

The majority would have us believe that an increased minimum wage would, without a doubt, increase unemployment. According to many studies, however, this is not true. In fact, over 100 leading economists, including three Nobel Prize winners, have urged an increase in the minimum wage.

If Congress truly cares about working Americans, it will raise the minimum wage. Doing so would raise standards of living for many Americans, and would also be a significant step toward closing the income gap that threatens to do great damage to American society. As part of my continuing efforts to understand and combat this income gap, I am hosting a forum on April 12 at the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul, MN. The forum is entitled "Renewing the Social Contract," and will address the questions of why working American families are struggling in today's economy. My special guest at this forum will be AFL-CIO president John Sweeney. Mr. Sweeney has been a tireless advocate on behalf of American workers, pushing for fair wages, good benefits, and honest labor-management cooperation.

The forum will explore what Government and business can do to ease economic anxiety, lessen income inequality, and increase job security. In addition to Mr. Sweeney, I will be welcoming representatives of business and academia, as well as workers who know what it is like to struggle for low wages and who have experienced the difficult search for livable-wage jobs.

I am hopeful that this event will shed additional light on the income gap, and will produce ideas for cooperation between Government, labor, and business that will enable all Americans to share in our growing economy.

#### A TRIBUTE TO CHAD THOMPSON

HON. WILLIAM M. "MAC" THORNBERRY  
OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Chad Thompson of Amarillo, TX who is the State winner of the Voice of Democracy broadcast script writing contest, administered by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. His essay is a reflection of our American heritage, to do what we can for our neighbors, community, and our Nation:

The great red sun peeked over the blue horizon. Just as dawn broke a young woman was strolling barefoot along the beach. She breathed in the cool morning air and felt the sand between her toes. The uniform stretch of beach was broken only by starfish washed in by the tide. There were thousands of them covering the beach.

Too bad, the young woman thought, that all of them would dry up and die before long. Starfish thrive in shallow water, but once they are beached there is no other option but death. She picked up one of the starfish, took a long look at it, and threw it far back into the ocean, giving it a second chance at life. Then she picked up another and hurled it back into the water too.

She had been doing this for a while when a casual jogger passed by and asked, "Are you

crazy? Do you realize there are millions of starfish here? You can't make a difference." She looked up at him, propelled another starfish to safety and replied, "I made a difference to that one."

Behind this simple story lies the solution to answering America's call. I believe America's call is for its citizens to love their country, to cherish its traditions while making room for new ones, and to work for the betterment of their fellow countrymen. Each person can make a tremendous difference—whether to the nation as a whole, their state, their community, or in their own neighborhood. The time is now for Americans to respond. Every American should realize large problems can be surmounted—that for every Goliath of society, there is a David who, with the courage to act, can solve what seemed to be an impossible task. David was able to conquer the huge giant Goliath with just one stone, in the same way we can eradicate any problem in America with a positive attitude and willingness to work hard.

I believe that cherishing America is to show pride in its symbols. For example, last summer, as I stepped out of my house early on July 4th to jog, something seemed a little strange. It wasn't anything that could hinder me physically, but it wounded by sense of patriotism. The problem was that no one had the American flag displayed.

Before I ran to the end of the street, I turned around, walked back in to my home, found the fabric of our nation, and proudly put it in its place in our yard. Afterwards I continued my jog, but when I returned a smile came across my face, for the neighborhood was now splashed with red, white, and blue.

You see, as everyone around the block saw the flag in our yard, they put theirs out as well. This incident shows how the power of one small act can cause a chain reaction that makes a big difference. Independence day in my neighborhood was a little brighter which in turn made me proud to be an American.

In April of 1995 tragedy ate at America's heart. When the Alfred Murrah Federal building in Oklahoma City was bombed, it created a black hole that pulled everyone to its center. Everyone pulled together in the terrible tragedy that took so many lives. There were no problems to race, religion or politics—just fellow humans who needed help and the people of the community responded. Soon offers of help poured in from all quarters of the country. Americans took off work across the country in hopes of helping the victims. Some were only able to offer teddy bears for the wounded children, while others could offer free intensive care; either way though, the lives of all Americans were altered in some form or fashion from that senseless act.

Captain Scott O'Grady knows what it takes to make a difference. His fighter plane was downed over Bosnian territory, and while the nation feared he was dead or captured, he lay hidden in bushes surviving on ants and rainwater. His life was saved because his fellow soldiers kept listening for him long after common sense told them to give up. The United States military was flawless in his rescue. His willingness to survive as an American played an extremely important role, but the unsung heroes were the men who answered America's call by serving in the Marines. Just by his will to live and to return home, Scott O'Grady made a difference by focusing America's attention on the honor, strength and determination held by our servicemen.

