

THE WORKING FAMILIES FLEXIBILITY ACT

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, as the percentage of employees who must balance work and family or personal interests grows rapidly, employers face obstacles in Federal law which prohibit them from providing flexible scheduling arrangements to their employees. The Working Families Flexibility Act gives employers the ability to offer their employees the option of receiving paid compensatory time off in lieu of overtime wages.

Since 1985, the public sector has had the ability under the Fair Labor Standards Act to use so-called comp time in lieu of overtime pay. H.R. 2391 extends this option to the private sector, with some adjustments, taking into account the inherent differences between the public and private sectors.

Comp time could only be provided at the request of an employee. An employee could, under an agreement with the employer, voluntarily choose to have time-and-one-half comp time over cash wages. If that same employee later decides that cash wages would be preferable to time off, then the employee could simply request to be compensated in wages. Nothing in the bill precludes employees from changing their minds. An employee could also request, at any time, to be paid cash wages for any accrued comp time.

It is time that the private sector is given the same flexibility which the public sector had had for some time. Support the Working Families Flexibility Act—to provide employees with options and greater control in balancing work and family responsibilities.

GIVE FLORIDA TOMATO FARMERS SOME JUSTICE

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, Florida tomato farmers used to supply 50 percent of all our tomatoes. They lost \$1 billion last year. The reason: Mexico is literally throwing tomatoes at Uncle Sam. Mexican tomatoes are so low they could roll under a closed door with a top hat on.

Check this out. A 25-pound box of Mexican tomatoes sells for \$2, while it costs Florida tomato farmers \$6 just to grow them. If that is not enough to stew your homegrown, check this out. The International Trade Commission ruled that Mexico's illegal dumping of tomatoes is not injuring Florida tomato farmers. Unbelievable. Who is on this Commission, the Three Amigos?

Let us tell it like it is. After NAFTA, GATT, and WTO, we have gone from a Nation that cannot spell potato to a

Nation that cannot sell tomatoes. Beam me up, Mr. Speaker, and give these Florida tomato farmers some justice.

URGING THE PRESIDENT TO SIGN THE WELFARE REFORM BILL

(Mr. HOKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, in his 1935 State of the Union Address, Franklin Roosevelt called welfare a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit. John Kennedy in 1962 said, "No lasting solution to the problem of poverty can be bought with a welfare check."

In 1965, Washington launched a war on poverty with the very best of intentions, but some three decades and \$5.5 trillion later we have a welfare system that has arguably done more harm than it has done good, because a basic law of nature has been ignored. When a person is given handout after handout without asking anything in return, he or she is condemned to a dependency and the loss of dignity and self-worth.

So Congress passed a plan to reform welfare that is based on the simple premise that welfare recipients should work for their benefits, just like you work to support your family and pay your taxes. Our reforms make sense. Welfare should not be a way of life. Work should replace welfare for the able-bodied. States should have the power and flexibility to implement their own reforms. Noncitizens and felons should not receive welfare benefits.

Mr. President, we ask that you sign the bill.

SPEAKER GINGRICH SHOULD BRING TO THE FLOOR BILLS RE- LATING TO DIABETES

(Ms. FURSE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. FURSE. Mr. Speaker, last week there was a historic meeting here in Washington. All the organizations who are working to end diabetes came to Washington for a call for action. The reason for this event was to celebrate that there are now 234 cosponsors of H.R. 1073 and 1074, but they also came here to call on the Speaker to bring those bills to the floor so we can vote on them.

These bills are bipartisan. They were introduced by myself and the gentleman from Washington [Mr. NETHERCUTT]. As parents of children with diabetes, we know that if we can improve coverage for diabetes education and supplies, people can better manage this disease, which affects over 16 million Americans. We know that that will be a saving in the long run.

As a result of this knowledge, we formed the Diabetes Caucus last year and we have introduced these bills. However, it is the Speaker who is able

to bring bills to the floor. So today we ask the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. GINGRICH] to bring these bills. He has previously stated his support for this issue. Bring them to the floor for a vote. Let us make a difference now for those 16 million Americans.

DEMOCRATS ARE DETERMINED TO PROTECT MEDICARE

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, today is the 31st anniversary of President Johnson's signature of the Medicare bill. I want to affirm that Democrats remain committed to improving Medicare in a commonsense fashion. It took Democrats 13 years to overcome Republicans' opposition to Medicare and enact the program.

In 1965, Mr. Speaker, 93 percent of the House Republicans, including then-Representative Bob Dole, voted for a substitute that would have killed Medicare as we know it. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership in this House of Representatives is continuing that effort essentially to change Medicare in a fashion so it will not be the Medicare that we know.

Unlike our Republican counterparts, we as Democrats are not sorry that hundreds of thousands of seniors rely on Medicare. Instead, we are pleased that it has doubled the number of seniors who now receive health care. Medicare is a proven success worth protecting. Democrats are determined to do that.

MEDICARE

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, today is the 31st anniversary of Medicare. Let's stop to think about what a difference Medicare has made in the lives of our seniors. Before Medicare, only 46 percent of American seniors had health insurance. Today 99 percent are covered. In 1966, the poverty rate for seniors was almost 30 percent. Today, fewer than 10 percent of our Nation's elderly live in poverty.

