

allow hard-working Americans to work full-time and not make enough money to pull themselves out of poverty. Eleven million Americans in this country rely on the minimum wage to support themselves and their families. Sixty-four percent of all minimum wage workers are adults with families to feed and rent payments to make.

Today the average minimum wage worker brings home about half of his or her household's weekly earnings. Let me tell you about a family who lives in Clovis, NM, who shared their monthly budget with me. They are a married couple with a 4-year-old son. They both work 40 hours a week at minimum wage jobs. They pay \$450 a month for child care, \$70 dollars for utilities, \$435 for a two-bedroom apartment, \$110 for a car payment, \$45 for car insurance.

After fixed costs, they have just under \$300 a month left to pay for gas, clothes, groceries, and health care. If their little boy gets an ear infection and goes to the doctor, they must feed their family on \$35 a week. If their car break down, they feed and clothe their family on \$20 a week.

This family is not alone. Just in my own congressional district, over 30,000 people get up and go to work every morning to earn a wage that, at the end of a full week, will not even bring them above the poverty level and the ranks of the working poor in our country are growing.

The economy is good. The unemployment rate is at its lowest level in years. The help wanted index is climbing. Yet some hard-working Americans are just not making it.

If left unchanged, by next year the minimum wage will be the lowest point in 40 years. If you are tired of seeing the welfare rolls grow, then let us make work pay. If someone cannot earn enough money working 40 hours a week to feed their family, then we are forcing them into the welfare office. We are telling them it is more profitable to collect than to work.

Do not be fooled by the argument that a modest increase in minimum wage eliminates jobs. Over a dozen recent economic studies have found that modest minimum wage has had an insignificant effect on unemployment levels and has boosted total worker income. Nine states currently have minimum wage levels higher than the Federal minimum wage, and in these States, increasing the minimum wage did not eliminate jobs.

A December Wall Street Journal poll found 75 percent of Americans support raising the minimum wage. To my colleagues, I say the message is clear, minimum wage earners can no longer make it on their salaries, 11 million Americans would get a pay raise if the minimum wage is increased to \$5.15 an hour. A 90 cent per hour increase in the minimum wage means an additional \$1,800 for a minimum wage earner who works full-time year around.

This is as much as the average American family spends on groceries over 9 months.

Five years ago this body voted to increase the minimum wage by a vote of 382 to 37. The large majority of Americans support it. It is time to raise the minimum wage.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 104TH CONGRESS IN ITS FOURTH MONTH

(Mr. EHLERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, last month a very important event occurred. We passed a bill giving the President line-item veto authority. We hope this will also pass the Senate and be signed into law.

What is remarkable to me is the pace of what we have been doing in this Congress during the past month and the accomplishments we have made.

And those of you who know me well know I am not this sort of person who brags. In fact, I was born in Minnesota, just like Garrison Keillor, I am somewhat shy and humble. As Garrison Keillor does occasionally, I have to talk about what we do.

We are often criticized as being a do-nothing Congress. I would like to announce we now have a do-something Congress, and I have the figures to prove it, and in the words of the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOKE], who spoke a few moments ago, a can-do Congress.

If you look at what this Congress has accomplished in the first month compared to Congresses of the past dozen years, it is striking. The number of hours spent in session, the average for the past 12 years, 28, our Congress, 115, three times as much; number of votes on the House floor, 9.3 is the average of the past dozen years, this year 79, roughly eight times this many; number of committee and subcommittee sessions, average before, 25, this year 155, six times more; number of measures reported out of committee, the average, 1.6, this year, 14, about nine times more.

This Congress is not in the process of reinventing Government, to use that term that is often used. We have a new way of governing. We are getting things done. Not only have we passed a number of important measures such as the balanced budget amendment which Congresses have tried to pass for 40 years or the line-item veto which has been discussed for many years, we have also passed unfunded mandates reform which the States desperately want. We passed the Congressional Accountability Act which applies many of the work place laws to Congress itself. Previous Congresses have exempted themselves.