America's call can be answered by young and old, by a small act such as helping a

child learn to read, the heroic deeds of a fireman saving a life or a soldier defending the nation in war. Anything positive counts. It is up to every American to take part in this government. Make a difference, and fill out that ballot. Remember it is your obligation to do something.

It is time now to answer America's call. Like the woman on the beach saving one starfish at a time, decide today to be that person who can make a difference.

#### FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF PERSIAN GULF WAR

HON. W.J. (BILLY) TAUZIN

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, this year marks the fifth anniversary of the Persian Gulf war—a war fought over oil in foreign lands. Although the U.S. troops and our allies displayed remarkable sophistication and prowess in bringing Saddam to his knees, our national security concerns remain and our position has weakened. In 1991, America imported 45 percent of the U.S. demand for oil; 5 years later our dependence has grown. Today we import over half, 52 percent of our annual consumption. The time has come for the Nation to decide to give our young men and women the option to take U.S. jobs on U.S. soil or go to war to protect foreign oil on which we are so dependent.

Our first commitment should be made to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and its mandated 1 billion barrel mark. The mere threat of drawing down these reserves calmed the oil and gas markets and stabilized the price during the Persian Gulf war crisis. Instead of preserving this stockpile we have reduced the minimum fill level, ceased the purchase of new oil, decided to sell 7 million barrels of oil, maybe as many as 100 million barrels, and lost the use of a 75 million barrel facility at Weeks Island which is in my district. It is time to move in the other direction.

We must create incentives to produce domestically and keep jobs at home instead of driving companies and employees abroad. I encourage Congress and the administration to move forward with the technical suggestions that the oil and gas caucus presented to President Clinton, as well as, sign in to law a commonsense regulatory reform bill, the royalty simplification and fairness bill, and the Coast Guard authorization bill which contains important language dealing with OPA '90's financial responsibility section.

In addition, we should reject the EPA's efforts to expand the toxic release inventory to include certain oil and gas wastes, speak out against efforts to increase taxes on oil and gas production and reject mandating an OCS moratorium.

I ask that you join me and many Members in both bodies to enact these legislative and regulatory changes. We must send the message that America's dependence on foreign oil comes at the price of U.S. lives and U.S. jobs.

STEPHEN GEPPI, THOMAS  
D'ALESSANDRO, JR., GOOD CITI-  
ZEN AWARD WINNER

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, March 29, 1996*

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Stephen Geppi, the 1996 winner of the Thomas D'Alessandro, Jr., Good Citizenship Award. Named for the late, great Mayor Thomas D'Alessandro, this recognition is bestowed upon Mr. Geppi for his contributions to the Italian-American community.

Born in Baltimore, Mr. Geppi learned at an early age the importance of hard work when he had to leave school to support his mother. His first job, at age 9, was bundling comic books and magazines. He opted to take part of his wages in comics.

Even when, as an adult, he took a job with the U.S. Postal Service, his interest in comic books did not wane. He began asking customers on his mail route for old comic books to sell or trade, and soon earned more buying and selling comics than he did delivering the mail.

Mr. Geppi opened Geppi's Comic World in Baltimore in 1974, and soon expanded to four stores. By 1982, he moved into comic distribution, and in just over 10 years time he expanded his distribution business to over 28 cities across North America and Europe. In addition to distribution, he branched out to publishing, and 1 year ago opened Diamond International Galleries, devoted to comics, comic collectibles, and related art which draws visitors from all over the world.

Mr. Geppi's extraordinary professional success has not prevented him from active involvement in his community. In 1993, he was one of the consortium of local investors who brought the Baltimore Orioles back to local ownership. He has actively served on civic boards or committees with a number of local organizations, including the Maryland Science Center, the Baltimore Zoo, the Johns Hopkins Children's Center, the College of Notre Dame, the International Museum of Cartoon Art, and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

This is not the first time Mr. Geppi has been honored for his many accomplishments. Most recently, he was named "Business Owner of the Year" by the Baltimore County Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to salute Stephen Geppi for the honor he has brought to the Italian-American community by his many accomplishments and commitment to the community. He deserves this award for the contributions he has made in the spirit and tradition of its namesake, Thomas D'Alessandro.

A BILL TO AMEND THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ACT OF 1970

HON. NANCY L. JOHNSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, March 29, 1996*

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a bill, for myself, Representative SHAYS of Connecticut, Representa-

tive FRANKS of New Jersey and Representative HORN of California, to amend the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 to require that OSHA inspections of commercial and residential construction sites be conducted by inspectors who have been specifically trained for such work by the Department of Labor.

