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Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in yielding me this time.

I am listening to my friend from Colorado saying that people back home may be confused when they listen to this debate. Well, I would suggest that they do not have to be confused at all. Listening to this debate and looking at the proposal that has been offered by the friends we have on the other side of the aisle reveals their true intentions and their true interest when it comes to tax justice in this country.

The alternative minimum tax is the major tax reform issue of this decade, not 20 years ago, not 30 years ago, but this decade, when because of the interaction of the proposals that you have brought forward and the relentless pace of inflation, it has drug millions of Americans into a tax that was never, never, never intended to apply to them. But what we have seen, the Republican majority chooses instead to focus their time, their energy, and tax resources on other issues. The inheritance tax, which affects a few thousand families a year, you have lavished attention and mortgaged our future in terms of the dollars that it would mean.

And what do you have to say about the alternative minimum tax? Well, every year you kick the can down the road, do it on the cheap, on the sly; not allowing, as my colleague, the distinguished ranking member of the Ways and Means Committee, had offered, for it to be brought forward, have a full debate, allow a clash of priorities and intentions.

I am convinced that the majority of people in Congress believe the rhetoric that you are saying about the pernicious nature of this tax that taxes people because they have families, because they take advantage of some of the tax preferences, because they pay their property and income tax. If we had a free and honest debate and a chance to offer meaningful alternatives, we would scale it down, if not repeal it.

But, unfortunately, our friends do not believe in their own rhetoric. They have other priorities. If they believed it, this would be the centerpiece; but instead they are extending taxes that do not even expire for years and benefit only a few.

I am sad to say that what we are doing here is going through the motions. We are going through the motions even if somehow the Senate buys into this for a 1-year extension. We are keeping people in limbo. We are skewing our fiscal and tax policies. And we are subjecting hard-working middle-class families who were never intended to be subjected to the minimum tax. They are going to suffer. I think it is shameful.

I will vote for the extension because that is the best the Republican leadership is willing to do. But it is a sad day for this House, and it is a sad day for American families.