

Now all of this is historic, and you say, "Why am I taking the time?" The problem is, this body just allowed the Comstock Act to be enforced on the Internet vis-a-vis anything doing with abortion. Previously, the Congress did away the Comstock Act dealing with family planning, thank goodness. But the Comstock Act has never been repealed; it is still on the books. And so, as a consequence, this has been thrown up on the Internet and could be used to bring people into a criminal conviction or arraignment if they decided to discuss anything about the big A word on the Internet.

Now I think when you look at this thing that I am sure more people started out thinking was a real anachronism from the 19th century, the fact that it is still on the books in the 20th century, and then to think that this Congress put it up on the Internet for the 21st century is really, really sad, and I would hope some time before this year is over we could go back and amend the Telecommunications Act, because at the time we are deregulating everything else, to think we are regulating speech about women and making it criminal I think is going the wrong way.

Madam Speaker, I want to take a moment today to recall a shameful chapter in the history of our country and this Congress. I want to talk about Anthony Comstock and the events historians now refer to as "Comstockery," because I think we have to acknowledge that elements of Comstockery are all too present today.

Anthony Comstock was a religious fanatic who spent his life in a personal crusade for moral purity—as defined, of course, by himself. This crusade resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of a multitude of Americans whose only crime was to exercise their constitutional right of free speech in ways that offended Anthony Comstock. Women seemed to particularly offend Anthony Comstock, most particularly women who believed in the right to plan their families through the use of contraceptives, or in the right of women to engage in discussions and debate about matters involving sexuality, including contraception and abortion.

For example, on November 3, 1872, Mr. Comstock brought about the arrest, on charges of obscenity, of two feminists, Victoria Woodhull and Tennessee Claflin, because they published a story in their newspaper about the alleged infidelity of Henry Ward Beecher, a clergyman. Comstock went after Margaret Sanger in 1914, causing her arraignment on eight counts of obscenity for publishing newspaper articles on birth control. He obtained a conviction against Margaret Sanger's husband, William Sanger, in 1915 for selling a single copy of a pamphlet on birth control entitled "Family Limitation."

Anthony Comstock, of course, could not conduct his fanatic crusade singlehandedly. His crusade was empowered by the Congress of the United States, which allowed him onto the floor of the House in January 1873, where he remained nearly all day. Carrying a satchel full of books and pictures he claimed were pornographic, he showed them to every Member of Congress he could buttonhole, and lob-

bied for a bill that would give him the legal authority to carry on his campaign of persecution and censorship in the name of fighting obscenity. One biographer notes that tears flowed from his eyes as he addressed Congress, begging for a law to stop the "hydra-headed monster" of vice.

The Congress, unfortunately, soon obliged Mr. Comstock, passing what is known as the Comstock Act. This act makes it a crime to advertise or mail not only "every lewd, lascivious, or filthy book, pamphlet, picture, paper, letter, writing, print, or other publication of an indecent character," but also any information "for preventing contraception or producing abortion." Congress passed this law with virtually no discussion, acting by unanimous consent in the Senate and under suspension of the rules in the House.

The Committee on Appropriations then set aside several thousand dollars for a special agent to carry out the Comstock Act, and on March 6, 1873, 1 day before his 29th birthday, Anthony Comstock was commissioned as a special agent of the post office, vested with powers of arrest and the privilege of free transportation on all mail lines so that he could roam the country arresting and prosecuting those who dared to send through the mails any information about contraception or abortion, or anything that Comstock deemed to be lewd or indecent.

As a result of Comstock's crusade, publishers were forced to censor their scientific and physiological works, druggists were punished for giving out information about contraception, and average Americans had to live with censorship of their mail, and without access to reliable information about contraception. Two years before this death in 1915, Comstock bragged that he had been responsible for the criminal conviction of enough people to fill a 61-coach passenger train.

George Bernard Shaw assessed this terrible series of events in 1905, saying, Comstockery is the world's standing joke at the expense of the United States. It confirms the deep-seated conviction of the Old World that America is a provincial place, a second-rate civilization after all.

Although its reach has been somewhat curtailed by the courts based upon first amendment principles, the Comstock Act remains on our books today. In 1971, Congress deleted the prohibition on birth control; but the prohibition on information about abortion remains, and the maximum fine was increased in 1994 from \$5,000 to \$250,000 for a first offense.

Comstockery, unfortunately, is not just a shameful part of our past. Comstockery has been given a new lease on life by this Congress.

