sorrow that is in my heart, and I know in the hearts of all of my colleagues and, indeed, everybody who works in the Senate, about the sad news of the unexpected ill health of our friend and colleague, Senator PAUL COVERDELL of Georgia. My heart and my prayers go out to him, his family,

his staff, his constituents, and all of the many people who care so much about our good friend. He will be in our hearts and in our prayers. I know I speak for all of my colleagues when I wish him a speedy recovery.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS and Mr. CRAIG pertaining to the introduction of S. 2879 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 3 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 4578, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4578) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, we are now back for the final 3 and one-quarter hours of debate on amendments to the Interior appropriations bill. Any Member who reserved an amendment to that bill may present it between now and 6:15 this evening, at which time, by unanimous consent, we go to the marriage penalty bill for what may be an extended series of votes. Any of the amendments reserved on the Interior bill will be voted on, if, in fact, the vote is necessary, tomorrow morning.

I list 12 amendments that were reserved for debate during this period of time. I am informed by staff that we have settled 4 of them. That leaves eight amendments: two by the Senator from New Mexico, Mr. BINGAMAN; one by the Senator from California, Mrs. BOXER; one by the Senator from Nevada, Mr. BRYAN; one by the Senator from Connecticut, Mr. LIEBERMAN; one by the Senator from Oklahoma, Mr. NICKLES; one by the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. REED; one by the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS.

Curiously enough, most of these Senators who have said they will be here from between 5 o'clock and 6 o'clock p.m., which takes a considerable portion of the debate time, are away. I think some of those eight amendments I have listed will themselves be settled without debate or by agreement. If any of the seven Senators whose names I have just mentioned are within hearing and sight of this debate, I urge that

Senator to reach the Senate floor promptly. At this point they have a real opportunity to present their amendments. Later on, they are likely to be very constricted as to time.

Therefore, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLINS). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMPSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMPSON. Madam President, as we debate this bill to provide funding for the Department of the Interior in the next fiscal year, I would like to discuss an issue that is of increasing concern to me: our underinvestment in our national parks.

There are 379 national parks in the United States and U.S. territories, covering over 80 million acres. These parks provide Americans with an opportunity to enjoy activities such as hiking, camping, white water rafting, or horseback riding in some of the most beautiful sites in the world. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park in my home State of Tennessee is often referred to as the crown jewel of the national park system, and for good reason.

But one can't help but be concerned about what is happening in our parks today. I have seen first hand the problems associated with air pollution, traffic congestion, and invasive species in our parks. Folks come to the Smokies to escape the big city and breathe the clean mountain air. Unfortunately, there are too many days now when the air quality in the Smokies is worse than in major cities. Already this year, the park has recorded 13 days with unhealthy ozone levels. Who would believe that visiting a national park could be hazardous to your health?

Air pollution is also diminishing the experience of visitors in the park. People visit the Smokies for the magnificent mountain vistas. Unfortunately, the pollution reduces their visibility not only by affecting how far they can see from a scenic overlook, but also how well they can see. Ground level ozone washes out the bright colors of the leaves in the fall and the flowers in the spring. These air quality problems have landed the Great Smoky Mountains National Park on the list of 10 most endangered national parks compiled by the National Parks and Conservation Association.

Another major threat facing many of our national parks, including the Smokies, is damage from invasive species. Organisms that are not native to parks are finding their way in and are killing wildlife. Virtually all of the frasier firs on top of Klingman's Dome in the Smokies are dead. At first

glance, it would appear that they were killed by fire, but that is not the case. These trees were killed by the balsam woolly adelgid which is not native to the Smokies and has no natural predator there.

These and similar problems afflict our entire national park system. That is why I'm pleased that the appropriations bill before us today recognizes these serious threats by providing \$11 million for the National Park Service's Natural Resource Challenge. This money will help fund air and water quality studies in our parks. It will also fund efforts to address the problems caused by non-native invasive species. I thank the Senators from Washington and West Virginia for their attention to these needs. I especially thank Senator GORTON for his leadership as chairman of this very important subcommittee.

I am also growing increasingly concerned that our national parks are showing the wear and tear of neglect. Each year our parks are host to more and more visitors. In 1998, almost 300 million people visited our national parks. Ten million of those visitors went to the Smokies, making it the most visited national park in the country. That is more visitors than the Grand Canyon and Yosemite combined—which rank second and third in terms of park visitation.

