

Since my last report, dated February 20, 1996, the Congress has cleared and the President has signed four short-term continuing resolutions (Public Laws 104-116, 104-118, 104-122, and 104-131), the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127), the Contract with America Advancement Act (P.L. 104-121), an act providing Tax Benefits for Members of the Armed Forces Performing Peacekeeping Services in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Macedonia (P.L. 104-117), the Federal Tea Tasters Repeal Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-128), the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (P.L. 104-132) and the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-134). The Federal payment to the District of Columbia and emergency funding for Bosnia and Herzegovina for economic revitalization were included in P.L. 104-122. These actions changed the current level of budget authority, outlays, and revenues.

Sincerely,

JUNE E. O'NEILL,  
Director.

PARLIAMENTARIAN STATUS REPORT—104TH CONGRESS,  
2ND SESSION, HOUSE ON-BUDGET SUPPORTING DETAIL,  
FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996, AS OF CLOSE OF BUSINESS  
MAY 17, 1996

(In millions of dollars)

|                                                                                              | Budget authority | Outlays  | Revenues  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Enacted in Previous Sessions</b>                                                          |                  |          |           |
| Revenues .....                                                                               |                  |          | 1,039,122 |
| Permanents and other spending .....                                                          |                  |          |           |
| Legislation .....                                                                            | 830,272          | 798,924  |           |
| Appropriation legislation .....                                                              |                  | 242,052  |           |
| Offsetting receipts .....                                                                    | -200,017         | -200,017 |           |
| Total previously enacted .....                                                               | 630,254          | 840,958  | 1,039,122 |
| <b>Enacted in First Session</b>                                                              |                  |          |           |
| Appropriation bills:                                                                         |                  |          |           |
| 1995 Rescissions and Department of Defense Emergency Supplementals Act (P.L. 104-6) .....    | -100             | -885     |           |
| 1995 Rescissions and Emergency Supplementals for Disaster Assistance Act (P.L. 104-19) ..... | 22               | -3,149   |           |
| Agriculture (P.L. 104-37) .....                                                              | 62,602           | 45,620   |           |
| Defense (P.L. 104-61) .....                                                                  | 243,301          | 163,223  |           |
| Energy and Water (P.L. 104-46) .....                                                         | 19,336           | 11,502   |           |
| Legislative Branch (P.L. 104-53) .....                                                       | 2,125            | 1,977    |           |
| Military Construction (P.L. 104-32) .....                                                    | 11,177           | 3,110    |           |
| Transportation (P.L. 104-50) .....                                                           | 12,682           | 11,899   |           |
| Treasury, Postal Service (P.L. 104-52) .....                                                 | 23,026           | 20,530   |           |
| Offsetting receipts .....                                                                    | -7,946           | -7,946   |           |
| Authorization bills:                                                                         |                  |          |           |
| Self-Employed Health Insurance Act (P.L. 104-7) .....                                        | -18              | -18      | -101      |
| Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (P.L. 104-42) .....                                      | 1                | 1        |           |
| Fishermen's Protective Right Amendments of 1995 (P.L. 104-43) .....                          |                  | (e)      |           |
| Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act Amendments of 1995 (P.L. 104-48) .....               | 1                | (e)      | 1         |
| Alaska Power Administration Sale Act (P.L. 104-58) .....                                     | -20              | -20      |           |
| ICC Termination Act (P.L. 104-88) .....                                                      |                  |          | (6)       |
| Total enacted first session .....                                                            | 366,191          | 245,845  | -100      |
| <b>Enacted in Second Session</b>                                                             |                  |          |           |
| Appropriation bills:                                                                         |                  |          |           |
| Ninth Continuing Resolution (P.L. 104-99) <sup>1</sup> .....                                 | -1,111           | -1,313   |           |
| Foreign Operations (P.L. 104-107) .....                                                      | 12,104           | 5,936    |           |
| Offsetting receipts .....                                                                    | -4               | -4       |           |
| District of Columbia (P.L. 104-122) .....                                                    | 712              | 712      |           |
| Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-134) .....         | 330,746          | 246,113  |           |
| Offsetting receipts .....                                                                    | -63,682          | -55,154  |           |
| Authorization bills:                                                                         |                  |          |           |
| Gloucester Marine Fisheries Act (P.L. 104-91) <sup>2</sup> .....                             | 14,054           | 5,882    |           |
| Smithsonian Commemorative Coin Act (P.L. 104-96) .....                                       | 3                | 3        |           |
| Saddleback Mt. Arizona Settlement Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-102) .....                           |                  | -7       |           |
| Telecommunications Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-104) <sup>3</sup> .....                             |                  |          |           |
| Farm Credit System Regulatory Relief Act (P.L. 104-105) .....                                | -1               | -1       |           |
| National Defense Authorization Act, fiscal year 1996 (P.L. 104-106) .....                    | 369              | 367      |           |

