

This extra pay may seem small but would mean 7 months of groceries, a year of health care costs, 9 months of utility bills or 4 months of housing.

In the State of Connecticut, 87,158 hardworking people earn between \$4.25 and \$5.14 an hour. Each one of those people would benefit by passing a minimum wage increase.

In the Republican Whip TOM DELAY's State of Texas, 1.1 million people would benefit. That is 14.7 percent of the Texas work force, not an insignificant number.

But these hardworking Americans in Connecticut and Texas and their 12 million fellow Americans continue to wait for a boost in their wages because the Republican Party continues to find new ways to block the increase.

This is legislation that has passed both the House and the Senate and is now being held hostage by extremists, people who would rather protect special interests than to help ordinary working Americans. All the while, America's workers struggle and they scramble to pay their bills, to put food on their tables, to clothe their kids, to get them to school and to maintain their standard of living.

A minimum wage worker makes about \$8,500 a year. That is it. Two-thirds of these workers are adults and almost 60 percent are women. Over 40 percent are the sole breadwinners in their family. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that the minimum wage increase could lift 300,000 families out of poverty, including 100,000 children.

A great American once said, and I quote:

No man can be a good citizen unless he has a living wage more than sufficient to cover the bare cost of living * * * so that after his day's work is done he will have time and energy to bear his share in the management of the community, to help in carrying the general load.

Which great American said that? Theodore Roosevelt. A Republican President of the United States. Unlike the Republicans in the Senate, President Roosevelt understood that Americans deserve to be treated fairly and to be honored for their work.

Day 3 of the Republicans holding hostage the minimum wage. Day 3, and the American people continue to wait for something they support overwhelmingly. Day 3, and the special interests continue to control the Republican agenda. It is time to free the minimum wage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington [Mrs. SMITH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. SMITH of Washington addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/WELFARE RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Madam Speaker, we are all aware of the fact that domestic violence is at epidemic levels and rising.

What was not known until recently however, is the relationship between domestic violence and welfare dependency: namely, that for victims of abuse, the welfare system is often the only hope they have for escape and survival.

A recent study by the Taylor Institute of Chicago offers insights as to why so many women become trapped in the cycle of violence and dependency. The study found that 50 percent to 80 percent of women on AFDC are current or past victims of domestic violence.

It also documents how abusers keep women financially and psychologically dependent by deliberately sabotaging their efforts to succeed in education and job training programs. For example, the study found that abusers have been known to destroy their victims' books and homework, hide their clothing, inflict visible and embarrassing injuries, and engage in abusive behavior before important events such as high school equivalency examinations and job interviews.

These findings underscore the importance of ensuring that any welfare reform legislation enacted by Congress maintains this critical safety net.

Toward this end, Senator WELLSTONE and I have introduced resolutions expressing the sense of Congress that any welfare reform proposals shall not further endanger women and children who are victims of domestic abuse by denying them access to their last source of support and means of escape.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this important resolution.

VACATION OF SPECIAL ORDER AND GRANTING OF SPECIAL ORDER

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. MCINTOSH].

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

MESSAGE FROM THE VOTERS

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

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Madam Speaker, I am one of those Members of the freshman class in the 104th Congress, and I do believe that 2 years ago the American people sent a very clear message

and they sent 73 new Members to this Congress for a very important reason. In fact, I think there were three or four major things they wanted us to do.

First of all, I think they wanted us to put the Federal Government on a diet. Second, I think they really wanted us to pass term limits. Third, I think they want commonsense regulatory reform. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, I think the American people want us to change the way Washington does business.

Well, Madam Speaker, I think we have made real progress. As a matter of fact, we passed the balanced budget amendment out of this House. Unfortunately, it failed by one vote over in the Senate. We went on to pass the first balanced budget plan in over 25 years. We have eliminated over 270 programs and, as a matter of fact, we have saved the taxpayers, this Congress, over \$43 billion.

The budget is moving in the right direction, and we are moving towards balancing the people's books. On the very first day we began to change the way Washington does business, the way we work. We passed the Shays Act.

We said that Congress is going to have to live by the same laws as everybody else. That was a very important change. For many years Congress would pass new rules and new laws that everybody else had to live by, but at the bottom of that bill it would say something to the effect that nothing in this enactment requires the Congress or the Federal Government to live by the same rules.

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Also, on the first day we opened the committee meetings to the public for the first time. We ended proxy voting, and this Congress passed the toughest gift ban in the history of the United States.

Madam Speaker, there was one area where this Congress failed, and that is on the very important issue of term limits. We can dress it any way we want, but I think that is one thing the American people want from this Congress, and that is to limit our own terms. They have been too long where Members who have served for years and years and years are no longer accountable to them and they begin to believe that all wisdom emanates from here in Washington, rather than from back in the districts which they are supposed to serve.

Madam Speaker, I have held over 75 town meet meetings in my district. Frankly, at virtually every one of them the issue of term limits has come up.

Another issue that people are concerned about is the whole concern about congressional pensions. As a matter of fact, almost monthly we read about some Member of Congress who is receiving a six-figure income after they retire from this body. We have read recently, just in the last year, that a former Speaker, and I will not mention

names, but a former Speaker is getting \$123,804 per year; that a former minority leader of this body is getting \$110,538 per year; and another gentleman who served as the Chair of one of the more powerful committees, who will soon become a constituent of mine, will receive a pension of \$96,462 per year.

The public is saying enough is enough. They did not get term limits. There is one way that we can perhaps kill two birds with one stone. That is by passing a bill that would limit pension accrual for Members to 12 years. If we cannot force Members to retire after 12 years, at least we can take some of the money out of it.

