

leaders at the National Rifle Association.

I am grateful that we may get good health care, but I am saddened that we will not have a secure Nation for all of our citizens. Why have we not had hearings on terrorism, domestic and international? Why? Because the Republicans have not set it on the agenda.

I hope America will rise up and determine that we must have, yes, good health care for all of our citizens, but we must also have a safe, secure Nation. We must give law enforcement the tools to fight terrorism and hold hearings on terrorism in America.

PEOPLE NEED HEALTH CARE SECURITY

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

Mr. HASTERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce to the American people and to this body that the score is not exactly an Olympic score, but it is big Government, big obtrusive Government, 0, the American people, 2.

That is a good trend, and we hope to raise and make that score even spread, but with the passage of welfare reform and, today, health care reform, we have given the American people something on a bipartisan basis, mainly because some people in this Congress have stood up and said there is a principle, there are some things we could do.

People need to have health care security. We need to make health care portable so a mother who loses her job, with an asthmatic child, can go and get health care at the next stop, at the next job she picks up; that a father who is locked into a job that he has and a wife with a heart condition will move on to a better job because there is portability.

And, yes, we do give American families choice, choice through the medical savings account to choose the doctor they want, to choose the health care they want, and if they do not spend that money they get to keep it.

MEDICARE

(Ms. MCKINNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, gripped by the fear of losing control over the first Republican Congress in 40 years, NEWT GINGRICH and his legions are trying to convince the public that they did not cut Medicare to pay for tax breaks to the wealthy.

On October 26, however, Speaker GINGRICH boasted about Republican efforts to weaken fee-for-service Medicare to the point where it would, quote, "Wither on the vine."

And in an attempt to back away from that statement, Speaker GINGRICH said that he meant the health care financing administration would wither on the

vine. The Los Angeles Times, however, reported that Speaker GINGRICH's spokesman, Tony Blankley, said that, quote, "GINGRICH's comments were consistent with the Republican belief that most seniors would voluntarily choose to leave the traditional Medicare fee-for-service system in favor of HMO's."

Now that's the real scoop on NEWT GINGRICH and Medicare.

Think about it, when have you known the Speaker to not say what he means and mean what he says.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON HEALTH CARE REFORM

(Mr. CHRYSLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CHRYSLER. Mr. Speaker, when Republicans took over the Congress, we proved to the Washington liberal establishment that politicians can come here and keep their word. We proved that we could make a difference in the lives of the American people.

The events of this week are proof that this Congress has been one of the most productive in a generation.

Yesterday, Bill Clinton said that he would sign our commonsense welfare reform bill that we will send him later this week. It is a good bill. It is genuine reform of the broken welfare system.

Today, the House will consider the conference report on health care reform. This bill will give health care security to working Americans. It establishes medical savings accounts, which I have had for 3 years, fights fraud and abuse, and ends job lock.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress is making a difference. We are providing the commonsense changes that the American people have demanded for years.

DEMOCRATIC AGENDA ALIVE AND WELL

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

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, good morning. Despite my GOP friends' spin, I have to tell you the Democratic agenda is alive and well in America and American citizens are better for it, because it is the Democrats who have pushed for health care reform and for the minimum wage.

On health care reform, the Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance reform bill will be on the floor today, and we will be able to provide Americans with health insurance when they change jobs. We will be able to ensure that Americans will not be prohibited from getting health insurance because of preexisting conditions, such as the fact that your child may have asthma or someone has a longstanding hip injury who is an older member of your family.

□ 1030

That is important and that was a Democratic initiative. We are also

going to take up tomorrow the minimum wage. Republicans have said they would fight it with every fiber of their being. The fact is the Democrats stood for decent wages and decent working conditions. Forty percent of the people who earn the minimum wage are bread winners for their family. Fifty-eight percent of the people who earn the minimum wage are women. We need decent wages in America.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic agenda is alive and well.

CHECKING ON NAFTA

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

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the debate over the success of NAFTA continues. Two years after this legislation became law, we look back and see whether or not it has been successful, and there is still disagreement.

Tomorrow I will introduce bipartisan legislation, Mr. Speaker, however, that all of us can join together on. My legislation, the NAFTA check bill, will require the President of the United States to certify each year to the Congress whether or not those side agreements that he told us would raise up the workers standards in Mexico and would enforce tough environmental laws in Mexico are actually working.

Mr. Speaker, I ask our colleagues to join with us to allow this President each year to certify to us as to whether or not what he told us to get our votes for NAFTA has in fact been occurring for the past 2 years. That is an annual certification as to environmental protection and as to worker standards in the state of Mexico as parties to the NAFTA agreement.

I urge our colleagues to sign as cosponsors when this bill is dropped tomorrow. We can move it quickly in September to get passage in this body and the other body.

TESTING SINCERITY ON WELFARE REFORM

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a historic day. The passage of welfare reform is long overdue. If we listen to the speeches on this floor, we heard Member after Member stand up and say we need to put people to work. The first test of sincerity on those speeches will come today or tomorrow on the question of whether we raise the minimum wage in America.

