

be unable to stop abusive practices and preserve consumer confidence in on-line transactions without such authority. This authority would not give agencies the ability to override any of the bill's requirements, only to clarify how they apply in specific circumstances.

4. Avoid Unintended Consequences in Areas Outside the Scope of the Bill.

The legislation must provide clear federal regulatory authority for records not covered by the bill's consumer provisions, including authority to exempt requirements from the bill's provisions if necessary. The broad scope of the legislation may have unintended consequences for laws and regulations governing "records" outside its intended focus on business-to-consumer and business-to-business transactions. For example, the bill could affect rules on the posting of workplace safety notices. Protections must be provided against such unintended consequences of the legislation.

5. Avoid Facilitating Predatory or Unlawful Practices.

The legislation must provide adequate protection against predatory or unlawful practices.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have worked out their problems and enabled the Senate, at last, to appoint conferees on S. 761. I co-authored S. 761 as it passed the Senate, and I look forward to working as a conferee to ensure that the final conference report respects the principles that this body endorsed when it passed that legislation by unanimous consent last year. The letter to conferees dated March 28, 2000, signed by all 45 Democratic Senators, reminds us of those principles.

I am only one conferee among 17 but working with the other 6 Democratic Senate conferees and the 10 Republican Senate conferees. I will endeavor to encourage electronic commerce with balance, fairness, and due regard for consumer protection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

ELIAN GONZALEZ

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise this morning to voice my deep concern over the developing situation in Miami involving this young boy, Elian Gonzalez.

I do not rise today to make legal or policy arguments regarding the events that have transpired thus far, although I have strongly held views on those matters. Rather, I rise to implore—yes, implore—the Justice Department and the Clinton Administration to exercise restraint in how they proceed.

For reasons I fail to understand, this Administration yesterday significantly ratcheted up the stakes in this matter, and unnecessarily turned this into a crisis situation by threatening to involuntarily and forcibly remove this boy from the place he calls home and to forcibly remove him from the family that has cared and sheltered him for four months.

And why? The Justice Department had previously indicated a willingness

to allow the Miami family to pursue its legal avenues in federal court. This family is appealing the recent decision of the district court. That is not news, and should hardly come as a surprise to the Department. In fact, it is my understanding that the family has agreed to the Justice Department's request to try and expedite the appeal.

So why has the Administration manufactured this crisis and issued these threats and ultimatums? Why make these threats regarding this arbitrary, self-created and self-imposed deadline of Thursday morning at 9:00 a.m.?

I know that my colleagues have different views on the matter of whether Elian Gonzalez should be returned to Cuba or allowed to stay in our country. But I do not stand before you today to debate that matter.

Rather, I would hope we could all join in calling upon the Department of Justice and the Clinton Administration to calm down, exercise restraint, and stop acting to increase the tension of this delicate situation unnecessarily through arbitrary deadlines or threats of force.

I fail to see how these threats serve any useful purpose. Hasn't this young boy been through enough? Why does this Administration need to forcibly remove him from his home while the appeal process continues to run? Has Elian become an enemy of the United States of America? If not, why is the Administration treating him like a dangerous drug lord or a mass murderer?

Again, I implore this Justice Department and this Administration to calm down and exercise restraint. We need to find a way to diffuse this situation, not to further inflame it. And, we need to act in accordance with the values of our country—restraint, respect for law, and common sense. We should not be led to extremes merely to appease a foreign government. We will be fair and deliberate. But, we should not engage in ridiculous, overwrought measures. After all, this is not Cuba. This is the United States of America, and we have a young boy here. He ought to be treated with dignity and with respect by a government that does not act as a bully with no restraint whatsoever.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the marriage tax penalty. We are trying not so much to give a tax cut to married couples but to make a tax correction. It is not the business of Government to say that when you are married your taxes should be higher. The Tax Code should be blind.

It should be fair to all. Any single person making \$35,000 a year marrying

someone making \$35,000 a year should not automatically go into a higher tax bracket. In fact, under today's Tax Code, that is exactly what happens. It is one of the most egregious oversights of our tax system that we must address.

It is estimated that 21 million married couples pay a marriage penalty; about 48 percent of people in this country who are married pay a penalty for being married. The question is, What can we do to correct that inequity? This is not just a tax cut. It is a tax correction.

Yesterday, Senator ROTH revealed his plan that will go to the Finance Committee for markup, hopefully, tomorrow. It is a very solid beginning. His plan, first and foremost, does something that will affect every single married couple: It doubles the standard deduction.

Today, the standard deduction is \$7,350 for a married couple. It is \$4,400 for singles. One would think a married couple would get \$8,800. That is not the case. They get \$7,350. Regardless of the tax bracket, there is a marriage tax penalty from the standard deduction. Senator ROTH's bill doubles the standard deduction next year.

Second, the bill starts with the lowest tax bracket, the 15-percent bracket. Over a 6-year period, starting in 2000, that bracket will be doubled for married couples. This is an \$8,650 increase that allows people to continue paying in the 15-percent level for \$8,650 more. Basically, that means if someone today is making up to \$43,000 as a married couple, they are in the 15-percent bracket. We raise that to \$52,500. As a married couple making about \$26,000 a year, they will stay in the 15-percent bracket and will not have that penalty.

It is important for people to know that everyone pays up to the \$52,000 in the 15-percent bracket. Even if you go up to the 28-percent bracket or the 36-percent bracket, you will also get that 15-percent bracket relief.

It was my hope to double the 28-percent bracket, as well, because this is where most people get hit the hardest. A policeman who marries a school-teacher gets hit in that 28-percent bracket. They are making approximately \$30,000 each. They would not be fully covered under the bill that will go to markup.

There will be opportunities to increase that bracket to 28 percent, which is what we hope to do. We want to go up to about \$120,000 in joint income to do away with that penalty for married couples. We will take the 28-percent bracket up to about \$126,000. A 28-percent tax bracket is almost a third of what a person makes, so with salaries of \$40,000 or \$50,000, it is a pretty big hit, especially if you have children and are trying to do the extras for their education.

We have the 15-percent bracket doubling, starting in 2000. We want to