PARLIAMENTARIAN STATUS REPORT—104TH CONGRESS,  
2ND SESSION, HOUSE ON-BUDGET SUPPORTING DETAIL,  
FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996, AS OF CLOSE OF BUSINESS  
MAY 17, 1996—Continued

(In millions of dollars)

|                                                                                                                                   | Budget authority | Outlays   | Revenues  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| To award Congressional Gold Medal to Ruth and Billy Graham (P.L. 104-111) .....                                                   | (e)              | (e)       |           |
| An Act Providing for Tax Benefits for Armed Forces in Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, and Macedonia (P.L. 104-117) .....            |                  |           | -38       |
| Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act (P.L. 104-127) .....                                                                       | -330             | -721      |           |
| Federal Tea Tasters Repeal Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-128) .....                                                                       |                  |           | (e)       |
| Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (P.L. 104-132) .....                                                                |                  |           | 2         |
| Total enacted second session .....                                                                                                | 292,820          | 201,774   | -36       |
| <b>Appropriated Entitlements and Mandatories</b>                                                                                  |                  |           |           |
| Budget resolution baseline estimates of appropriated entitlements and other mandatory programs not yet enacted <sup>4</sup> ..... |                  |           |           |
|                                                                                                                                   | 17,604           | 19,168    |           |
| Total current level <sup>5</sup> .....                                                                                            | 1,306,869        | 1,307,746 | 1,038,986 |
| Total budget resolution .....                                                                                                     | 1,285,515        | 1,288,160 | 1,042,500 |
| Amount remaining:                                                                                                                 |                  |           |           |
| Under budget resolution .....                                                                                                     |                  |           | 3,514     |
| Over budget resolution .....                                                                                                      | 21,354           | 19,586    |           |

<sup>1</sup>P.L. 104-92 and P.L. 104-99 provide funding for specific appropriated accounts until September 30, 1996.

<sup>2</sup>This bill, also referred to as the seventh continuing resolution for 1996, provides funding until September 30, 1996, for specific appropriated accounts.

<sup>3</sup>The effects of this Act on budget authority, outlays and revenues begin in fiscal year 1997.

<sup>4</sup>Estimates include the effects of changes enacted this session in the following public laws: Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act (P.L. 104-57), Contract with America Advance Act (P.L. 104-121), and the Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act (P.L. 104-127).

<sup>5</sup>In accordance with the Budget Enforcement Act, the total does not include \$4,551 million in budget authority and \$2,448 million in outlays for funding of emergencies that have been designated as such by the President and the Congress.

<sup>6</sup>Less than \$500,000.

Note: Detail may not add due to rounding.

INDIAN EMBASSY CAUGHT RED-HANDED

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

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, for many years I have talked about the horrible human rights violations that have been talking place around the world, but in particular in a place called Punjab in Kashmir and Nagaland in India. Because of that, I have been the target of people who support the Indian lobby in the United States.

At one time, my life was threatened, as well as that of my wife and my children, and they have supported my opponents in campaigns year in and year out. I understand that because I have been talking about the gang raping of women that has been taking place over there, the tortures of individuals who have been taken out of their homes in the middle of the night to be tortured to death never to be seen again, and the placing of about 1.1 million Indian troops in Punjab and Kashmir and Nagaland to repress those people up there because all they want is freedom, democracy and human rights.

But today, Mr. Speaker, I found out some additional things that need to be brought to the attention of my colleagues and the American people. I found out, Mr. Speaker, that the Indian Embassy has been caught red-handed

violating America's national sovereignty and democratic values. Newspapers have reported that a Maryland political fundraiser named Lalit Gadhia confessed that the Embassy provided over \$46,000, which he used to reimburse friends of associates for political contributions that he solicited.

