

Clearly the IRS is out-of-control and needs to be reformed. Every year we delay will result in tens of thousands of additional nightmares for taxpayers who are unfairly targeted, hounded, abused, and bankrupted by the agency.

That is why I am so greatly alarmed by the comments of your top economic advisor today that reform efforts are "a recipe for conflicts of interest" and a "serious step backwards." Surely you do not agree with Mr. Sperling's bizarre assertion that the bipartisan recommendations of the IRS reform commission headed by Rep. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Sen. Bob Kerrey (D-NE) would lead to "less accountability" and "less trust." Does Mr. Sperling truly speak for you when he said that you will "vigorously oppose" those recommendations?

If you do not repudiate the statements made by Mr. Sperling today, you will have allied yourself with the IRS' bureaucratic machine and turned your back on the millions of Americans who have been pulled through its gears. I urge you to immediately disavow Mr. Sperling's remarks and make clear your personal commitment to reforming the IRS.

Sincerely,

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, September 29, 1997.

Hon. NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House, U.S. Congress, Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER GINGRICH: Thank you for your letter of September 29 regarding our approach to IRS reform.

As Mr. Sperling noted this morning in stating the Administration's position, we are firmly committed to reforming the IRS. This is a long-held commitment that recent congressional hearings have only helped reaffirm. As Mr. Sperling reiterated this morning "much more needs to be done" and we have put forward a "very strong reform agenda." President Clinton made that commitment clear when he signed the Taxpayer Bill of Rights into law last year: "We say to America's taxpayers, when you deal with the IRS, you also have privileges and we respect them. You have protection and we will help provide it. You have rights and we will shield them."

Earlier this month, Secretary Rubin outlined a comprehensive plan to build on those reforms and to modernize and restructure the IRS. This builds on the intensified oversight Treasury has provided over the last two years. Our reform plan mirrors many of the recommendations made by the Kerrey-Portman Commission. Our reform plan would strengthen oversight, increase accountability, and provide for increasing advice from the private sector. The plan would also grant the Taxpayer Advocate greater independence and build on our efforts to promote electronic filing.

To improve management at the IRS, we have nominated a top-notch private-sector information management expert, Charles Rossotti to head the agency. We believe he can bring his cutting-edge private sector expertise, particularly in the area of customer service, to that agency. His nomination is pending before the Senate, and I hope we can put his skills to use as soon as possible.

There is one area where we strongly disagree with the plan supported by the House Republican leadership. The President strongly opposes a part-time private board that would oversee the operations of the IRS. We believe that such a private board would foster less accountability and create the potential for wide-scale conflicts of interest, as

Mr. Sperling noted this morning. Undoubtedly, the type of people qualified to serve on such a board would have their own business before the IRS; that potential for conflicts of interest would make impartial oversight difficult at best. That concern about conflicts of interest is shared by, among others, former IRS Commissioners from both Democratic and Republican administrations, Brookings Institution scholars, and the New York State Bar Association.

I hope we do not let our differences over the responsibilities of a private advisory board stand in the way of meaningful, bipartisan reform of the IRS. The American people deserve better. As Mr. Sperling said today, we were "appalled" and "extremely disturbed" by the tales of abuse of individual taxpayers described in the hearings. Such behavior has no place in this administration as Mr. Sperling's full comments this morning make perfectly clear.

We are encouraged by the measures that the IRS has undertaken to correct those abuses and eliminate any practices that may have inadvertently encouraged them. Secretary Rubin has assured me that he will redouble our efforts to root out cases of malfeasance and promote accountability at the Internal Revenue Service. To promote real reform at the IRS, I hope we can work with you in a bipartisan, constructive spirit.

Sincerely,

ERSKINE B. BOWLES,
Chief of Staff.

THE SPEAKER,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, September 30, 1997.

President WILLIAM J. CLINTON,
The White House, Washington, DC.

Dear Mr. President. With all due respect, Mr. President, your staff just doesn't seem to get it. For five years, the administration officials in charge of the IRS have fiddled while the agency has burned the hopes and dreams of thousands of innocent taxpayers. Fortunately, the bipartisan Portman-Kerrey commission has put forth real reforms to help the taxpayers.

Now, despite recent congressional hearings that have uncovered the extent of the malfeasance and mismanagement within the IRS, your staff has taken the indefensible position that this same group of political appointees should be allowed to continue supervising the agency.

