The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Bishop David R. Brown, Chaplain of the American Legion, offered the following prayer:

O God of our hearts, we thank You for the fullness of joy which has come to us from serving You and has made itself apparent in the growth of this great country. We ask for Your unwavering blessings that we may rededicate and strengthen the faith in ourselves, the faith in each other, the faith in the process, and the faith in You that we may live our motto “In God We Trust.”

O God of hope, grant wisdom and guidance to these men and women who have been placed in positions of trust by their peers. Lead them, O Beloved, so that the desire in each of our hearts for justice and equality will resound as a clarion call throughout this hallowed Senate Chamber. We ask that Your all-embracing love and forgiveness make equal the voice of the power broker and the most humble citizen; make equal the voice of every citizen regardless of race, creed, or gender.

Beloved, help us to renew our faith and trust in those deeply felt spiritual and reasonable truths of our forefathers that all men and women are created equal. They proposed a theory. We ask You for the strength of heart and will to give it life throughout this land of ours so that we might shine as a beacon of hope and equality, of faith and trust, for the rest of Your creation. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CRAIG THOMAS, a Senator from the State of Wyoming, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.
The decision to use the atomic bomb was an extraordinarily difficult one. And, too often, revisionist historians have tried to rewrite the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with unjustified suggestions that Harry Truman’s decision was the bomb to end the war was immoral.

What would have been immoral, of course, would have been to force the world into a further, protracted, bloody struggle when the means were available to end it—-with, in the end, less suffering, destruction, and killing.

The weight of that decision was placed on the shoulders of the crew of the Enola Gay, among whom was a farm boy from Davie County, NC. In nearby Mocksville, where Tom Ferebee went to school, nobody could have predicted that this four-sport star of baseball, football, basketball, and track would be remembered one day around the world.

Throughout his later years, Tom Ferebee was often questioned about his Enola Gay role. One journalist after another with their minds made up in advance tried to press Tom Ferebee to admit guilt about his role—which Tom Ferebee rejected, saying, for example in 1995:

I’m sorry an awful lot of people died from that bomb, and I hate that something like that had to happen to end the war. But it was war, and we had to do something to end it.

None of us who were on the Enola Gay ever lost a minute’s sleep over it. In fact, I sleep better because I feel a large part of the peace we had in the last 50 years was what we brought about. If we hadn’t forced the surrender, there would have had to be a land invasion of Japan, and the estimates are that a million Americans and as many Japanese would have died in it.

Which is absolutely correct. The fact is, Mr. President, that Tom Ferebee and his comrades deserve better than to be symbols of phony guilt resulting from an absolute necessity of war. Tom Ferebee knew—as we do—that he did the right thing by carrying out his mission.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

THE BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last year we spent a great deal of time talking about whether or not we should have an $800 billion tax cut. We spent an inordinate amount of time working on that. The minority, the Democrats, thought we should not do that, that it was too much, that instead of having this large tax cut, we should have some targeted tax cut, much, much, much smaller. This debate went on for months. The sad part about it is, when we came to the appropriations bills, the 13 appropriations bills, suddenly there was no money. Even though there had been $800 billion set aside, supposedly for tax cuts, there was no money to take care of the expenses that were necessary in the funding of this country.

Day after day we were talked to—-some say talked down to—by our friends on the other side of the aisle, that the economy would come to a grinding halt if we did not pass this bill. That hasn’t happened. Not only did the minority not buy the plan of the majority, but the American people did not buy the plan. In any poll taken, the American people decided there were more important priorities.

What were those priorities? Education—when you have 3,000 children dropping out of high school every day, you would think that would be a priority. Social Security is a priority. We have to make sure in the outyears Social Security is as good to people as it is today. Social Security is going to be doing just fine until the year 2035, maybe as late as 2060. But perhaps in that period of time, people will only be able to draw 75 percent or 80 percent of their benefits. We need to make sure after that time they can draw all their benefits.

We have to make sure Medicare is taken care of. Something on this program that has been in existence for 35 years to take care of people who need prescription drugs; that is, all seniors. The average senior over age 65 fills 18 prescriptions a year. So we have to make sure Medicare, a very important program that has done a great deal to help the American senior population, that has allowed them to live longer and live more productive lives—-we have to make sure that as a component of that there are some benefits for prescription drugs.