The Telecommunications Act passed this year extended the Comstock Act's prohibitions to anyone who uses an interactive computer service. This Congress, therefore, revived Comstockery by making it a crime to use the Internet to provide or receive information which directly or indirectly tells where, how, of whom, or by what means an abortion may be obtained. A broader gag rule is hard to imagine. It could criminalize:

An Internet posting of the referral directory of your local medical society, or the yellow pages of the telephone directory;

A telemedicine consultation between two doctors who are conferring about a patient who may need an abortion to save her life; or

Uploading or downloading medical journal articles about RU-486, or about safe abortion techniques.

I have introduced legislation to repeal the abortion-related speech provisions of the Comstock Act, but unfortunately, the leadership of the Judiciary Committee and of the Congress has refused to move this bill. So Comstockery remains alive and well, and until the Congress is motivated to renounce Comstockery once and for all, I fear that women will pay a disproportionate share of the price, with the dark shadow of Anthony Comstock hanging over our health-related speech on critical topics such as abortion.

And Comstockery seems to be enjoying a revival in other ways, as well. Efforts to impose gag rules on doctors, punitive measures designed to make it harder for women to get access to information and services relating to contraception and abortion, laws that would allow the Anthony Comstocks of today to arrest and jail doctors who perform an abortion procedure that in their medical judgment is the safest to preserve the health and future fertility of their patients—all this is the Comstockery of today.

It is only President Clinton's veto of H.R. 1833 that stops us from seeing, on the evening news, the chilling image of medical doctors going in handcuffs to criminal trial for exercising their best medical judgment for women who wanted pregnancies have gone terribly wrong.

Republican control of the Congress has brought us more than 50 votes on abortion. Every imaginable form of Comstockery is represented in this array of antichoice measures.

Anthony Comstock's crusade against free speech and reproductive choice represents one of the worst chapters of our history. The last thing this country needs or wants is a bridge to the past represented by Comstockery. Suppression of free speech, suppression of reproductive choice, is an aberration from genuine American values.

As the Anthony Comstocks of today patrol the Halls of this Congress seeking to suppress free speech and reproductive choice in the name of morality, or family values, or whatever high-sounding purpose they may invoke, it is incumbent upon the Congress to ensure that no form of the Comstock Act is ever again enacted, and that no special agent is ever again commissioned to roam the land, persecuting Americans in the name of morality or family values.

FAMILY QUALITY OF LIFE ADVISORY COMMITTEE—ASSESSMENT OF EFFORTS IN THE 104TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. WOLF] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor this morning in my capacity as the chairman of the Family Quality of Life Advisory Committee to submit for the RECORD my assessment of the efforts during the 104th Congress to make the House more family friendly which I request be inserted in the RECORD.

While some progress toward the goal of making the Congress more family

friendly for Members, for their families, and for the staff has been made, it is probably fair to say that this body may never truly become a family friendly place to work.

Still, I believe that it is important to continue the efforts. Rolled votes, firmer and more reliable legislative schedules, earlier end times on get-away days and efforts to conduct most legislative business in the Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday window have helped some. Much more needs to be done.

As I step down as chairman, I urge the leadership to continue this effort and appoint as the next chairman someone who comes from a different perspective, someone, perhaps, whose district is more remote from the Capitol who commutes home on weekends to be in the district and with his or her family, someone with younger children living at home, someone who will continue to strive for progress in this area but who sees things through different eyes.

Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to share my thoughts on family friendly efforts in the House and my hopes for such efforts in the days ahead.

At the conclusion of the 104th Congress, I will end my service as chairman of the Family Quality of Life Advisory Committee. It has been an honor and privilege to serve on this Committee, but it is appropriate that a new chairman be named to continue efforts in the 105th Congress. To provide long-range balance, it is my hope that the next Family Quality of Life Advisory Committee chairman brings a perspective different from my own—preferably someone with young children who lives with his or her family in the congressional district, located beyond the Washington metropolitan area. The new chairman should serve as an ombudsman for the House, push for further family friendly initiatives, and be willing to challenge the House leadership on both sides of the aisle on family friendly matters.

In assessing family friendly efforts in the 104th Congress, simply put, this Congress has been extremely difficult for many Members, staff and families. Both sessions have been marked by long days and nights, contentious debate, and ambitious legislative agendas. Our efforts to enact broad reforms and sweeping initiatives have exacted a significant toll on far too many of our colleagues, staff, and on the families. I know many who have struggled greatly under the enormous burdens imposed by the House schedule.

The House leadership did try to respond to the needs of Members, staff and families by adopting some reforms and improvements in the House schedule gleaned from a survey the committee conducted of Members and staff. But the House is not family friendly. The House began adhering where possible to a published schedule, starting sessions earlier in the morning, rolling votes, ending sessions earlier on get-away Fridays, and instituting a Tuesday-Thursday schedule for floor business when possible. There were good intentions at the outset and they helped. However, much more is needed.