These contributions went to pro-India Members of Congress and to a political action committee, the Indian American Leadership Investment Fund. India's violations of democratic principles have now come to the United States of America. The scheme was run by former Indian Ambassador S.S. Ray and Embassy official Devendra Singh. It is illegal for noncitizens to contribute to U.S. political campaigns or for anyone to make a contribution in another person's name. Yet this is not the first time that the Indian Embassy has been caught interfering in U.S. political campaigns.

Earlier this year, it came to light that former Ambassador Ray urged Indian Americans to support a candidate in the South Dakota senate race, and the Embassy sent out a letter attacking a member of this House who is running for senator in New Jersey.

Mr. Speaker, now they are infecting the American political process with foreign money. They must believe that America is corrupt. This interference leads one to believe that the Indian journalist Rajinder Puri of the Times of India was right when he described India as, "A rotten, corrupt, repressive and antipeople system."

The U.S. Government must make it clear that India's interference in American politics is unacceptable. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1425, which will cut off U.S. development aid to India until it respects human rights, and House Concurrent Resolution 32, which calls for self-determination for the Sikhs of Khalistan. These two measures will show the Indian Government that their disregard for human rights and democratic principles are not to be tolerated.

In addition, India illegally tried to influence congressional elections and that will not be tolerated as well. I hope that the new government of India will correct these practices and that India and the United States can begin to live together in mutual respect for freedom, democracy and human rights, and that the new government will respect the sovereignty of other nations and not be in fear in our elective process.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the articles referred to earlier and a press release from the Council of Khalistan of the Gadhia case:

[From the Washington Times, May 9, 1996]

DEMOCRAT GUILTY OF LAUNDERING CONTRIBUTIONS

(By Mary Pemberton)

BALTIMORE.—A Democratic Party activist pleaded guilty yesterday to devising a scheme to funnel \$46,000 in illegal contributions to a political action committee and several federal election campaigns.

Lalit H. Gadhia, 57, who had been Gov. Parris Glendening's campaign treasurer, pleaded guilty in federal court to one count of causing a false statement to be made to the Federal Election Commission, U.S. Attorney Lynne A. Battaglia said. He faces up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine at sentencing Aug. 6.

None of the money in question went to the governor's campaign. But Maryland Republican Party Chairman Joyce Lyons Terhes said Gadhia's activities are indicative of the type of people Mr. Glendening surrounds himself with.

"I think it is one more example of the flawed administration of Glendening," she said.

But a state Democratic Party spokesman said it has nothing to do with Mr. Glendening and, if anything, reflects positively on the party.

"It is very unfortunate that he became overzealous, but the Clinton administration does not back off . . . even though this guy has been a strong supporter of Democrats," David Paulson said.

The FBI said Gadhia approached the Indian-American Leadership Fund in the fall of 1994 and persuaded the New Mexico PAC to contribute to candidates other than Indian-Americans, as long as he did the fund raising.

For three weeks in October 1994, Gadhia presented the PAC with checks totaling \$34,900, which he said were contributions from a number of individuals. He also provided names, addresses and occupations for those individuals so that the PAC could file the required reports with the FEC.

The PAC, in return, made political contributions to federal candidates selected by Gadhia in the November elections.

For the most part, the money donated to the PAC did not come from the contributors, prosecutors, said. At least \$31,400 of the funds provided to the PAC were laundered by individuals who issued checks to the Indian-American Leadership Fund and then were reimbursed in cash for their contributions by Gadhia or his intermediaries, according to the FBI.

Prosecutors said Gadhia used the same type of scheme to launder \$15,000 in illegal contributions that he provided directly to a number of federal election campaigns.

#### U.S. CONCERN ON EMBASSY POLITICAL ROLE (By Aziz Haniffa)

WASHINGTON.—Barely two weeks into his term after presenting his credentials to President Clinton, India's new Ambassador, Naresh Chandra, received a strong complaint from the Clinton Administration about its concern over the Indian Embassy's alleged interference in the American political process.

State Department officials said that Robin Raphel, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs and the Administration's point person for the subcontinent, had called Chandra to raise the issue about the Justice Department's finding that an Indian diplomat at the embassy here was the source of thousand of dollars of illegal campaign contributions funneled through an Indian-American political action committee by a longtime Democratic Party activist.