We in Tennessee and North Carolina welcome these visitors to our beautiful mountains. National parks are here to be used and enjoyed. But our parks are laboring under their popularity. One might say our parks are being loved to death. We must face up to the stresses to infrastructure that result from increased visitation. More visitors cause more wear and tear on the trails, campgrounds, and roads. Growing visitation also requires higher staffing levels in the parks since more visitors mean more stranded hikers that need to be rescued, more comfort stations that need to be cleaned, and more trash that needs to be picked up.

Unfortunately, park budgets have not kept pace with increases in visitation. The National Park Service estimates that there is currently a \$4.3 million maintenance backlog. Park Service staff are struggling to do more with fewer resources.

Fortunately, they have been able to rely on a number of organizations for help such as friends groups, the National Park Foundation and other cooperating associations. These organizations raise money to fund maintenance and educational projects within the parks.

I am proud that the Friends of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is held up as the model friends group for the country. Over the last 7 years, the Friends of the Smokies has raised \$6 million—\$1.5 million last year alone. This money has come from donation

boxes in the park, license plate sales, telethons and direct contributions. And, it is used for a variety of projects. For example, the Friends just produced a new orientation film to welcome park visitors. The Friends funded the restoration of the historic Mount Cammerer Fire Tower. And, the Friends help organize and manage volunteer projects in the park. When a team of volunteers goes out to work on a trail, it's the Friends of the Smokies that buys the materials needed to do the job. The hard work and generosity on the part of the Friends of the Smokies is critical to assisting the Park Service officials maintain our valuable natural resource.

Just as important as the financial contributions to our national parks are the generous donations of time. This year alone, volunteers will donate almost 75,000 hours valued at \$1.1 million to run the visitor centers and help maintain trails and campgrounds in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Because the Smokies was a gift from the residents of Tennessee and North Carolina to the Federal Government, citizens living near the park have a strong sense of ownership. They want to volunteer to take care of their park.

Several years ago, Congress also recognized the need to increase resources to our national park system, and we passed legislation to provide the Park Service with new sources of funding for maintenance projects. This new law allows national parks to retain most of the entrance and other fees they may charge, and use that money for visitor services. Fee revenue can be used to fund maintenance projects or to pay seasonal employees, but it cannot be used to fund basic operations. This year, Smokies' fees will generate \$1.9 million over and above the park's \$13.2 million annual appropriated budget.

Fee revenue, volunteer hours, and donations are critical to keeping our parks running, but they are just not enough. Without an adequate operations budget and enough permanent full-time staff, the Park Service lacks the capability to handle the generosity of groups like the Friends of the Smokies.

Again, I compliment my colleagues from Washington and West Virginia for recognizing the most pressing needs of our national park system by providing a substantial increase in the Park Service's basic operations budget in this bill. The bill before us includes over \$1.4 billion for the National Park Service. That's an increase of more than \$80 million over FY 2000.

But as impressive a job as the managers have done here today, I'm sure they would both agree with me when I say that Congress still must do better for our national parks. I believe that the Federal Government has a fundamental responsibility to ensure the

protection of these natural resources for the enjoyment of both the current and future generations. But we are not meeting that responsibility fully. We must provide our park officials with adequate resources to maintain the trails and campgrounds. We must give them better tools to combat threats like air pollution.

As Congress debates what to do with the projected budget surplus, I think we should start by determining whether government is meeting its fundamental responsibilities now. If we see that we are neglecting certain responsibilities, then we need to make fulfilling those obligations a priority.

I believe that increasing our investment in our national parks is a priority. I intend to work closely with my colleagues in the years to come to ensure that Congress provides the funding necessary to protect our precious natural resources for the enjoyment of my grandchildren and their grandchildren.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. REID. Madam President, before my friend leaves the floor, I want to tell him how very much I appreciate his statement. In years past, I offered amendments when we did not have a budget surplus to increase funding for our park system. I hope next year we can work together in a bipartisan fashion to increase significantly the funding for our National Park System.

I have not had the good fortune to be in the park to which the Senator referred, the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, but I have been to a number of national parks. For example, the living conditions our park rangers have to put up with in our national parks is a disgrace. My colleague should see what park rangers live in at the Grand Canyon National Park. They are from World War II. They look like icehouses; they are square. It is disgraceful.

We only have one national park in Nevada. It is one of the newer ones, so I really do not have the right to complain as many do, but we have so many things that need to be done there. We do not have a visitors center. Interpretive trails have not been built. There are parts of our great National Park System that we have closed as a result of dangerous conditions. The Park Service simply does not have the resources to keep up.

