

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE DESERVE TO BE HEARD IN DECISIONS ON THE MEXICAN BAILOUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. WAMP] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Speaker, I come today as a freshman Member of this body with a burden on my heart to speak to the American people about this crisis in Mexico. I think it points out that we have a crisis in Washington, because some people are still not listening to the American electorate. I think the people out here deserve to know some of what we are privy to know here in Washington, DC, relative to the Mexican bailout and the actions, in the last few hours, of the administration.

Today I was briefed at the Republican policy meeting by our Treasury Secretary, Robert Rubin. While I have a tremendous amount of admiration and respect for Mr. Rubin, I realize that he is in a very difficult situation because he was thrown into, as our new Treasury Secretary, this unfortunate situation in Mexico.

Mr. Speaker, many people in our conference, in the Republican Conference, believed for the last 2 weeks as the administration came to us, Mr. Greenspan, Mr. Rubin, and made their case for why we needed to consider a \$40 billion bailout of Mexico's peso, we believed that Congress was the only way that they could come and tap into the resources necessary to try to achieve their objectives.

We did not believe, from the questions that we asked at the meetings which we attended, that the Stabilization Fund was even possible to tap into. We continued to believe that as the administration continued to work with our leadership for the last 2 weeks, and proposals were brought before us, that they had to come through Congress where the money is appropriated in this country to get even a little part of money, let alone 40 billion dollars' worth of money. The Stabilization Fund was off limits.

Today I asked Mr. Rubin, "Mr. Rubin, exactly when and why was the Stabilization Fund decision made to tap into this fund and to use an Executive order from the President to take this \$20 billion?" He gave me three answers. I think the American people need to hear them.

First of all, he said he recognized that it was preferable to come to Congress for this money. I think it is preferable. That is an understatement. It is preferable to come to Congress for a \$40 billion loan package to anybody, any time.

Second, he said "Until the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, raised their commitment from \$7-some-odd billion to \$17.5 billion, using this fund was not an option because collectively it did not get to 40 billion dollars' worth of guarantees," which is

what they needed in order to meet the problems in Mexico.

Third, Mr. Speaker, and most importantly, he said the crisis got out of hand. On Monday the crisis got out of hand and it required quick and decisive action. I tip my hat to him. Clearly this is quick and decisive action.

However, Mr. Speaker, let me make some points representing this freshman class that was just elected to the 104th Congress.

Many questions are left unanswered. Today, still no answers to these questions: How long is the term on this debt? Three years? Five years? How long?

Exactly how is it going to be repaid? Are these direct payments or are these loans? Again, today they could not give us a definitive answer.

What are the conditions that Mexico must meet in order to receive this financial commitment? Still left unanswered, yet through this Executive order, \$20 billion is pulled from the Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I have not been in Congress very long, but I was in the real estate business for a long time before I got to Congress. I can tell Members that if our Government was in the banking business—and I don't think we ought to be—if we were, we would have required a pro forma, a first mortgage, good credit history, on and on and on, none of which we got.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bad deal for the American people. I come to the floor today outraged for the American people that, first, they have overlooked the citizens of this country, who spoke loud and clear on November 8 that they are tired of the Government running off anywhere without them, that this is their House of Representatives, this is their Congress, this is their Government, this is their country.

Second, Mr. Speaker, the Congress has been circumvented in a major way, with billions and billions of dollars. I am a populist conservative freshman. I represent, I believe, the majority wishes of the Third District of Tennessee, and in fact, I believe this freshman class represents the heart of the American electorate. We are upset about this.

You know one reason they circumvented Congress? They knew they could not get this through this Congress because they ran into a wall called the freshman class of the 104th Congress, which I believe stood 80 or 90 percent against even talking about a multibillion-dollar bailout to Mexico.

Mr. Speaker, who is to say this is not going to happen again? We know that it is. It is high time, Mr. Speaker, that the American people have a voice in Washington, DC, on either end of Pennsylvania Avenue. It is time we listened to you. I am here to carry the torch for the American people.

THE PRESIDENT'S ACTION WITH REGARD TO THE MEXICAN ECONOMIC SITUATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. COLEMAN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend President Clinton's action today to help stabilize the Mexican economy by Executive order.

With the President pledging \$20 billion in U.S. loan guarantees from the U.S. Exchange Stabilization Fund, a Democrat once again averts another major foreign policy crisis with no Republican help. This new plan which includes contributions from the International Monetary Fund and other international organizations will stem the plunge of the peso which dropped to its all-time-low in value to close at 6.3 to the dollar yesterday.

As a strong supporter of NAFTA and the Mexican stabilization package, I am very gratified to see today's action because small businesses and retailers in my district and across the Southwest will benefit from a sound Mexican economy. In Texas, about 262,400 workers are employed producing products ultimately destined for Mexico.

Our national security interests were also at stake. If the Mexican situation was not resolved, there were estimates that undocumented immigration could have risen by more than 30 percent—or an additional one-half million economic refugees to our country this year. International observers were also monitoring our response to the Mexican crisis with great interest. The United States credibility was at stake.

What today's action also shows is that the leadership vacuum has been filled in this new year. The President stepped up to the plate and delivered on the question of what is good for our country. The Republican majority running the Congress has failed in its first major leadership test.

Remember NAFTA? Even though a majority of Democrats and the Democratic leadership opposed it last Congress, our party brought it up for a vote. I said back then and I will say now that you either lead, follow, or get out of the way. The Republicans, with their newfound power, seem to be dithering between following or getting out of the way. They certainly are not leading.

Just a few days ago, the esteemed Speaker said that he would not bring the Mexican stabilization package to a vote because of lack of support from Democrats. My question to him is: Since when does the opposition party have to deliver the requisite number of votes for a passage on a measure?

Does not the majority party have the prerogative to lead?

Many of the President's most outspoken critics seemed to be putting their Presidential ambitions before the good of the Nation. Yet how can we explain their change of heart with regards to Mexico? After all, were not these same Presidential aspirants supporters of NAFTA 2 years ago?

Many Republicans said after the President's State of the Union Address to let them act on what was best for the country. Well, the President has acted on an important national interest matter. And to the Republicans I say: Either lead, follow, or get out of the way.