

deficits simply does not make sense. We can't afford to do it.

Let me give one example of the absurdity of continuing to provide tax breaks to the oil and gas industry. I want my colleagues to take a look at this chart right here. As we all know, ExxonMobil was the most profitable corporation in the history of the world from 2006 through 2008, making \$40 billion in profits in 2006, \$41 billion in 2007, and \$45 billion in 2008. Not bad. These profits, among other things, enabled Exxon to provide a \$398 million retirement package to its former CEO, Lee Raymond.

In 2009, one of the most economically difficult years since the Great Depression—millions of people losing their jobs, their homes, their savings—ExxonMobil was still able to make \$19 billion in profits in the midst of a severe recession.

I have a question for my friends on both sides of the aisle to consider: Out of that \$19 billion profit, how much did ExxonMobil pay in taxes to the IRS? How much did they pay? How many billions of dollars? How many hundreds of millions of dollars did they pay? Well, the answer is: Zero, not one red nickel.

So all over America, working families are struggling to keep their heads above water. They pay their taxes. Yet we have a corporation, the most profitable in the history of the country, that last year made \$19 billion in profit, and they didn't pay a nickel in taxes.

But that is not, as they say, the whole story. It gets worse than that.

As this chart right here on my right shows, ExxonMobil reported to the SEC that not only did it avoid paying any Federal income taxes, it actually received a \$156 million refund from the IRS. Twenty-two percent of the children in this country live in poverty. We have record-breaking deficits. We have a \$13 trillion national debt, and ExxonMobil receives \$156 million in a tax refund after making \$19 billion in profits. This has to stop.

This amendment I am offering would begin to make sure that ExxonMobil pays at least a minimal amount of their record-breaking profits in taxes to the Federal Government. That is the very least we can do.

But ExxonMobil is not the only corporation enjoying these tax breaks. Chevron, the fourth most profitable oil company in America, a company that made a \$10 billion profit last year when other companies were fighting to stay alive, reported to the SEC that it received a \$19 million refund from the IRS. This is Chevron. I know. It is not as much as ExxonMobil, but a \$19 million refund after you make \$10 billion in profits, that is not too shabby.

Valero Energy, the 25th largest company in America with \$68 billion in sales last year, received a \$157 million refund check from the IRS, and over the past 3 years it received a \$134 mil-

lion tax break from the oil and gas manufacturing tax deduction that this amendment seeks to eliminate. And on and on it goes. ConocoPhillips, et cetera, et cetera.

Let me very briefly turn to what this amendment would do with the revenues. In terms of deficit reduction, as I have indicated, the benefits are substantial. As we all know, the underlying bill we are debating today, which I support, would increase the deficit by about \$87 billion over 10 years. This amendment, my amendment, would cut that by about a third—\$25 billion over 10 years. This amendment importantly would also invest \$10 billion into the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program which, as I mentioned earlier, will create jobs, save people money on their fuel bills, and help transform our energy system away from fossil fuels.

I get a little bit tired of hearing my friends come to the floor of the Senate talking about the need to reduce our deficit. I get a little bit tired of people talking about the need for equity. If we cannot address a situation where some of the most profitable corporations in America pay zero Federal taxes and, in fact, get a tax rebate, then I am not quite sure what this institution is doing.

So we now have an opportunity to move forward, to address our deficit crisis. We have an opportunity to move forward to transform our energy system. We have an opportunity in this amendment to create jobs and break our dependency on fossil fuel.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a debate on amendment No. 4318; that the time for such debate be limited to half an hour equally divided; that once the time has expired on this debate, the Senate proceed to a vote on amendment No. 4318.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. INHOFE. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I hear my friend's objection. I think that is unfortunate. The American people should be able to have a different vote and debate on this issue. But I hear what the Senator has said.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I think the regular order is to go out now. First, I suggest that I will want some time this afternoon to explain what this amendment really does and also to explain in some detail the marginal wells this would affect. The average marginal well in my State of Oklahoma is 2 barrels a day. We are not talking about giants here. This is a totally different situation. We will have an opportunity to pursue that after resuming the regular order.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:01 p.m., recessed, and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BEGICH).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I wish to bring to my colleagues' attention the fact that we have this problem we deal with too often called the alternative minimum tax. I bring it to my colleagues' attention.

Last week, I had an opportunity to address my colleagues on the unfinished tax legislative business. These four items are the unfinished business to which I was referring. The legislation before the Senate deals with only one but, of course, an important piece of the unfinished legislative business. These tax extenders are on their second legislative stop through the Senate.

As the chart shows, the tax extenders, which are overdue by almost half a year, are not alone in that unfinished business. There are three other major areas of unfinished business. As we can see from the chart, we have the death tax with which we have not dealt. Another area is the 2001 to 2003 tax rate cuts and family tax relief package. Then the third area is the AMT patch, the alternative minimum tax.

Over the past few years, the AMT is frequently a subject of many of my addresses to my colleagues. I intend to keep talking about the AMT until this Congress actually takes action on reforming the AMT.

Instead of taking action, Congress this session has done absolutely nothing, and the problem continues to get worse for at least 26 million American families—let me emphasize middle-class American families—who will be caught in this AMT trap and, as a matter of fact, are now already caught.

Those being caught or are caught are the families who make estimated tax payments and who will be making their second payment this very day.

Last year, in 2009, a bit over 4 million families were hit by the alternative minimum tax. I think this was 4 million families too many, but it is considerably better than the more than 26 million additional families who will be hit this year in 2010 if Congress does not take action.

The reason we are experiencing this large increase this year is that over the last 9 years Congress has passed legislation that would temporarily—and only temporarily—increase the amount of income exempt from the alternative minimum tax. These temporary exemption increases have prevented millions of middle-class American families from