I commend and applaud my friend from Tennessee. He has given a great statement. I look forward to next year. Perhaps we can work together to come up with a funding formula that would be permanent in nature to take care of the \$5 billion backlog in our National Park System.

Mr. THOMPSON. Madam President, I thank my friend from Nevada for those comments. This is something upon which I believe we can all agree. Even

those who view the role of Government to be a limited one must agree that there are certain basic obligations and functions the Federal Government has. Of course, national defense is one of them; infrastructure is one of them. Our national parks are a precious resource that we must all protect.

They are, as the Senator indicates, being attacked from so many different directions right now. We are taking them for granted and slowly, but surely, they are falling into disrepair, and they are being damaged environmentally. We in the Smokies have a particular problem with the weather patterns, for example. Not only do we have some old coal-fired plants in the area, but we have a weather pattern that brings the pollution in from other parts of the country that just seems to hover over that particular area. We have days where there is more pollution on top of the Smoky Mountains than there is in downtown New York City. It is an increasing problem. Hopefully, as my colleague suggests, we can join together and do even more next year.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, first, I thank our distinguished assistant Democratic leader for his graciousness once again in providing me the opportunity to say a couple of words this evening.

MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY RELIEF

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, the Senate will be voting on two competing marriage penalty relief proposals. The choice really could not be more clear. I want to talk a little bit about that choice this afternoon. The Republican bill has very little to do with the marriage penalty.

In fact, I was just commenting that if the Republicans were trying to treat an illness, they would be sued for malpractice—given the bill they are proposing this afternoon—malpractice because they are not curing the disease. In fact, in some ways they are causing the disease, this marriage penalty disease, to be even more problematic, more difficult. They are actually creating another disease—a singles penalty. We need to be aware of the repercussions of what the Republicans are attempting to do with their legislation this afternoon. The singles penalty is something I will talk a little bit more about.

To begin, I don't think there is any doubt that if you asked all 100 Senators: should we fix the marriage penalty, the answer would be emphatically yes. The question is, How do we fix it, and are we really intent on fixing it?

Our Republican colleagues only deal with three of the marriage penalty provisions incorporated in the law today. If you were going to completely elimi-

nate the entire marriage penalty, you would have to deal not with 3 but with 65 of the provisions incorporated in the tax law that have caused the imbalance or the inequity to exist today. The Republicans have only dealt with three. Yet the cost to the Treasury of their plan—the one we will vote on today—is \$248 billion overall.

I don't know what it would cost if you were going to try to fix all 65 under the Republican plan. Republican amendments were filed addressing six additional provisions, totaling \$81 billion, in the Finance Committee. The remaining 56 provisions, untouched in the Republican bill, not addressed at all, have yet to be calculated in terms of what the cost might be with regard to the approach our Republican colleagues use.

The second chart spells out what that means. If you only deal with 3 of the 65 provisions, this is what happens. Take a married couple with a joint income of \$70,000. Under current law, if the couple were single and they each paid their share of the tax, their tax total would be \$8,407, depicted on the chart. Yet because they are kicked into a higher tax bracket when they reach that \$70,000 joint income level, their tax is not \$8,407; their tax is \$9,532. So the marriage penalty is \$1,125 under current tax law.

Here is what the Republicans do. The Republicans will provide, under their bill, 39-percent relief. That is all you get. Here they are, spending \$248 billion, and they can't even do it right. They can't even fix all 65 provisions. They fix three. So you leave the balance, under the Republican bill, for another day, apparently.

We don't believe that ought to be the way to fix the marriage penalty. We think you ought to fix the marriage penalty, if you are saying you are going to fix it. We provide 100-percent relief, \$1,125 in relief for that couple making \$70,000 a year. That is what we do. That is why we believe it is important for people to know there is a clear choice tonight when we vote on those plans: You can vote for the \$248 billion Republican plan that fixes 3 or you can vote for the Democratic plan that provides for 100-percent relief and fixes all 65.

I think it is very important for us to understand that not only is there a choice in trying to address the marriage penalty, but there is also another problem.

We know how doctors try to fix one disease and sometimes create another side effect they had not anticipated because they prescribed the wrong medicine. We have a true illustration of prescription drugs as we know it in this country today, with a \$248 billion fix when you could do it for a fraction of the cost. Not only that, their prescription doesn't cure the disease. Not only does it not cure the disease, it actually creates a new one.