### Removal of Name of Member as Co-Sponsor of H.R. 1617

Mr. OBEY moves that the managers on the part of the House be instructed to agree to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] to remove his name as a cosponsor of H.R. 1617.

Mr. Speaker, what is before us is the question of going to conference on the Treasury-Postal appropriation bill. The motion that I have just made is a motion which would accept the Senate amendment numbered 130, which in essence indicates that the congressional pay will be frozen for yet another year with no COLA, although that COLA will be provided for other Federal employees.

Mr. Speaker, as Members of the House know, this House established a new procedure. As Members will remember, in 1991, the Congress took a step forward, at least I think many thoughtful Members will recognize it was a step forward, when we decided that outside income for Members of Congress was going to be limited and that instead we would have only one paymaster, that being the general public, rather than supplementing our pay through various activities, including giving speeches and earning outside income in a manner which many people were concerned created the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The Congress took a lot of heat for that action at the time, but I think it was the right action because I think it substantially improved the financial practices around here. It was supported on both sides of the aisle on a bipartisan basis.

We established a new process under that legislation which guaranteed that Members of Congress would never get a pay increase larger than that provided for other Federal employees. And, in fact, the way it was set up, we got that adjustment one year later, so that we could not be accused of setting the trend for increased pay, but rather we were following what would happen in other sectors of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, under that condition, we received two small cost of living adjustments: A 3.5 increase in 1992 and a 3.2 increase in 1993. Since that time we have taken action each year to freeze our own pay. So that means that for calendar year
1994, and 1995, the Congress voluntarily decided not to accept a congressional pay raise, even though other Federal employees did receive a pay raise.

The Senate has now taken an action on this bill which indicates their belief that we should do that for another year.

I think that probably the vast majority of Members on both sides of the aisle will share the view that under the circumstances that we face with other agencies of Government being cut, with many other programs being cut, when we are in a period of stabilizing the budget guidelines that we will live with for either the next 5 or 7 years on our way to what people would like to think would be a balanced budget, I think that under the circumstances, it would be highly unrealistic to expect that the Congress this year would receive even a cost-of-living adjustment.

So I am simply offering this motion because I think that it is generally accepted in the House that, under these circumstances it would be inappropriate to accept the Senate position.

In doing so, I would make the following observation, however: I believe it is essential to the ability of this House over the long term to attract quality candidates, and I think it is essential to see to it that in the long term we do not have renewed pressures for providing other ways for Members to receive income by, in effect, cashing in on their own notoriety, for want of a better way of putting it, as a Member of Congress to increase their pay. In order to prevent those actions from happening, it is going to be necessary at some time for Members of Congress to receive pay adjustments identical to those provided to other workers in the Federal Government.

I do not believe that people can expect that forever there will be no adjustments in congressional pay. But I think it is common good sense to recognize that under these circumstances, Members of Congress are not and should not be providing themselves with an increase in pay when we are in the process of establishing a multiyear effort to reduce the deficit and cut expenditures.

So, for the third year in a row, the effect of this motion would be to deny ourselves a pay raise. I think that that is the rational thing to do under these circumstances, and I would urge support for this action.

Mr. LIVINGTON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OBEY. I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana.

Mr. LIVINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

It is with some degree of reluctance that I rise in a bipartisan display of support. It is with some degree of reluctance that I rise in an effort to display bipartisan support for the gentleman's amendment. I agree with the gentleman's conclusions. This Congress has made great strides in making deep cuts in the Federal budget. To date, the appropriations process has yielded net savings in fiscal year 1995 and 1996 of approximately $44 billion, and it would be highly untenable for the Congress to say, "Well, we are going to cut the rest of the Federal budget. But we are going to go ahead and allow our own pay to escalate."

So I join the gentleman, and I suspect that the vast majority of the Members of this House will join him. The Senate has taken an action which I believe the House will not accept, as supporting this effort, and so this effort is merely to conform with what the Senate has already done.

But let me say that I also have some grave concern that pay, unfortunately, becomes an aspect, an ingredient to a degree of short term politics. I frankly do not know any Members over the years that I have served in the Congress that have been defeated over the pay raise issue. But I suspect, if any have, they are very few.

The American people, I think, intuitively understand that public officials have to make a living, and if they do not want a body of 100 percent of millionaires in the House of Representatives or in the Senate, then obviously they have to pay them a salary.

One can argue how much that salary should be. But a few years ago, as the gentleman pointed out, we had an honoraria process whereby Members of the Congress would supplement their own income by going out and getting speaking fees. I think that the press did a pretty good job, and Members in this body and the Members of the other body stood up and talked about how that process had gone astray. That situation had done much to begin to corrupt the institution. People were not working for their pay. They were going out and cutting deals. They were walking into breakfasts and walking out with thousand dollar checks. Frankly, the whole system smelled.

So the gentleman who is presenting this initiative, and several others and I were eager to get rid of honoraria. Honoraria is now history. It is gone for Members of Congress, and I think that is good.

In an effort to compensate for what was a significant loss of income for many Members of the House and in the other body, there was a fairly significant pay raise. But really it was not an increase, because it was offsetting income that was lost.

That being said, that was several years ago, and since then Members have gotten some nominal COLA's, along with the rest of the Federal employees and military retirees and others, but not as often as the Federal employees and the military retirees. In the last 2 or 3 years this body and the other body have joined together and froze our pay. But I think it would be fair to say that COLA's have not been given COLA's, though Federal employees and military retirees have gotten their COLA's, and that is OK. We are doing it again this year.