My proposal will require that inspectors of commercial and residential construction meet certain experience and training requirements and be specifically certified to perform construction site inspections. Although many construction inspectors take courses offered by OSHA, they are not required to do so, allowing many to perform this important work with little or no formal training in the often complicated procedures used in the construction industry.

Construction site inspections comprise nearly half of all inspections done by OSHA. More seriously, the rate of accidents in the construction industry is significantly higher than in other industries. Based on 1994 Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the rate of nonfatal injuries per 100 full-time workers is 11.8 percent for the construction industry compared to 8.4 percent for all private industry. Total deaths from occupational accidents in 1994 were 6,588 or 5.3 per 100,000 employed, but there were 1,027 deaths or 14.8 per 100,000 in the construction industry. Therefore, I believe that it is not only prudent and sound public policy to make sure that those who do construction site inspections are well qualified, but that this reform is overdue.

Under current OSHA rules, OSHA inspectors can go from inspecting beauty salons to inspecting high-rise steel structures on a daily basis. Since most work-related deaths occur in the construction industry, I believe that my proposal will significantly improve the quality of OSHA inspections, the overall effectiveness of OSHA, and save lives.

I urge my colleagues to join in support of this important effort to improve the way OSHA construction inspections are performed.

CORTLAND ZONTA CLUB NAMES  
WOMAN OF THE YEAR

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, March 29, 1996*

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me today in congratulating Ute Gomez from Cortland, NY, who will be honored on Sunday, April 14 as the Zonta Club of Cortland Woman of Achievement for 1996.

My personal esteem for Mrs. Gomez is based upon her positive attitude in a dire situation. She turned a personal health scare into a learning experience for many other women. In 1992, she was diagnosed with breast cancer after a self-exam and mammography. Since then she has created a support group and counseled scores of women with breast cancer.

Three-and-a-half-years-later, after a lumpectomy, a modified radical mastectomy, chemotherapy, countless visits to homes and hospital rooms, Mrs. Gomez was quoted in the Cortland Standard about being named the Zonta Woman of Achievement:

"I am embarrassed by this," she said. "Not my breast cancer, but being honored. But if

one woman can see this and do a self-exam, or get a mammogram done, or reach out for help, I feel I've accomplished something."

Ute Gomez is an outstanding civic leader who meets that definition by caring for others and putting that love to work. She is involved with the Breast Health Partnership Committee of Cortland County, a State and federally funded program. She has taken it upon herself to arrange mammograms, counsel, and otherwise assist women who need her help.

My mother died a victim of breast cancer. I have tried in my public and private life to help in eradicating the disease and bringing comfort to those who suffer with it. I pledge further help now, and look forward to continuing to work toward those goals with Mrs. Gomez and others who have given so selflessly of their time and spirit.

A TRIBUTE TO THE CITY OF  
COALINGA ON ITS 90TH ANNI-  
VERSARY

HON. CALVIN M. DOOLEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, March 29, 1996*

Mr. DOOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise before my colleagues today to recognize the city of Coalinga. On April 6, 1996, the city will celebrate its 90th anniversary, and I would like to honor the people of Coalinga by recounting a few of the highlights of the city's history.

Coalinga came into existence as an oil and coal mining town in the late 1880s. At the base of the coastal mountain range on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley, the town started out as little more than a coaling station for the Southern Pacific Railroad line that connects Los Angeles and San Francisco. The name apparently derives from its designation as Coaling Station A.

The mining of coal, and later oil, caused an economic boom at the turn of the century. By 1910, 4 years after the city incorporated, the Coalinga oil field was the largest in California. Oil continues to be one of the city's economic mainstays, along with agriculture.

As a relatively isolated settlement, Coalinga survived the aftermath of the boom years by relying on a tight-knit community. This close cooperation among its citizens was used to establish a drinking water supply in an area beset by hard water, to establish city-operated natural gas utility in a rural community ignored by the corporate utilities, and to establish a school and a library. This little community also had a strong patriotic element—it was World War I veterans from Coalinga who started the push to establish the American Legion in California in 1919. Coalinga is the home to American Legion Post 2, designated as the "Mother Post" of the California American Legion.

This sense of community was put to the test in 1983, when Coalinga was devastated by a 6.7 earthquake that leveled a significant portion of the business district and caused over \$31 million in damages. There was open speculation that Coalinga would not survive this disaster.

Instead of surrendering to this speculation, the citizens rolled up their sleeves and rebuilt. In fact, the earthquake served as a stimulator, with the town leaders using the rebuilding effort as an opportunity to develop a new revitalization plan. That plan has resulted in the