

In the meantime, our taxpayers get the shaft—they are left holding the bag—this time for a wasteful Government in Mexico, whose economy has been ruined by years of socialism.

We probably cannot stop this now, but we would if we were truly listening to the citizens we are supposed to be representing.

□ 2050

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT THREATENS SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise again tonight to discuss some of the effects of the Personal Responsibility Act on the nutrition programs, specifically the senior citizens nutrition programs.

Yesterday, during a hearing on the Personal Responsibility Act in the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities, of which I am a member, there were six witnesses, five representing local community groups, and all were against title V of the bill which deals with all our Federal nutrition programs. Title V repeals every Federal nutrition program and then block-grants the funds after severe cuts. Under this repeal of our nutrition programs, the State of Texas would lose over \$1 billion in 1996 alone.

One member of the committee questioned the constitutional basis for providing nutrition and actually said it is not a Federal responsibility, and he quoted the Constitution.

Well, we all may need to reread our Constitution because where I see it in the Preamble, it says to provide for the common defense and promote the general welfare, and that is included in nutrition.

If the Republicans are holding the defense budget sacred and even increasing it because it is protected under the Constitution, at the very minimum nutrition programs should also be protected from these draconian budget cuts.

After November 8 of last year, many people called for Congress to become result-oriented. The PRA, or the Personal Responsibility Act, will result in 800 seniors going hungry every day in the city of Houston.

I hope and I pray that the PRA, the Personal Responsibility Act, was not designed to deny senior citizens their Meals on Wheels but that will surely be the result.

Let me repeat. If the PRA is passed in its current form, there will be over 800 hungry seniors in or around the district that I represent in Houston, TX. Not only will seniors go hungry, but on page 74 of the PRA, it requires seniors under the age of 63 and not disabled to work for their food.

The Older Americans Act allows any senior over 60 years of age and their spouse, regardless of age, to receive one meal a day. Would this Personal Responsibility Act repeal that law? I believe so.

What we will see, and I will show this sign, is that we will have seniors saying I will work for food, and that sign will be traded in every day with an affidavit from that senior to the State swearing that they will work at least 32 hours a week for that one hot meal. This is ludicrous.

I would hope that the committees, and I serve on one of the committees, will have better judgment than to pass this bill, particularly title V.

Stalin may have done this to the Soviet seniors, but not us. This would mean at least 35 people would be barred from a hot meal at the Magnolia Multi-Purpose Center in Houston, Texas. And simply on the work requirement alone. So between 60 and 63, they have 35 people who today enjoy a hot meal that would have to either carry this sign or turn it in with an affidavit saying they will work.

Should there be budget responsibilities? Of course, yes. Should there be administrative reduction? Yes. Should there be lonely, hungry seniors in the breadbasket of the world? No.

We must take a look at this title V in the Personal Responsibility Act contained in this Contract With America to see that it is a contract on our seniors to remove the nutrition programs.

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORTS DAY

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

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I am glad listening to the Democrats that they are finally getting off NEWT GINGRICH and talking substance on the Contract but as usual it is mostly specious emotional arguments hardly based in reality and it would seem incredible to me for somebody to say that the Contract With America is going to mean that 800 senior citizens in his own district would be going hungry.

I find it incredible that the gentleman who is an elected Member of Congress would take such a tactic and one of such stature at that. I hope that in the future we can have a more honest dialog.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KINGSTON. I would be glad to yield time, but I have to make a statement on something else. Then if we run out of time, if perhaps someone on your side would yield time, I would like to engage you, because what I would like to talk about is entirely off the subject. But I did feel it was appropriate to react to that which of course is why we are here, to have good substantive debate on subjects.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to talk about, something that happened on the mall outside of the Capitol this morning, and that was a celebration of National Day of Women and Girls in Sports. This was an important event for many reasons. There are so many different activities that go on in Washington that often we say, oh, that's just one more demonstration, so to speak.

Today in high schools, 38 percent of the girls are participating in athletic programs. That is up from 24 percent 10 years ago. But I think the real story is actually in the elementary schools. The young girls are participating in sports. They are flooding the soccer fields. They are on the tee ball and baseball diamond. They are running out on the basketball courts, and all the other traditional boys arenas now have young ladies playing.

Indeed, those of us who are fathers look forward to watching our girls just as much as fathers with sons look forward to watching their boys. I want to emphasize also that this is a national trend. This is not going to be stopped or end at the county recreation level. These young ladies will grow to be women who are athletic and they are going to take the sports with them throughout junior high, high school and college, and hopefully professional.

We will, I believe, 20 years from now go to see women's soccer games and women's basketball games with the same alacrity and the same enthusiasm and the same vigor that we are now seeing men's sports. I think it is important for us as a country to realize that.

I say that one of the best benefits of this is that for those of us who are maybe a little shell-shocked after the Super Bowl wondering who is going to go on strike next, that we are tired of the overgrown, pampered, greedy, self-indulgent millionaire prima donna players and owners who dominate our national pastime. We are sick of it. These striking athletes have built an empire which is collapsing under the weight of their own grandeur.

I think it is time to open up the system, end their monopoly and let the girls on in. I am glad to see it.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas so we can get back to our dialog.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman yielding.

I agree this is why we are here and to talk about the issues. I had not had an opportunity to read the Personal Responsibility Act or deal with it until we had the hearings yesterday.