I think what is even more striking are the internal reforms that we have accomplished, many of which were done the first day of Congress. We have eliminated proxy voting which I felt was an abominable practice. We have

cut committee staff by one-third. We have reduced the number of committees and subcommittees.

And I wish all the people in this land could walk through the basement corridors of the Cannon Building and some of the other buildings and see the dozens and dozens of desks lining the walls in the corridor, the hundreds and hundreds of file cabinets that are there and will be auctioned off because they are no longer needed. The staff that used those desks and those file cabinets are no longer here. Congress truly has cut back, and I hope that trend continues.

I think we have to have many cuts in the budget of this Nation, but we have to start with ourselves first, and we have done that.

We have open committee hearings to the public, and we have made dozens of other changes in reforming the way Congress operates, even on such mundane matters as parking. It was discovered that some lobbyists had been given parking privileges in the parking garages here in our buildings, and that has been stopped. Providing parking for partisan political organizations has been stopped.

What I want all of us to recognize and to appreciate and in fact celebrate, is that we are governing in a different way, and the people of this Nation have responded.

Last year the favorable rating of Congress was about 14 percent. It is now almost 50 percent. We have really made progress in changing things, and the public is responding and saying, "Go on. That is what we like. Keep it up."

Now, I do want to warn the people of this Nation that these cuts we imposed on ourselves, as I said a moment ago, are a precursor of what we will be doing to the entire budget, and no one likes to have their part of the budget cut, but everyone is going to have to share the pain, because the people of this Nation have said, "Enough, we want our budget balanced. We want our taxes to be reasonable. We want our country to go forward and operate the way we have to operate our families and stay within our income."

This Congress has pledged to do that.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION CONCERNING MEXICAN RESCUE PACKAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized during morning business for 3 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, in order for Congress to begin to fulfill our duty under our Constitution regarding the Mexican rescue package, my colleagues and I have introduced a privileged resolution, House Resolution 57. This resolution will be brought up today under special parliamentary procedure after the 1-minute session and the Journal vote this morning.

Our resolution does two things: It reasserts Congress constitutional authority in regard to the purse strings of this Nation, and it also asks the Comptroller General of the United States to report back to the Congress within 7 days on how our tax dollars are being used.

Four men in this Congress and one in the White House do not a republic make. Our bipartisan resolution speaks on behalf of the vast majority of American taxpayers who have clearly said to us that they do not want their money put at risk to ensure a foreign nation nor its creditors.

We were told NAFTA would not result in a great sucking sound. Well, it has not only resulted in a sucking sound of jobs, but now also our taxpayer dollars. To the unilateral actions of the administration in concert with four men here in the Congress, the American people have been denied their just voice on such a consequential matter.

Our Government is not a monarchy. It is not a parliament. We are not here to approve what the Executive does. This legislative branch has equal powers in the law.

Let me read you two sections of the U.S. Constitution which pertain to the powers of Congress in this regard; under article I, section 9, the Constitution states, "No money shall be drawn from the Treasury but in consequence of appropriations made by law." And under article I, section 8, the Constitution states, "Congress has the power," and I underline Congress, "to pay the debts and provide for the general welfare of the United States, to borrow money on the credit of the United States, to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and to coin money, regulate the value thereof, and of foreign coin."

As is evident in this reading, the administration's recent decision to extend United States taxpayer funds to the Mexican Government and its Wall Street creditors without a vote of Congress is a direct violation of the spirit and letter of our United States Constitution. Where in the Constitution does it say that the executive branch has the sole power to create new money and use that money to fund a multibillion-dollar back door foreign aid program for Mexico without the approval of this Congress? Where in the Constitution does it give the executive power to make U.S. taxpayers liable for the mistakes and machinations of a foreign government and its rich U.S. speculators from the United States who went south in search of quick profits?

Today vote for House Resolution 57. Reassert Congress' proper duty and obligation.