Think about how many millions of Americans are struggling today at a minimum wage job trying to stay off welfare. The Republican leadership, Mr. GINGRICH and Mr. Dole, have both resisted our efforts to raise the minimum wage so people who are doing the personally responsible thing for their

families will receive a decent wage. Those coming off welfare because of reform need to have an opportunity to move to a job where they can make a living.

The first test of sincerity on the welfare reform bill is whether we will leave this week defying the Republican leadership, Mr. Dole and Mr. GINGRICH, and increase the minimum wage. If we fail to do that, the critics can just say that this welfare reform debate was political hot air.

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

Mr. TIAHRT. 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 under the 5-minute rule: The Committee on Agriculture; the Committee on Banking and Financial Services; the Committee on Commerce; 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 Resources; the Committee on Science; the Committee on Small Business; the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure; and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NETHERCUTT). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Kansas?

There was no objection.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3754, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1997

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order at any time to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 3754) making appropriations for the legislative branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1997, and for other purposes, that all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration be waived, and that the conference report be considered as read when called up.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the order of the House of today,

I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 3754) making appropriations for the legislative branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1997, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report to accompany H.R. 3754 and that they may include tabular and extraneous material.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of Wednesday, July 31, 1996, at page H9450).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the gentleman from California [Mr. PACKARD] and the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. THORNTON] each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California [Mr. PACKARD].

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

This is the conference report on the legislative branch appropriations bill. It will cut from the 1996 program level over \$22 million and will keep us on the glidepath to a balanced budget.

HIGHLIGHTS—H.R. 3754 CONFERENCE REPORT CONTINUING PROGRAM OF OVERALL SAVINGS

\$22.3 million below 1996 program level (budget authority); \$48.6 million below in outlays.

Two-year reduction of \$226 million in BA and \$236 million in outlays.

Cut funding for 616 jobs in this bill; two year total of 1643 FTE'S=6.4 percent of legislative workforce.

House budget down by \$45 million and House staff down by 854 FTE's over 96-97 period.

If entire Federal budget were reduced proportionately, Federal budget would show a \$100 billion surplus (based on closed model extrapolation).

FRANKED MAIL REFORM

Make permanent law the 90-day before election ban on unsolicited mass mailings.

MOVING TOWARD CYBERCONGRESS

\$211 million provided for operations and investments in computers and telecommunications—12.5 percent of entire legislative budget (Senate excluded).

Expanding public access through Internet to public laws, Congressional debate, Congressional schedule, and other legislative matter via THOMAS and GPO ACCESS.

Established a legislative branch-wide information system working group—under

guidance of House Oversight Committee and Senate Rules Committee.

Directed a study of audio broadcasts of House proceedings.

STREAMLINING

Completing two-year program to downsize General Accounting Office by 25 percent.

Eliminated funding for jobs not being utilized by several agencies.

Converting permanent edition of bound Congressional Record, a 26 volume document, to CD-ROM: will expedite availability by at least 2 years, enhance the research capabilities of the document, and save over \$1 million annually.

Converting Congressional Serial Set, a 60 volume document to CD-ROM: will expedite availability by several years, enhance its use as a research tool, and save over \$1 million annually.

Clerk of the House will expand capability of House to use electronic formats for legislative documents to reduce printing and distribution costs.

Have deferred to authorizing Committees the Public Printer's plan to convert Federal Depository Program to electronic format.

INCREASING USE OF PRIVATE SECTOR

Outsourcing custodial work at Ford House Office Building; directed Architect to transfer affected staff to comparable jobs at comparable pay.

Conducting studies of other outsourcing possibilities at Power Plant, care and maintenance of other Congressional buildings.

Continue public-private sector collaboration on National Digital Library.

Public Printer to determine potential for privatizing GPO plant workload.

Looking for alternatives for operating the Botanic Garden.

CONFERENCE REPORT COMPARED TO HOUSE BILL

Added \$1.1 million for the Capitol Police.

Added \$244,000 for CBO.

Added \$1 million for the Library of Congress to pay for a Management study.

Added \$750,000 for a new backup power supply for the Library's computers.

\$250,000 reduction for the Joint Economic Committee; conferees believe the need for this joint committee should be reviewed with the idea that it will be phased out in the future. In the meantime, funding continues at a reduced level.

General Provisions; the bill contains a provision that will bring greater standardization to legislative information processes.

The Capitol Police will be able to elect to use comp time in lieu of paid overtime.

There is a provision that will remove copyright prohibitions from reproduction and distribution of braille and other special materials for the blind and other readers with disabilities.

COMPARED TO 602(B)'S

\$15 million below Budget Authority target.

\$17 million below Outlay target.

CONFERENCE AGREEMENT COMPARED TO ITEMS IN ORIGINAL HOUSE BILL

The House bill sent to the Senate was \$37.4 million below 1996 in BA and \$52.5 million below in outlays.

The conference agreement is \$34.4 million below in BA and \$48.5 below in outlays.