To that end, I have introduced H.R. 1618, and we have a companion bill which is much easier to remember in the Senate. It is Senate bill 1776. So Members watching on TV and those on C-SPAN, if they remember Senate bill 1776, they can remember the bill.

What this bill says is that Members would limit their pensions accrual. After they had served for 12 years, their pensions would stop adding up. What that would mean is that at the current level of salary for a Member of Congress, the maximum level of pension that a Member of Congress could get would be \$27,254.

Now, under this plan, if this bill were in law today, the total savings to the taxpayer per year would be \$7,892,140. But, more importantly, we would take some of the incentive away for Members staying years and years and literally beginning to grow roots here in Washington.

I think the American people are speaking loudly and clearly that they support this basic notion. There was some polling done recently by the Luntz Research Company, and what it demonstrates is this: Would you be more or less likely to vote for a Member who voted to reduce the growth in congressional pension? Sixty-five percent of the people in the United States said they would be more likely to vote for those candidates.

I think the American people are speaking loudly and clearly. They would like to see term limits and they would like to see limits on the amount of pensions that Members of Congress can collect.

I think the bill that we have introduced, and my sponsor over in the Senate is Senator JIM INHOFE from Oklahoma, I think we have introduced a bill that makes sense. It is fair. It is reasonable. It is responsible, and it is long overdue.

Madam Speaker, everywhere I go, and as I say, I have had 75 town meetings, people ask me, "GIL, why are you not doing more in terms of reform of Washington?" And they ask me, "GIL, are you going to pass term limits? When are you going to pass congressional pension limits, so that we do not see Members retiring with six-figure parachutes?"

We did not get term limits through, but saying "Sorry, we tried" is not

good enough. Working families in America want us to change the way Washington does business. They want Congressional reform. I hope we can get it in the next several weeks.

VETERANS ARE AT A CROSSROADS

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

Mr. WISE. Madam Speaker, there are two issues I wish to talk about today. First of all is veterans.

Madam Speaker, I think it is important that we recognize that veterans are at a crossroads right now and this Congress is at a crossroads, and it is important to reestablish that commitment and to reaffirm commitment to our veterans.

The budget plan that was proposed in this House just last year would have cut veterans' programs, VA programs, by \$6.4 billion to the year 2002, and yet at the same time there would have been over \$2 billion in tax cuts, many of which went to the wealthiest individuals.

This proposal, had it gone through, would have meant the VA medical system would have had to reduce employment by 9,500 employees, denying care to 165,000 veterans that it was planning to take care of. This also means that they would have had to have reduced their workforce by the year 2002 by 61,000 workers or about 30 percent of their work force.

I am happy to say that we beat this back, Madam Speaker, but yet even under the appropriation bills veterans were going to be asked to increase prescription copayments, to double the copayment that veterans pay for prescription drugs, and to deny 150,000 veterans Medicaid coverage in 2002, most of whom could not afford private insurance and would have been ineligible for VA medical care.

We were able to beat that back, as well, and I am happy to say that I supported on the floor recently the Stump amendment, a bipartisan amendment to increase VA medical care by \$40 million over both the President's request and the committee bill. Indeed, there was almost \$1 billion of increased funding for veterans health care in that bill. I also supported permitting Medicare to reimburse for veterans' care, particularly in military hospitals. I am sorry that that was defeated, but we will be back again.

CAMPAIGN REFORM

Madam Speaker, I also want to talk about campaign reform, because next week is billed as reform week by the Republican leadership in this House. What kind of reform are we looking at for campaign reform? It is interesting. My constituents tell me, "BOB, the problem is there is too much money in politics, and you ought to get it out."

What does this campaign reform bill that the Speaker is bringing to the

floor do? It does not take money out. It puts more money into campaigns. In fact, the Speaker himself said in November, and I quote, "One of the greatest myths of modern politics is that campaigns are too expensive. The political process in fact is underfunded. It is not overfunded." That is not what my constituents are telling me.

First of all, this bill would reduce political action committees, what they can contribute, by one-half, perhaps worthwhile. But it would permit individual contributions to go up from \$1,000 to \$2,500, what an individual can give to a candidate. That does not sound like reform to me.

Whereas the bill that has been talked about for the Democratic side would limit political action committee contributions to one-third of what a candidate could receive, this would increase and take the limits off what PAC's could contribute. There would be no limitation in the Speaker's bill on soft money, which is one of the most egregious offenses that either party can commit, funneling large amounts of money into State parties without any accounting.

Also, this bill does nothing to take on the recent Supreme Court decision that in effect says a political party, Republican or Democrat, can make an unlimited independent expenditure in behalf of a candidate, one of the greatest loopholes going.

So what this bill does that they are going to bring to the floor does not begin to cut down to the flow of money going into campaigns. It only takes the limits off and makes the situation far worse than it is.

What we need, in order to deal with the Supreme Court decisions as well as other actions, we are going to have a constitutional amendment that says that free speech and expenditure of money are not the same thing; that simply because we can spend more money, that is not equated to free speech.

I am greatly concerned because I see the cost of campaigns going up, I see outside groups coming in, I see independent expenditures steadily rising, all of which is taking control farther and farther away from the everyday voter and constituent. Yet this bill, branded as reform, only takes us further in that direction. It does not take money out of the electoral system, it puts more money in, and it makes candidates more responsive to large individual contributors.

The interesting thing is, a family of four could contribute up to \$2.4 million. If they have got it, folks could contribute up to \$2.4 million under this bill. That is not campaign reform, and I do not think anybody in my district thinks that it is.

Another interesting provision in this bill is that it was suggested no money could be raised within 50 miles of Washington. I ought to be happy with that provision because the eastern Panhandle, which is just 50 to 60 miles