

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, what is the legislative business now before the Senate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. H.R. 4461, the Agriculture appropriations bill.

Mr. REID. Is there an amendment pending?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is none.

AMENDMENT NO. 3938

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID], for Mr. HARKIN, proposes an amendment numbered 3938.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit the use of appropriated funds to label, mark, stamp, or tag as "inspected and passed" meat, meat products, poultry, or poultry products that do not meet microbiological performance standards established by the Secretary of Agriculture)

On page 25, line 11, before the period, insert the following: "Provided further, That none of the funds made available under this heading may be used by the Secretary of Agriculture to label, mark, stamp, or tag as "inspected and passed" meat, meat products, poultry, or poultry products, under the Poultry Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 451 et seq.) or the Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), that do not meet microbiological performance standards established by the Secretary".

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this amendment clarifies USDA's authority to enforce standards for pathogens in meat and poultry products. These standards are essential to ensuring continued progress in producing safer products by reducing these pathogen levels in meat and poultry products. They are an important part of the new meat and poultry inspection system adopted in 1996.

This amendment only clarifies USDA's authority to enforce pathogen standards. It will not codify existing salmonella performance standards.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH of Oregon). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX RELIEF FOR MARRIED COUPLES

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate passed legislation providing tax relief for married couples. We passed a bill that basically eliminates the marriage penalty tax for most married couples. The cost of the bill was \$55.6 billion over 5 years and over ten years. The cost of the bill was incorrectly reported in several newspapers despite the fact that on the floor of the Senate and in a press conference later, we stated clearly that the bill that we passed was a 5-year bill, and the cost of the bill was estimated by the Joint Committee on Taxation to be \$56 billion. You wouldn't know that if you read the New York Times.

In today's paper: "Senate Approves Tax Cut To Help Married Couples. Clinton Threatens Veto." That much is correct, but the next line says, "\$248 billion measure would aid even those who do not pay marriage penalty." I dispute that claim, because it is absolutely false. The \$248 billion cost they attribute to our bill is false. It is not correct.

In the article, the second paragraph says the vote was 61-38; eight Democrats joined Republicans to approve the measure which would reduce income taxes for nearly all married couples by a total of \$248 billion over 10 years.

The facts are, the bill that we passed was \$56 billion over the next 5 years and the next 10 years. Maybe some people didn't know that. Maybe if some Senators knew that they would have voted differently. I don't know. I want accuracy. I want people to know the facts.

The Washington Post had an article as well, and it had a chart that bothers me. The Washington Post headline said the "Senate Votes 'Marriage Penalty' Relief." That statement is true. Then it says, GOP continues tax cutting drive and the President threatens to veto it. It talks of the bill being \$248 billion and included a chart from the Citizens for Tax Justice. The chart asks the question: Who would benefit? It says the benefit for couples who make between \$50,000 and \$75,000 is \$344. That is not correct.

The Citizens for Tax Justice has a reputation of being quite a liberal group. Regardless, they are entitled to their own opinion, but they are not entitled to their own facts. I want my colleagues and the American people to know what the facts are. Under the Senate-passed bill, people who have

taxable incomes from zero to \$43,000 could get a maximum tax benefit from earned income credit changes of \$527, and a maximum tax benefit from the standard deduction adjustment of \$218, for a total maximum tax cut of \$745. For couples with taxable income between \$43,000 and \$52,500, they also have a standard deduction tax cut worth \$218, and because of changes to the 15 percent income tax bracket they could also get a maximum tax cut of \$1,125, for total maximum tax relief for married couples earning up to \$52,500 of \$1,342. These are facts about the bill we passed.

The Washington Post chart says people who make \$40,000 to \$50,000 have tax relief of \$148. I believe the facts are that it could be as much as \$1,342. There is a big difference.

Citizens for Tax Justice happens to be wrong. I don't know if they are using some unreasonable type of income classification that greatly inflates income so that everyone seems rich. That's what the Clinton administration does when it wants to attack our tax cuts. I don't know what they are doing. It bothers me. Maybe it shouldn't. Maybe I am a stickler for facts. We should stick to the facts.

We passed a tax bill yesterday that I believe will become law. If the President will sign it, married couples with taxable income of \$52,500 will get \$1,342 worth of tax relief. That is a fairly significant tax cut. For the local paper the next day to say that couples making between \$40,000 and \$50,000 get \$148 is wrong, way wrong. It is \$1,000 off.

The Washington Post tries to imply that the real benefits of this tax cut go to people making \$200,000 or more. That is not the case, either. I will have printed in the RECORD a table for the information of our colleagues and the information of the press, if they happen to be interested in what we passed. This table shows the maximum tax benefit that anyone would receive under our bill by provision and by taxable income. A couple with taxable income of approximately \$127,000 gets the maximum benefit, which is \$2,165. People who made over \$127,000 get less, and that amount would be \$1,759.

One might say, why? The difference is because they lose the standard deduction. Under the law that passed in 1990, they lost a standard deduction after their income is above a certain level. We didn't change that. Maybe we should have, but we didn't.

Citizens for Tax Justice says, and the Washington Post says, people making over \$200,000 get a much bigger benefit. They missed it by a mile. They imply that those over \$200,000 get more of a benefit than those with income between \$75,000 and \$100,000. They missed it again. They are wrong. Factually incorrect. They ought to know better. If they are going to put this information in one of the largest newspapers in the