We have to make sure the debt is paid down. During the Bush-Reagan years, we accumulated a huge debt of some $5 trillion. It is time we started paying down that debt. We are not going to have the rosy economic scenarios we have now forever. We are in the longest economic growth period in the history of this country. We are now in the 108th or 109th month, but that does not mean it will go on forever. It will not. I hope when the economic downturn comes, we will have paid down that debt and not have voted for irresponsible tax cuts.

It is interesting that the demagoguery and rhetoric has not stopped. It is at full blast again, talking about tax cuts. Governor George W. Bush has recently proposed tax cuts which would add up to $1 trillion over 10 years. House Majority Whip Delay from Texas—Congressman Delay—-last week asked about this, said let’s do that and do more. He wants even larger tax cuts than George W. Bush has called for. I think there could be no better example of ignoring the wishes of the American people and ignoring what the economy needs.

As justification for this $1 trillion worth of tax cuts over programs such as saving Social Security, doing something about education, Medicare, and on and on doing something about the national debt, the Governor and others in the majority continually point to the overwhelming tax burden on the American people. I imagine there were a few people around America this past Sunday worrying why we have been reading reading newspapers all over America.

A column in the Washington Post from the front page reads: “Federal Tax Level Falls for Most; Studies Show Burden Now Less Than 10%.”

This was not a partisan poll put out by the Democrats or some liberal think tank. This information is from a series of studies by liberal and conservative tax experts. It shows that taxes are at their lowest point in more than 40 years. Federal income taxes are at their lowest point in more than 40 years.

I ask unanimous consent the article that appeared in the Washington Post and other newspapers around the country be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Washington Post, March 26, 2000]

FEDERAL TAX LEVEL FALLS FOR MOST; STUDIES SHOW BURDEN NOW LESS THAN 10% FOR MOST

For all but the wealthiest Americans, the federal income tax burden has shrunk to the lowest level in four decades, according to a series of studies by liberal and conservative think tanks and the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation.

Each of the studies slices the data in different ways, but the bottom line is the same: Most Americans this year will have to fork over less than 10 percent of their income to the federal government when they file federal income taxes.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates the middle fifth of American families, with an average income of $36,100, paid 5.4 percent in income tax in 1999, compared with 8.3 percent in 1981. The Treasury Department estimates a four-person family, with the median income of $54,900, paid 7.4 percent of that in income tax, the lowest since 1965. And the conservative Tax Foundation figures that the median two-earner family, making $68,605, paid 8.8 percent in 1998, about the same as 1955.

Federal income taxes are so low for so many Americans that it is little wonder many voters place tax cuts near the bottom of their priorities in many opinion polls. “It’s a shocker,” said Bill Ahern, spokesman of the Tax Foundation, of the group’s calculation that families paid just 8.8 percent of their income in tax in 1999, compared with 8.3 percent in 1981. “We look at it as a positive accomplishment. It’s the lowest since 1965.”

But when it comes to education, Medicare and Social Security, the American people have said no. In any poll taken, the American people put those priorities near the bottom.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates this year’s plan would add up to $1 trillion over 10 years, and that is not to mention the $400 billion that is promised in the long-term budget plan. This plan would cost taxpayers at least $400 billion, yet it has yet to come under the scrutiny of a single Senate hearing. It is an irresponsible tax cut.

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Another good reason not to pass this type of tax cut is what the economy needs. As we heard yesterday, the economy is in a recession, and unemployment is at a twenty-year high. The last time the economy was in a recession was 1990, and that recession lasted eight months. The last recession lasted just two months. The last recession was over eighteen months ago. The last recession lasted over two years.

The economy had a $400 billion budget surplus and a $400 billion budget deficit. This economy is in a recession.

We need to do something about the recession, and that is to cut tax rates. We need to do something about the recession, and that is to cut tax rates. The way we get out of this recession is to cut tax rates.

The plan that is sitting here on the desk is a $688 billion tax cut that would add up to $1 trillion over the next ten years.

So the question is: Do we add up to $1 trillion over ten years, or do we do about $400 billion in tax cuts over the next ten years?

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