

in our Armed Forces had the strong support of the Congress of the United States? Or, will the record show that the Congress chose to leave them unprepared for the difficult trials asked of them? Common sense says that a secure and prosperous America can afford adequate, fully trained, properly equipped, and highly prepared military forces.

HISTORIC CHANGE IN THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise to talk about what I feel is a historic change in the Congress of the United States.

When I was running for Congress last year and I received the Contract With America in the mail, I was very, very pleasantly surprised, because when I read through the contract I felt like I was reading my own campaign platform. For months I had been campaigning on how we need to reform the Congress itself and how the Congress does business, how we needed to shrink the size of Government, and how we needed to start in the Congress itself by reducing the number of committees and the number of committee staff.

One of the most important things that I ran on was how strongly I felt that the Congress needed to make all of the laws that they exempted themselves from apply to themselves. Indeed, I was very impressed when I read in the Federalist papers No. 37 written by Madison, how he described in that paper how the Congress should not be allowed to pass laws that did not apply to themselves and their friends.

Mr. Speaker, I am so delighted to actually be here and to see us fulfilling our commitment to the American people, how on that historic day on January 4 we passed all of those congressional reforms reducing the staff, reducing the number of committees, and then how we went on to pass legislation making all of the laws the Congress had exempted themselves from applying to the Congress itself.

Then in recent weeks we have seen historic vote after vote, the passage of a balanced budget amendment, the passage of legislation stopping the practice of passing unfunded mandates on to our cities and on to our counties. I heard over and over again in my campaign from local legislators, local politicians how the burden of unfunded mandates and regulations was killing them.

Then last night again we had another historic vote where a Republican Congress, with a sitting Democrat President, voted to give the President line-item veto authority. It was doubly ironic, it was sweet that this occurred on the birthday of President Ronald Reagan, a man who had campaigned

over and over again for the need for a line-item veto for our President. He stated over and over again how there were dozens of Governors in our Nation, in our States who have line-item veto authority, and how they exercise that line-item veto authority prudently to pare back pork-barrel spending and to trim State deficits and help State governments to be more efficient.

Last night we had a historic bipartisan vote where we passed a line-item veto.

Mr. Speaker, we have many, many more important votes coming before this body, votes on some real criminal justice reform to lock up violent offenders, some real welfare reform. Mr. Speaker, I am excited and delighted to be here and be part of this historic Congress, restoring to the American people, their body, faith in Government again.

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MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURTON of Indiana). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Alabama [Mr. HILLIARD] is recognized during morning business for 2 minutes.

Mr. HILLIARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of increasing the minimum wage. Lately I have heard a lot of rhetoric which is both misleading and dead wrong.

Just this Sunday I heard it stated that the only people who work minimum wage jobs are high school and college age kids. Mr. Speaker, this may be true in the wealthier suburban areas of this country, but I wish to tell you that in Appalachia or in the Mississippi Delta or in the Black belt of Alabama or in Watts, in Harlem, this is just not the case, and I wish to inform all of those persons who are misinformed that these are jobs that people work to live, and they are not living the American dream. They are having difficulties just living. They are having difficulties in many ways trying to find a decent place to live, because of the low wages that they receive. These are not people who are on welfare, but these are Americans. They are those who reject welfare. They are those who try to live within the system.

Yes, they have a hard time living the American dream, but these are good Americans. They work minimum wage jobs in many instances, because there are no other jobs available in the communities where they live. These are hard-working Americans.

Some of them have high school diplomas, and some who even went to college; many of them are too proud to take welfare, so they are stuck in these low-paying jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we talk a lot about welfare reform, and getting many of our citizens off of welfare. I believe we owe it to these working Americans, these young adults who work minimum wage

jobs, the working mothers and fathers, the seniors trying to make ends meet. Yes, we owe it to them who are in the job market to raise the minimum wage.

This act may be the finest welfare reform bill which we vote on during this session of Congress.

THE PROPOSAL TO LIST THE ARKANSAS RIVER SHINER AS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. LUCAS] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I say to my colleagues if you are fishing in the Arkansas River Basin, you had better watch what you put on your hook. There is a mighty dangerous little bait fish lurking in the basin's waters when there is water in the basin.

This little bait fish might have the power to stop those in the agriculture industry from irrigating their land, or protecting their crops. This little bait fish might inhibit rural towns from utilizing their primary water sources. This little bait fish might even stop a major metropolitan area from completing its \$250 million downtown restoration project which is crucial to its economic future. Yes my colleagues should know there is a dangerous little bait fish lurking in the river.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is considering whether to put the Arkansas River shiner on the endangered species list. As a new Member of Congress, I am truly underwhelmed by my first dealings with this segment of our Nation's Government. On September 15, 1994, I joined Congressman PAT ROBERTS of Kansas, and Congressman LARRY COMBEST of Texas in sending a letter to Ms. Mollie H. Beattie, the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, expressing our thoughts on the Arkansas River shiner proposal. To date, neither of my colleagues nor I have received a formal reply.

In our letter, we stated that we were concerned that the listing of the Arkansas River shiner could result in land- and water-use restrictions and other prohibitions that preclude full economic use of property, lower property values, and decimate the economies of the communities in the area. We further urged the Fish and Wildlife Service or an appropriate Government agency to conduct an assessment of the economic impact of any proposal to preserve this little bait fish.

In recent history, western Oklahoma, the Texas Panhandle, and western Kansas were the heart of the legendary Dust Bowl. One generation removed from today's watched as their top soil dried up and blew away. The fact that thriving economies have developed on this once barren land is a testament to the drive and fortitude of the people that live there and their ability to use

the resources available to them. The most important of these resources is water. All of us who live in the region will fight any attempts to turn back the clock of progress.