Can this possibly be the same Medicare Program that Bob Dole bragged about "fighting the fight * * * voting against Medicare in 1965 * * * because we knew it wouldn't work?" And the same program that Speaker GINGRICH expects to "wither on the vine?" And is it the same Medicare that the chair of the Health Subcommittee, BILL THOMAS called "the old-fashioned, socialist 1960's top-heavy bureaucratic system."

Medicare works. The seniors in my district know it and seniors across the country know it. And these same seniors are deeply set against cutting Medicare to pay for tax breaks for the wealthy. We made a pledge to seniors

31 years ago—Medicare must be protected and continue to provide quality health care that seniors can rely on.

PERMISSION FOR SUNDRY COMMITTEES AND THEIR SUBCOMMITTEES TO SIT TODAY DURING 5-MINUTE RULE

Mr. SCHAEFER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the following committees and their subcommittees be permitted to sit today while the House is meeting in the Committee of the Whole House under the 5-minute rule: the Committee on Banking and Financial Services; the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities; the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight; the Committee on International Relations; the Committee on the Judiciary; the Committee on National Security; the Committee on Resources; the Committee on Science; and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

It is my understanding that the minority has been consulted and that there is no objection to these requests.

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

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 3603, AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1997

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 3603) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1997, and for other purposes, with Senate amendments thereto, disagree to the Senate amendments, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Mexico? The Chair hears none and without objection, appoints the following conferees: Messrs. SKEEN, MYERS of Indiana, WALSH, DICK- EY, KINGSTON, RIGGS, NETHERCUTT, LIVINGSTON, DURBIN, Ms. KAPTUR, and Messrs. THORNTON, FAZIO of California, and OBEY.

There was no objection.

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ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JONES). Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule I, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered or on which the vote is objected to under

clause 4 of rule XV. Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken after debate has concluded on all motions to suspend the rules, but not before 2 p.m. today.

ENERGY POLICY AND CONSERVATION ACT AMENDMENTS

Mr. SCHAEFER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3868) to extend certain programs under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act through September 30, 1996.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3868

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. ENERGY POLICY AND CONSERVATION ACT AMENDMENTS.

The Energy Policy and Conservation Act is amended—

(1) by amending section 166 (42 U.S.C. 6246) to read as follows:

"AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

"SEC. 166. There are authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 1996 such sums as may be necessary to implement this part.";

(2) in section 181 (42 U.S.C. 6251) by striking "June 30, 1996" both places it appears and inserting in lieu thereof "September 30, 1996";

(3) by adding at the end of section 256(h) (42 U.S.C. 6276(h)) "There are authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 1996 such sums as may be necessary to carry out this part.";

and

(4) in section 281 (42 U.S.C. 6258) by striking "June 30, 1996" both places it appears and inserting in lieu thereof "September 30, 1996".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SCHAEFER] and the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SCHAEFER].

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCHAEFER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3868.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SCHAEFER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. SCHAEFER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHAEFER. Mr. Speaker, this bill reauthorizes certain provisions contained in the Energy Policy and Conservation Act. Specifically, this bill assures that if there is an energy emergency during the August recess, the President's authority to drawdown the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and the ability of U.S. oil companies to participate in the International Energy Agreement without violating antitrust laws is preserved.

It is important that the United States maintain a strong Strategic Petroleum Reserve to protect American citizens from shutoffs in imported oil. Similarly, the President's authority to

order a drawdown of that stored oil in an emergency must also be maintained. This bill assures the President's drawdown authority is kept intact until the end of the fiscal year.

This bill does not address the issue of maintaining adequate levels of oil in the Reserve. Over the past 18 months, I have been greatly troubled by the trend of selling oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to meet budgetary goals.

The Reserve is our first line of defense in an energy emergency. This energy security insurance policy for which we have paid over \$200 billion should not be squandered carelessly to meet short-term budgetary objectives.

I have directed staff to work on a long-term EPCA extension which would make it more difficult for the Reserve to be raided by people willing to sacrifice long-term energy security for short-term budget goals. In the meantime, this short-term extension of certain EPCA authorities protects Americans in the event of an energy emergency and gives us time to pass a long-term extension before the 104th Congress adjourns.

I believe these provisions of EPCA are too important for us to leave for August recess without reauthorizing them. While an energy emergency which would require the Reserve to be drawn down during August is unlikely, it is not impossible. Consider the implications of the recent terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia on our energy security. I believe this Nation must have the ability to use all its tools to deal with an energy emergency so I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this temporary reauthorization of the most important provisions of Energy Policy and Conservation Act, through September 30 of this year. While I would prefer a simple extension of EPCA—one that covered its State Energy Conservation programs and other authorities—I support this legislation because it ensures the United States and industry are able to fulfill their major emergency-related responsibilities. These include planning for international oil crises and management of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

I thank Chairman SCHAEFER for bringing this extension to the House floor, and I look forward to working with him in September to resolve the remaining issues.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHAEFER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly am willing to work with my good friend, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE], to extend this a bit further. We will have to sit down and decide on how we are going to do this. But we are giving the President the authority during the August recess in order to adapt to any emergency that might exist.