On May 8, in a submission of a "statement of facts" filed in court as the basis for a guilty plea entered by Lalit H. Gadhia, 58, the office of the U.S. District Attorney in Baltimore, Maryland, said, "The evidence indicates that the source of the cash used by Mr. Gadhia to finance the nominee contributions was Devendra Singh, an individual assigned to the Indian Embassy in Washington." Singh, who was Minister, Community

Affairs, at the embassy from late 1990 to early 1995, returned to India to take up the position of Director-General of Police in Rajasthan.

State Department officials said that Raphel had called Chandra "to express our strong concern about this allegation of an Indian Embassy official being involved" in a money-laundering scheme to make campaign contributions to pro-India American law-makers.

One official said that "at this point, (the Raphel call to Chandra) this is about it," as far as any raising of the issue with the embassy is concerned. However, the official acknowledged that "anything further will depend on what unfolds legally. So we'll have to see about that."

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the matter was "a criminal case" and that aspect would be handled by the Department of Justice. But he said, "On the diplomatic side of this, the diplomatic aspect of it, we have contacted the Indian Embassy here in Washington and expressed our very strong concern about this particular case." The embassy spokesman, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, declined comment on Raphel's call to Chandra and only reiterated his earlier statement that "the Indian Embassy always has and continues to operate strictly within the basis of diplomatic propriety."

On May 8, U.S. Attorney Lynne A. Battaglia, whose office prosecuted the case, told *The Baltimore Sun*, which first broke the story about this money-laundering plan, "The fact that the money came from the Indian Embassy and that so many people were manipulated into participating in the scheme takes this case to a higher level than we normally see in these kinds of investigations."

In an interview with *India Abroad*, she had said that "we don't normally have crimes involving diplomats," and acknowledged that as far as she could remember, such a case of a diplomat trying to circumvent U.S. election laws was unprecedented.

The State Department official said that if Singh had remained in Washington as an embassy official, even though he would have enjoyed diplomatic immunity, "it would have raised other issues about his status in the country and things like that," that could have resulted in the U.S. calling for his expulsion.

"But as things stand right now," the official said, Raphel's strong expression of concern was the extent of the State Department's action in the case, which had been referred to it by the Justice Department.

Raphel's call to Chandra expressing the Administration's strong concern comes close on the heels of the State Department in March informing a senior member of Congress that the Indian Embassy had given assurances that it was not interfering in America's political process.

In a letter to India's most acerbic critic in Congress, Rep. Dan Burton, Republican of Indiana, Barbara Larkin, acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, said, "We have raised the episodes you mention and have been reassured of India's commitment to noninterference in the domestic political affairs on any state."

On Feb. 13, Burton, a member of the House International Relations Committee, wrote to Secretary of State Warren Christopher complaining of a "series of actions taken by the Embassy of India, which I believe clearly constitute inappropriate involvement in domestic U.S. politics." He urged Christopher, at his "earliest opportunity," to protest "this breach of protocol with the Indian government."

First, he said, "Ambassador Siddhartha Shankar Ray openly and actively endorsed

Senator Larry Pressler's bid for re-election in South Dakota" in a December speech to the Indian-American Forum for Political Education in Boston. Ray told the audience to "please make sure Larry Pressler (Republican from South Dakota) goes to the Senate again," Burton said.

Second, he reported, the embassy has "actively sought to intervene in the current Senate race in New Jersey." Burton said the deputy chief of mission, Shyamala Cowsik, had circulated a letter to the Indian-American community criticizing Democratic Representative Robert Torricelli for his "record" in attacking alleged human rights abuses in India. Cowsik's letter, Burton contended, "not so subtly notes that Torricelli is running for the Senate this year," and added, "It can only be assumed that these instances of political interference that have come to light point to a broader pattern of political involvement."

Torricelli is running for the Senate seat being vacated by the retiring Democratic Senator Bill Bradley. He has co-sponsored legislation by Burton calling for the suspension of American development aid to India unless it alleviates rights conditions.

In his letter to Christopher, Burton insisted that he was "not writing out of partisan considerations," and noted that, as a Republican, the embassy's actions were intended to benefit Republican candidates in both races.

"There is a larger principal at stake," he declared. "It is a serious violation of diplomatic protocol for an ambassador to attempt to influence or intervene in domestic political contests. The voters of New Jersey and South Dakota should have the opportunity to make up their own minds without foreign interference."