While I believe the Endangered Species Act is important, I believe as written it is flawed because of its lack of human compassion. Economic impact and private property rights must be taken into account in future draftings of the act.

Many of my colleagues know, there is a strong push in the early days of the 104th Congress to put a moratorium on any future endangered species listings until the act is reauthorized. I support this effort wholeheartedly and have co-sponsored both the Farm, Ranch and Homestead Protection Act of 1995 by Mr. SMITH and the Endangered Species Moratorium Act by Mr. BONILLA. I would urge my colleagues to do the same.

Beware, there is probably a little minnow lurking somewhere in your district too.

INCREASE IN MINIMUM WAGE LONG OVERDUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from New York [Mr. HINCHEY] is recognized during morning business for 2 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Clinton administration for taking action on behalf of working Americans today and raising the minimum wage.

The administration's action is long overdue and I hope this wage increase will help the working families of my district—and the Nation—to share in the economic recovery that we read so much about.

According to the Labor Department, the Employment Cost Index, which measures the wages, salaries and benefits paid to American workers, rose by only three-tenths of 1 percent during the past 12 months—the smallest annual increase on record.

This means that wages and benefits have failed to rise in response to economic growth and lower unemployment.

This is not a normal economic recovery in which wages rise as the economy picks up steam.

The Federal Government has few opportunities to improve the wages and benefits of America's labor force and subsequently improve the quality of life of working Americans. Adjusting the minimum wage is one method available.

Today, I applaud President Clinton for attempting to deal directly with the declining standard of living for working Americans.

An increase in the minimum wage is long overdue and I support President Clinton's effort to strengthen the economic outlook for working families.

THE CAN DO CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOKE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, what we have seen in the past 30 days is a stark contrast between the can-do Congress and the me-too White House.

Let us just review a little bit about what this can-do Congress has done. By the way, the can-do Congress is something that is being said about our U.S. Congress in international reports. If you pick up the Herald Tribune in Europe or if you pick up any of the London papers, you find out there is tremendous celebration and rather a fair amount of amazement that the U.S. Congress can get so much legislation accomplished in so little time, in such a short time.

What exactly have we done? Well, first of all, we reformed the process. We required Members of Congress would actually have to be present at committee meetings to vote on the bills that are being marked up at those meetings. It means no more proxy voting. It requires our presence at those meetings. We cut staff by a third. We cut the budget for the Congress itself, and we have cut two standing committees, the first time since the 1940's, as well as 27 subcommittees.

So we have reformed this process to make it more efficient, more streamlined, more workable.

And we passed the Congressional Accountability Act. It seems like a very simple concept. We had not even been able to get it to the floor of the Congress for a vote before this session.

We passed the balanced budget amendment for the very first time. We voted on that many times on this floor. We actually passed it. We passed an unfunded mandates bill that requires analysis before we go putting mandates on the States. We have to know exactly what it is going to cost on a State or a local community.

And last night we passed a very important piece of legislation, the line-item veto. The line-item veto is something President Clinton asked for in the 1992 campaign. He did not talk about that very much in the 103d session of Congress, the last session of Congress.

I might go through a few of these things, too, that Mr. Clinton campaigned for in 1992. He campaigned for unfunded mandates reform both as a Presidential candidate and as the Governor of the State of Arkansas. He campaigned for reforming the process, and he campaigned for a middle-class tax cut, all of which are in our Contract With America, and yet last fall what did he do, he called this not a Contract With America but a contract on America. Now, he is back to being me too, but so that he will say, "Well, me, too, we want to do this as well with some exceptions or some provisions or some considerations."

What did he present to us yesterday? He presented to us his version of the 1996 budget for the United States of America for the Federal Government, and without overreacting to that budget, because in a way you have to remember, you have to remind yourself this is not that important an event since he does not have the votes in the Congress to pass the budget anyway, but let us look at what he did do and, in my view, what he did is he went through the motions. He is treading water. He produced a document that he has to produce because of a law that says that he has to send a document to the U.S. Congress.

But it essentially does not make any real changes. What it does do is it continues \$200 billion deficits all the way through to the 21st century. What it does do is it adds in the next 5 years, it adds \$1 trillion to the national debt. What it does do it makes the interest payments projected for the year 2000 to be \$310 billion, when we spent \$204 billion on interest in 1994, in other words, a 50-percent increase in interest payments alone in this budget.

And it is clear that there is no will for bringing us to a balanced budget. It is clear from testimony that the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, OMB, Alice Rivlin, gave several weeks ago to my Judiciary Subcommittee, that not only is there no plan for it, but there is no real desire to balance the budget in the White House.

What we have got is we have got a can-do Congress that is actually keeping the promises that it made to the American public. It is re-instilling a sense of confidence in the integrity of this institution. It is re-instilling a sense of confidence in the American people's own ability to elect officials who will do what they said they would do, that this is an institution which can accomplish things, which can get things done, instead of pretending to get things done all the while obfuscating and making every attempt to only create the appearance of activity when, in fact, the real issue is to keep things under wraps.

So here we have got the can-do Congress versus the me-too White House. Keep your eyes posted on what happens in the next month.

IN SUPPORT OF RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I am here to commend President Clinton for initiating the minimum wage increase, 45 cents for this next year and 45 cents for the next.

It is interesting to note that this morning in USA Today, America's newspaper, 77 percent of all Americans approve of this measure. We cannot