

Mr. Speaker,

It was the issue of taxes that led to me running for Congress in the first place. The question of how much of your money the government forces from us is central to the relationship of the individual with government and to the freedom of the individual. And in the past several years through calls, emails, and personal meetings, I have heard from many of my constituents about the necessity of having stability in the tax code.

Making the current tax rates permanent for the vast majority of Americans, as this bill does, is a major accomplishment. No longer will the threat of major tax increases because of an expiring law hang over the heads of taxpayers. Providing tax certainty for individuals and businesses has long been needed and will allow them to plan and make decisions. Hopefully, it will help the economy grow. And finally having an answer on the death tax, although I prefer to abolish it entirely, is also critical for every farmer, rancher, and small business person in the country.

The clearest reason to vote against this bill is because of what it does not do – limit spending. Too much spending, along with low economic growth, is the reason that our debt is mounting and that our children's future is in peril. This bill is a missed opportunity to take meaningful action to deal with that problem, and I supported efforts to have significant spending cuts included in this measure. But it is not our last opportunity.

It is always possible to justify voting against a bill for what is not included in it. One must go further and ask, "What happens if this bill is defeated? Will the result be better or worse for the country?" We also have to make a judgment on what is possible with the current cast of characters that the American people have elected to office. It does no good to imagine some ideal measure that could never pass the Democratically-controlled Senate or that President Barack Obama would never sign into law. I am a conservative, and I am also a realist.

The answers to those questions lead me to conclude that it is better to approve this bill at this time, understanding that we must use the next few

weeks of discussion about the debt limit to find a way to significantly reduce spending and begin to get our economic house in order. House Republicans do not have to accomplish everything in one bill, but time is running out for us to get spending under control. In coming weeks, we will need to consider every tool at our disposal to convince the White House and the Senate on the imperative of cutting spending.

Of course, there are provisions in this bill with which I disagree. For example, extending some of the tax credits from the stimulus bill and continuing to pay unemployment for an additional year discourage work and encourage further dependency on government. But they total about \$100 billion out of a \$4 trillion bill; the rest of the “cost” is due to extending tax provisions that have been in place for more than a decade.

Stepping back and looking at the whole picture, it seems clear to me that preventing a tax increase for most Americans and making all tax rates permanent is an important step for families all across the country and for the economy as a whole.

Other provisions contained in this bill are important to the people in my district. One would extend the current farm bill for the remainder of the fiscal year, allowing farmers and their bankers to make decisions on planting. That provision also prevents the price of milk from doubling this week. Another section prevents the 27% cut in Medicare reimbursement to doctors, which would have made it very difficult for Medicare patients to find a physician to treat them.

Approving this measure is just a step. Next, we must do whatever is required to control spending, especially spending in mandatory programs that constitute nearly two-thirds of the budget. I continue to support comprehensive tax reform, which can ease the pain to taxpayers, help us be more competitive in the world, and give our economy a real boost. We do not have to do all of these things in one bill – and it would be a mistake to try – but we must do them for the sake of our country and our future.