I dare say, for one reason or another it is quite possible we may do that again next year. But I would like to offer a cautionary note to my colleagues in this body and tell you that unless you want a situation where all of the Members of the various districts, the 435 districts of this great nation that serve in this body, if you want everyone to be a millionaire, well then just keep on freezing the pay because a person of modest means will not be able to serve here after some length of time, will not be able to support his family. He will not be able to send his children to college or educate his kids or meet obligations to his family. She will not be able to raise her family. He or she will not be running for Congress because he or she at some point will not be able to afford to be here. I do not think that is what we want.

I think the great thing about this country is that we have not had to depend solely on the affluent class, if you will, to serve as our number.

I think the great thing about this institution, particularly the House of Representatives, and I do distinguish it from the Senate, because 82 percent of them are millionaires, I am not trying to say that anybody who has been put smart enough or affluent enough or wise enough to invest their money and has made great fortune for himself or inherited great fortune. I think that is great. That is the American system.

All of those that are affluent means that serve in this body serve valiantly and serve their constituents, but our constituents should also have the opportunity to elect people who are not affluent, who are not people who absolutely can pay their way to be here.

That is why I think that is a mistake to freeze our pay year after year after year. I think there is great merit in giving the Federal employees a cost-of-living adjustment periodically. There is great merit in giving the Federal employees, retired military personnel a cost-of-living adjustment periodically, and, yes, I think that there is great merit in providing judges and Members of Congress and heads of departments of the executive branch and other ranking leaders a periodic adjustment in their cost of living as well. Not to do so risks changing this system, risks changing this country, and not necessarily for the better, because it will not only go to those folks who are already independent, many of whom go to those folks who might other wise seek to find outside income through less than appropriate channels. I would not want to see that happen either.

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Mr. Speaker, for all of the reasons articulated by the distinguished gentleman from Louisiana, the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, I rise in opposition to this motion. I think he is absolutely correct, and the reasons that he articulated undergird the efforts of this House of Representatives to, in a fair and open manner, adopt legislation which would lead to a reasonable incremental adjustment in the pay of Members.

It is obviously a very politically difficult situation. No Member likes to vote on their raise, and, in fact, what we talk about here is not a raise in the classic sense. It is a cost-of-living adjustment; that is to say, a mechanism was established to keep Members even with the cost-of-living adjustment.

The gentleman from Louisiana pointed out that we do that for others, social security recipients, Federal retirees, and active Federal employees, some of whom as well as for members of the military. We do that so that their standard of living will not deteriorate as inflation occurs. That is the issue here, not a pay raise in the classic sense.

That resolution of a very thorny issue was arrived at through bipartisan work and agreement. The current speaker, Speaker GINGRICH, was a part of that, Speaker Foley and the current minority leader, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. GEPHARDT], was part of that, and my good friend from California [Mr. FAZIO] was part of that, and the distinguished ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBRY] was part of that, and the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. LIVINGSTON] has said and the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. HOYER] has said the realities are, ultimately we can bring together, ultimately we can come to a conclusion.

It is not impossible that this issue can be resolved by the Members here in just a moment. To lay this issue aside for this Congress. But, in the minority leader's words, I am sure we will make with great—another major effort here in just a moment—to lay this issue aside for this Congress. But, in the minority leader's words, I am sure we will make with great—another major effort here in just a moment—to lay this issue aside for this Congress.

The failure to have done that over the years led to anomalies that outraged the American public and gave great fodder for talk show hosts.

What was that? As the gentleman has pointed out, for 3 or 4 or 5 years we would put on a very difficult issue, obviously, with our constituents so that they knew and we knew and our families knew what is the deal, how do we adjust congressional pay in a rational, reasonable way.

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that his opposition, which I believe is largely symbolic here today, will not succeed.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I do not see my opposition as largely symbolic, I perceive it as very real, because there is a talk among it and I think that it is not symbolic that I am seeking.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have just one additional observation.

I recognize fully what the gentleman from Louisiana said, and I understand the position of the gentleman from Maryland. I do not think it is reasonable to expect that the only people in America who never get a pay adjustment would be Members of Congress.

I make no apology for the efforts of the past that have been engaged in on a bipartisan basis in this House, in full view of the public, not in a midnight meeting on the Senate side of the Capitol, but I think under the circumstances it would be better off if we had a more bipartisan basis in this House, in full view of the public, not in a midnight meeting on the Senate side of the Capitol, but I think under the circumstances it would be better off if we had a more bipartisan body to do because, as the gentleman indicated, newspaper stories indicate, what happens to other Federal employees is probably as good a guideline as any.

Unfortunately we are stuck with the pay we are stuck with the pay, but under the circumstances I think that it is appropriate this year, given what is happening with the budget, for the Congress to freeze its own pay.

I would note that that is unquestionably a lot easier for Members of the other body to do because, as the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. LIVINGSTONE] indicated, newspaper stories indicate that there are possibly up to 80 percent of the Senate that are millionaires. I regret that condition; I think we would be better off if we had a more even spread among income groups in the other body. But we do not, and I recognize that it is much easier for them to do this than it is for those on this side of the Capitol, but I think under the circumstances this is the best course of action. I think Members understand that.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I, too, yield back the balance of my time.