We had 6 witnesses, 5 of them called by the majority side and 1 of them called by the minority side. Of those 5, and that is what I said, that of those 6 witnesses, 5 of them asked that that be changed, that that PRA or the Personal Responsibility Act that deals with senior citizens nutrition.

They also asked for the school lunch program and breakfast program to be changed because the witnesses even called by the majority side said that that is wrong that we are cutting off food to children and some of the programs that have been developed over both Democrat and Republican administrations. But we used the testimony from the hearing yesterday and I called some senior citizens sites in my district and said, okay, just one provision of it that says that if you are under the age of 63, how many people are served in the Magnolia Multi-Purpose Center in Houston that are under the age of 63 and not disabled.

□ 2100

They told us, they said that this is the number we serve. They actually serve 35 people who are not classified as disabled and under the age of 63. The gentleman can look at the bill itself. It states if you are under 63, not disabled, you have to agree to work, or sign an affidavit to say you are working.

Mr. KINGSTON. Reclaiming my time for the purpose of asking a question, I am not sure about the details of that, but if I am hearing the gentleman correctly, he is saying if somebody is 63 years old and in good physical shape and able to work they are entitled to a free meal just because of their age.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The time of the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON] has expired.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Maybe next week we can continue this dialog.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. KAPTUR. addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

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

[Mr. OWENS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I support welfare reform. Reform of our welfare system is best accomplished by rewarding work—by making work a prize rather than a penalty.

Work is a prize when a full-time worker can earn enough to pay for life's necessities.

Work is a penalty when a person can achieve a better quality of life when getting public entitlements rather than holding a job.

That is why any discussion of welfare reform, must also include a discussion of other reforms. One such reform is minimum wage reform.

Contrary to a popular misconception, most minimum wage earners are adults, not young people.

And, many of the minimum wage workers are from rural communities. In fact, it is twice as likely that a minimum wage worker will be from a rural community than from an urban community.

The most disturbing fact is that far too many minimum wage workers have families, spouses and children who depend on them.

That is disturbing, Mr. Speaker, because a full-time worker, heading a family of three—the typical size of an American family today—and earning a minimum wage, would fall below the poverty line by close to \$2,500 dollars. Imagine that.

In this country, a person can work, every day, full-time, and still be below the poverty level. Work, in that situation, is a penalty.

A review of the history of the minimum wage is revealing. First implemented in 1938, with passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act, the minimum wage covers ninety percent of all workers.

Between 1950 and 1981, the minimum wage was raised twelve times. During the 1980's, however, while prices were rising by 30 percent, Congress did not raise the minimum wage. Increases in 1980 and 1991 brought the wage to its current level, but did not bring it level with the cost of living.

In 1980, during the period when there were regular increases in the minimum wage as costs rose, a worker, with a family of three, earning a minimum wage, would have been above the poverty level. Work, in that situation, is a prize.

Enlightened economists and most recent studies now conclude that, increases in the minimum wage produce no significant changes in employment either up or down—among low wage firms.

Raising wages does not mean losing jobs. A recent, comprehensive study dramatically demonstrates this conclusion.

The State of New Jersey raised its minimum wage to \$5.05. It's neighbor, the State of Pennsylvania, kept its minimum wage at the required level, \$4.25.

According to the study, the number of low-wage workers in New Jersey actually increased, following the increase in the minimum wage, while the number of low-wage workers in Pennsylvania remained the same. Those are compelling results.

Since April, 1991, the minimum wage has remained constant, while the cost of living has risen, yet another 11 percent.

When costs go up and wages remain the same, the effect is that disposal income declines.

In other words, the ability of a minimum-wage worker to shelter, feed, and clothe his or her family becomes more and more difficult.

If, while working full time, a person has difficulty paying for housing, food, and clothing, the basic necessities, he or she can become discouraged.

The minimum wage affects many workers in America. More than 4 million individuals—6.6 percent of the labor force—worked at or below the labor force in 1993.

Another 9.2 million workers earned just above the minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, it should interest us to know that most of the minimum-wage workers are women.

In fact, three out of every five or 62 percent of the minimum-wage workers are women. And, minimum-wage workers are more likely to be poor.

Last Congress, we expanded the earned income tax credit, and that helps those families who battle poverty each day.

But, that tax credit, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, does not go far enough to reach down and bring the minimum-wage workers out of poverty. We must do more.

When a person works, he or she feels good about themselves. They contribute to their communities, and they are in a position to help their families. Work gives a person an identity.

Our policies, therefore, should encourage people to work. We discourage them from working when we force them to work at wages that leave them in poverty.

Soon, Congress will have the opportunity to raise the minimum wage. Let's make rewarding work and wage reform an essential part of welfare reform. Let's encourage people to work. And, let's insure that they can work at a livable wage.

Let's raise the minimum wage.

CLEAN WATER ACT AMENDMENT

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

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, today my colleagues and I from San Diego introduced a bill to amend the Clean Water Act to allow San Diego to treat its sewage in a cost-effective and environmentally sensitive manner.

This has been a long fight for many of us. I have been fighting against nonsensical Fed requirements for more than 6 years.

These efforts began when I was a member of the San Diego City Council. During this time, I often found myself on the losing end of 7 to 2 votes—because a majority of my city council did not want to challenge the Environmental Protection Agency. But I was convinced—by my own research and the testimony of scientists from the prestigious Scripps Institution of