□ 1015

PRESIDENT'S BUDGET DOA, DEVOID OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURTON of Indiana). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from California [Mr. HORN] is recognized during morning business for 3 minutes.

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, when Democrats controlled this Chamber and Republicans were in the White House, the budgets submitted by Republican Presidents were always considered DOA, dead on arrival.

Well, we Republicans who are now in the majority will not follow that tradition. We will take a good, hard look at what the President proposes, and where we find common ground, we will work with him. But it is clear that the President's budget is not nearly as aggressive as it should be in reducing the size and the power of the Federal Government.

The few cuts that are there are half-hearted, and spending is still going up too rapidly. In fact, this budget calls for a \$50 billion increase in spending from the current budget.

So much for leadership. The Wall Street Journal reported that the budget "makes little further progress in reducing the deficit." So much for leadership.

The paper reports that the President's game plan is to let Republicans make the hard decisions. This is not Presidential leadership; it is Presidential abdication.

You know, come to think of it, maybe the President's budget is DOA. But that is not dead on arrival, that is devoid of accountability.

THE \$50,000 TAX DEDUCTIBLE DINNERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentlewoman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, I come to the well to speak about something that troubles me a lot. I spent 3 years of my life, and I must say they were miserable years, studying the Tax Code when I was in law school. And the one thing that was very clear in our Tax Code was you did not get a charitable deduction for political donations. If you gave to charity, fine, you got a charitable deduction. But if you gave to politics, you did not get one.

I think most of us as Americans think that that is the way it should be. But we are in interesting times, very interesting times. We have a new Speaker who has found ways to stretch these things, and tonight we have a very interesting occasion going on, showing how these bright lines are being blurred more and more.

If you saw the Chicago Tribune today, they are mentioning the Speak-

er's dinner tonight, which will cost \$50,000 a plate—\$50,000 a plate. But unlike a normal political contribution, \$19,800 will be tax deductible.

Now, what is this dinner about and how do you get the tax deduction? Well, you get the tax deduction because they are saying it goes to a non-profit organization. But that organization happens to be the Speaker's television network called National Empowerment Television. And what is it? It does not even pretend to have balance. It does not even pretend to present both sides. It presents NEWT's views 24 hours a day. I do not think NEWT's views qualifies as news all the time, and I do not think that is what the Tax Code was meant to back.

So you see, now really an indirect taxpayer subsidy is going to this television thing that is absolutely nothing but broadcasts of whatever they want to put on. That looks terribly political, and I think is terribly political.

At the very same time you see them taking on public television, which is a different kind of direct subsidy which does attempt to be balanced and does let everybody on.

Now, is it not interesting? While you hear they don't want taxpayer subsidies of that, they are perfectly willing to craft these dinners that only let in people from a certain strata of society. Believe me, to pay \$50,000 for a dinner you have got to come from a lot wealthier background than I do in my district. You get a House for \$50,000. Nobody would ever think of paying \$50,000 for a dinner.

Also think about if you are an average tipper like I am and you did a 20-percent tip. A tip on that \$50,000 dinner would equal what the average minimum wage earner earns in a year. Just think, one tip on one dinner, one night, equals what a minimum wage earner makes for a year.

I mean, what is going on here? This is one of the things that many of us on this side are very troubled about. I was pleased to see that Time magazine is also getting troubled about it. Time magazine has an excellent article this week called "Newt, Inc." I hope everybody reads it, because it lays out many of the interesting ways the Speaker has been able to spread his tentacles out to control all these different ways of access to public information, shut off those who are not with him, find novel ways for people to be able to deduct it, and really march forward.

That does not look like the democracy I knew. The democracy I knew was one where everybody had an equal weighted voice and everybody's vote counted equally. I just do not see why we should be doing taxpayer subsidies of this type of occasion, and I do not see how in the world you can ever pretend that everybody's voice is going to be weighted equally, if you cannot get access to the TV stations that the taxpayers indirectly subsidize, nor can you buy the ticket to the dinner which