At times it seems to be an impossible task in trying to balance the needs of Members anxious to conclude legislative business at a

reasonable time most days except Wednesday to allow them to be with family members in the metropolitan Washington area with the needs of Members eager to return to their more distant districts at the end of the legislative work week. But it is a challenge we must address. Some Members prefer the House to conclude legislative business earlier in the evening during the week to allow them the opportunity to have dinner with their family, attend PTA meetings, spend time with their sons or daughters, or simply relax. For these Members, the late sessions make it nearly impossible for them to go home to spend time with their families here and still attend to needs in their own districts when the House is not in session.

Other Members whose families live in their districts want the House to compress its legislative sessions, maintaining a Tuesday-Thursday work schedule and working late into the evening if necessary. These Members prefer longer legislative sessions so they may spend additional time when they go back to their districts with their families and constituents. I recognize the difficulties in attempting to meet these conflicting needs, but we must make every effort to be fair and balanced and accommodate the needs of all Members as much as possible.

My own personal view is that perhaps a truly family friendly Congress may not be possible. Maybe we can never balance the legislative business of the Nation against the individual, personal needs of Members, staff, and families. Still, I do know that we must continue working toward that goal. We will either get better or get worse. Things never stay the same.

We must remain committed to making Congress a more family friendly place, one which enables Members to be successful Representatives as well as successful spouses, fathers and mothers. We owe this effort to ourselves, our staffs, our families, and those who would aspire to follow us to Capitol Hill. If we give up on efforts to establish a more family friendly Congress, we essentially concede that on Capitol Hill, one can only be successful in either his or her professional or personal life but not both. What kind of legislators, spouses, fathers or mothers would we then become? Truly, when our course has been run, the only place each of us will really be missed is in our family. Let's not throw in the towel on efforts to successfully meet both professional and personal needs.

Success in establishing a more family friendly working environment requires a strong commitment from House leadership on both sides of the aisle. Members—especially newer Members—need to see their leaders are committed to having the House family friendly.

While leadership on both sides of the aisle must lead the way in our family friendly efforts, all Members have a responsibility to further these efforts. Where possible, all Members should work to focus floor debate and not waste time, and drag out matters beyond a reasonable point to no useful end. The House, Members, and staff should not be held hostage to the whims of Members who would force everyone to stay in session late to debate issues whose outcome is a foregone conclusion. Family friendly is a responsibility not just of the leadership but of all Members.

Of course, Members understand that as legislators, we are in an unpredictable business.

There will be times when Congress must remain in session to debate critical issues. Crisis government should not, however, be the standard for doing business on Capitol Hill.

At both political conventions this summer, both parties offered strong profamily platforms and policies. I believe it is vital that the espoused profamily views represent the true positions of the parties. It is important that the parties not only talk the profamily talk but that they also walk the profamily walk by living a relatively normal life. If we are so busy meeting the needs of the job that we neglect the needs of our families, our views become skewed. Let's not lose our focus and true commitment to family.

Further reforms in House procedures and practices can help. For example, I am not convinced that the House is particularly productive or effective when it works day after day, night after night. Are we as effective as we can be when we debate critical issues late into the night, night after night. These hours are draining for all of us and tiredness increases the level of frustration, hostility and perhaps stubbornness.

Let me make a comment here about the staff. Just like the Members around here, the staff have families, too. They have husbands and wives and sons and daughters and moms and dads. Members need to be sensitive to the fact that the staff arrives before the House goes into session in the morning, and they continue to work after we adjourn for the day, no matter how late. If legislative business and the last vote concludes in the early evening, most Members leave. But if there are special orders into the night, the staff stays. That can make for 14-plus hour days and 2 or 3 of these days in a row takes a tremendous toll on the staff. The floor staff probably does not use the term family friendly to describe their work environment.

Many Members have suggested additional changes in House practices that merit further consideration and/or adoption. Some of these changes include: Start legislative sessions earlier in the day; end legislative sessions at a reasonable hour every day while setting one day each week for a late session; conclude voting on the designated late night by 8 or 9 p.m. and only allow debate on amendments to take place past this hour.

Also, roll or cluster roll call votes; approve modified closed rules to expedite debate; set time limits on debate on amendments; establish and adhere to a set schedule; adjourn before 7 p.m. at least one night a week or more frequently if the House starts work earlier.

Finally, provide more time for district work; eliminate 1 minute speeches at the start of the day in which the House is expected to be in session beyond 9 p.m.; and eliminate special orders when the House session extends beyond 9 p.m.

And, of course, some of these reforms may need to be set aside at the end of a session or when legislative demands dictate. But these reforms should be the rule—not the exception. And when we violate them, we should do so only for very good reasons.

I hope we continue to make family friendly reforms. It will help us be better legislators, help us be better husbands or wives and better parents. While change is difficult, let's not abandon this critical effort.