He said that had the American Ambassador to India attempted "to sway an election, there would be howls of protest."

In her reply to Burton, Larkin said the State Department appreciated "the non-partisan nature of your concern."

#### EX-ENVOY DENIES U.S. CAMPAIGN TIE (By P.B. Chandra)

JAIPUR.—Devendra Singh, a former senior diplomat of the Indian Embassy in Washington, has denied his involvement in the illegal campaign contributions funneled through the Indian American Political Action Committee (PAC).

Singh is currently the Director-General of Police of Rajasthan. He served as a Minister, Community Affairs in the Indian mission from 1990 to 1995 before returning to India.

Singh told "India Abroad" he did not give any money to Lalit H. Gadhia, a longtime Democratic party activist, in illegal campaign contributions. Reacting to media reports that Gadhia had pleaded guilty to illegally raising the funds and named Singh as the diplomat who gave Gadhia the money, Singh said his job as Minister, Community Affairs demanded that he should meet various people but he never paid any amount to anyone for financing any candidate's election. Singh was the security officer of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi before being transferred to the Washington mission.

When asked about an air freight receipt and copy of the report sent by Gadhia to him and which was subsequently seized by U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation agents in Gadhia's office, Singh said he knew nothing about the air freight receipt and reports. When Singh was asked whether he could be called to court to give evidence against Gadhia, he said the case related to the period when he enjoyed complete diplomatic immunity.

When asked whether it was true that Gadhia has implicated him while making the

guilty plea in the court, Singh said that in all such cases the Indian mission was answerable. Singh said then Indian Ambassador Siddhartha Siddhartha Shankar Ray had clarified the Indian mission's viewpoint and there was nothing much left to be added to that.

INDIAN EMBASSY CAUGHT RED-HANDED—FUND RAISER ADMITS ILLEGALLY LAUNDERING POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 14—Lalit H. Gadhia, a major political fundraiser in Maryland, has confessed that he laundered over \$46,000 in political contributions from the Indian Embassy to Members of Congress, Thursday's Baltimore Sun reported. Gadhia, 57, former campaign treasurer for Maryland Governor Parris Glendening and a Baltimore immigration lawyer, confessed to the scheme in the U.S. District Court in Baltimore, according to the report.

Under the plan, Gadhia used money provided by the Indian Embassy here to reimburse Indian Americans and Indians living in the United States for contributions they made to the candidates the Embassy supported. According to the report, the Embassy, through Gadhia, illegally gave \$31,400 to the Indian American Leadership Investment Fund, a Los Angeles-based political action committee, which then distributed it to candidates. It is illegal for noncitizens to contribute to U.S. political campaigns or for anyone to make a contribution in another person's name.

The Embassy officials in charge of the scheme, former Ambassador S.S. Ray and former Embassy staffer Devendra Singh, have both returned to India. Mr. Ray was a losing candidate for Parliament in the recent elections and Mr. Singh holds a high-ranking position with the Rajasthan state police. On February 19, 1995, Indian Foreign Minister R.L. Bhatia said at a press conference that "there is a strong anti-India lobby in the United States. We are spending large sums of money through Ambassador Ray to neutralize it." During the time that Mr. Ray was Governor of Punjab, Sikhs spoke of "the three Rs—Ray, Ribeiro, and Rajiv"—a very repressive trio. Julian Ribeiro was Director General of Police at the time. He and Mr. Ray are responsible for instituting the tactic of the fake "encounter" in Punjab. In a fake encounter, a Sikh will be killed by the police or while in custody, then they will report that he died in an "encounter," thus providing cover for the killing.

Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, the government in exile of Khalistan, confronted Mr. Ray in the hall of the Longworth House Office Building, calling him "the Butcher of Punjab." The confrontation was picked up by the media. Mr. Ray returned to India shortly after that confrontation. The new ambassador, Naresh Chandra, brought his brother, Girish Chandra Saxena, to the Embassy with him. Girish Saxena is a former head of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), which infiltrated Sikh militant organizations before the "Operation Bluestar" attack on the Golden Temple and 38 other Sikh temples throughout Punjab, Khalistan, in June 1984 in which over 20,000 Sikhs were killed. Ambassador Chandra himself has recently been implicated in illegal smuggling of CFCs from India to the United States. CFCs have been banned in the United States since January 1. According to the Customs Service, CFCs are now the number two problem after illegal drugs.

