

Mr. Speaker, I came to Congress to help make our communities more livable--to make families safe, healthy and economically secure. Clearly, affording needed tax relief to America's working families is part of that effort. This bill, however, skews priorities: Rather than focusing on the working people who need help the most, the bill offers the most relief to those who already have lobbyists working for them.

First of all, we ought to be making things easier for families, not more difficult. One big problem for them is that a growing number are being forced into the Alternative Minimum Tax, which was originally intended to ensure that very wealthy people paid at least some income tax. Just last week, I was confronted back home with a farmer who has 10 children that he works hard to support. Taking the tax credits for his children triggers the AMT for him, and no one would confuse him with Bill Gates.

This bill not only fails to solve the problem, it actually makes things worse. In every year, a larger percentage of families are shut out from the full benefits of the bill, exceeding 50 percent by 2010.

It's not that hard to fix this. The Democratic alternative, which I support, would offer \$89.1 billion in marriage penalty relief. It would fix the AMT problem, making sure that families actually get the tax relief they've been promised. It would direct an additional \$10 billion to low- and moderate-income families. Even better, it would cost less than half of what the Republican bill does.

With that additional revenue, we could address other pressing priorities. More than 11 million American children have no health insurance. Many of their grandparents pay staggering sums for the prescription drugs that prolong and improve their lives. We have children with special educational needs that Congress has promised to fund--but Congress can't find the money for them. Sadly, in my own state, one in five children suffers from hunger sometime during the year. I believe these issues deserve our attention just as much as adjusting the tax schedule.

For that reason, I will vote for the alternative that offers the most direct and targeted tax advantages for American families. Unfortunately, the majority has rejected the opportunity for commonsense reform in favor of political theater. The bill the House will pass today will rightly be vetoed by the President. It is going nowhere--and it shouldn't go anywhere. At \$182 billion,

the cost of admission to this political sideshow is just too high.