"Mr. Gadhia's confession shows the moral bankruptcy of the Indian regime," said Dr. Aulakh. "India has been murdering Sikhs

and other minorities for many years. The recent payoff scandal that helped to bring down the Congress Party showed the world that in addition to being a brutal tyranny, India is corrupt and its claim to be a 'democracy' is hollow. This money-laundering campaign contribution scheme shows India's total disregard for democratic principles in other countries as well," Dr. Aulakh said. "Obviously, the regime believes that everyone is as corrupt as they are," he stated. "These practices are unacceptable, and I hope that Mr. Gadhia's confession will not be the end of the investigation. The Embassy is deeply involved in this scheme, and its involvement should be exposed and punished."

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

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

THE MINIMUM WAGE

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

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of why I supported the increase of the minimum wage from \$4.25 an hour to \$5.15 an hour.

One of the basic reasons I supported raising the minimum wage in this house today was, there are about 112,000 reasons: The 112,000 payroll positions in West Virginia that will see a wage increase because of this vote, roughly 17 percent of our work force.

Mr. Speaker, this is important because it means it boosts their level of income. It makes them consumers. It makes them participants. The minimum wage has not been raised since 1991 when it finally reached \$4.25 an hour. Moses wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. The minimum wage is at an all-time buying low, 40-year buying low, and it is time that it be raised. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it was just a few years ago that in the 1950's, 1960's and early 1970's that the minimum wage was designed to be about one-half of the average manufacturing wage. Today it is somewhere around one-third of that amount.

So the minimum wage has steadily dropped, and I know, Mr. Speaker, we have heard the arguments about how much it is a job killer and less people will be hired. The studies do not seem to indicate that. But let me also suggest that we have heard that argument every time since the 1930's when the minimum wage was first raised. Time after time that has been trotted out. About 8½ million jobs have been created in the past 3½ years. So the minimum wage is certainly not a factor in job retardation.

Indeed, most of the jobs we are hoping to create are not minimum wage jobs. But for those people who have to work at 40 hours a week, trying to get by doing exactly what society asks them to do, I think it is not too much

to ask for a minimum wage increase. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I recall that when I was working my way through college, as a bunch of people in this country have done, I worked at minimum wage, and I remember that the only collective bargaining agent I ever had when I worked in that hospital carrying bed pans, and when I did other work along that line, the only collective bargaining agent I ever had was the Federal Government when it raised the minimum wage. That is the only way I was going to see a wage increase, and it was the only way that millions of others were.

Mr. Speaker, there were amendments that would have greatly stripped the minimum wage coverage. One of the amendments, the Goodling amendment, while it would have raised the minimum wage, would have also removed 10 million people from possible coverage by the minimum wage. That certainly would not have been much of a victory. We could have celebrated the seven people left who could still qualify for an increased minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, just a few days ago, this House passed legislation to repeal the gas tax for 7 months, a 4.3-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax for 7 months. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it ironic that that action takes place. We were able to pass the gasoline tax suspension for 7 months. That, incidentally, gets you through the election. I guess that is to enable people to get gasoline to drive to the polls.

The minimum wage increase is a real measure. It puts money into people's pockets. It gives them far more than the gasoline tax repeal for 7 months ever would have given them. It gives them an increase over a 2-year period to \$5.15, or 90 cents an hour. It is what permits that person to recognize some fruits of their labor.

We are asking a lot of people in welfare reform to get off of welfare, as they should, to go to work. What Kind of reward is there if you do not get a pay increase since 1991? I might add, I went to the supermarket the other night. Nobody stopped the food prices from increasing. Gasoline prices have been increasing. Everything else has been increasing since 1991. But wages of people who do a lot of the basic work in this country have not.

So my hope is that this can be the first step in improving the working conditions of a lot of middle-income working people in our country. No, this is not the only step. There is a lot that needs to be done to grow jobs. There is a lot that must be done in education. There is a lot that must be done building the public works, the roads, the bridges, the water and the sewer systems, the industrial parks. But making sure that people are paid a fair and adequate wage, raising the minimum wage for the first time in 5 years, raising it from the lowest point in 40 years in terms of buying power that it has had, I think that is a significant accomplishment.