In separate statements yesterday, both your top economic advisor and your Chief of Staff made the ludicrous assertion that placing a non-partisan private board of directors—unbeholden to any political interest—in charge of the IRS would foster "less accountability" and "less trust" in the agency.

Instead of this independent board, your administration has proposed the creation of an internal board made up of 15 current political appointees from within the IRS, the Department of Treasury and the Office of Management and Budget. In other words, your response to the dozens of horror stories we have heard from innocent taxpayers over recent weeks is that we leave exactly the same people in charge who have already failed to solve the problem.

Worse, several of the current officials who would make up such a board are also donors to the Democratic Party and Democrat candidates. In the midst of all of your administration's ongoing campaign finance scandals, do you really expect to restore the confidence of the American people in the IRS by putting some big-donor Democrats in charge of "non-partisan," "objective" tax collection.

Earlier today, you said that we must "not try to sweep any of these problems under the

rugs." I agree. The only way to ensure a genuine housecleaning at the IRS is to appoint a private, independent board of directors for the agency.

I urge you to drop your opposition to reform and join with congressional Democrats and Republicans as we take action to restore public confidence in the IRS.

Sincerely,

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House.

HONORING MARIO & CELIA JIMENEZ ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF MARIO'S TACOS

HON. ESTEBAN EDWARD TORRES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

Mr. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a very special couple and dear friends, Mario and Celia Jimenez of Mario's Tacos in the City of Pico Rivera. On Saturday, October 4, 1997, Mario, Celia, and hundreds of members of the community will celebrate the 30th anniversary of Mario's Tacos.

Mario and Celia own and operate this family restaurant in my congressional district. Over the last 30 years, they built their small taco stand into a thriving business, expanding to its current large family eatery. It is known throughout the community for the traditional Mexican and American dishes that are served in a friendly family oriented atmosphere. Over the years, Mario's Tacos has endeared itself to the residents of Pico Rivera and surrounding communities and has become a common place for friends and family to join together.

A sense of family and a dedication to the community are values held dear to Mario and Celia. The success of their business can be credited to their impenetrable faith and belief in family and community. Each of their children, Mary, Mario, Jr., David, Martha, and Norma has contributed their time and efforts to making this family business a success. Mario and Celia instilled in their children a strong work ethic and a belief that with determination their children could accomplish anything.

Their successful business has afforded them the opportunity to give back to the community. Mario and Celia support various school and charitable organizations. Because of their strong belief in our young people and the education that they were denied, they contribute much of their time and money to community youth projects, school programs and activities that support quality education in their native country of Mexico, as well as in the United States.

Mario has established and works with a variety of international aid organizations, assisting poor communities in Mexico and South America gain access to health care, emergency, and educational resources. Locally, Mario and Celia have helped those less fortunate by providing meals for senior citizens and homeless. Also, Mario has been an unwavering supporter of the 34th Congressional District Congressional Awards Council, which recognizes young people in my congressional district for their volunteer contributions in the community.

Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I rise to recognize the Jimenez family for their strong

character and entrepreneurial spirit as they celebrate the 30th anniversary of Mario's Tacos. I ask my colleagues to join me in saluting this fine establishment and extending Mario and Celia Jimenez our fondest wishes for their continued success.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF BESSIE GILMORE

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 2, 1997

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call to your attention the loving memory of Bessie Gilmore, from Paterson, NJ.

Bessie was born on September 12, 1920 in Camden, SC. She was the daughter of the late Charles June, Sr. and Margaret Bracey June Jackson.

Bessie moved to Paterson, NJ at a very young age and was baptized at St. Augustine Presbyterian Church in Paterson. A graduate of Paterson Public School No. 6, she attend Eastside High School and graduated from Brown Home Mather Academy in Camden, SC.

As a community leader, Bessie spoke for the disenfranchised citizens of Paterson. She spearheaded numerous civic action committees, served as chief organizer for the Federation of Neighborhood Councils, which is a division of the Paterson Task Force for Community Action, and coorganized the Welfare Rights Organization.

Bessie served as a commissioner on the Paterson Board of Adjustment and a member of the Board of Directors of the Bergen/Passaic County Health Systems Agency, the WPAT Coalition Committee, and Title One Committee. A Fourth Ward Democratic co-leader and County Committeewoman, she was a member of the NAACP and the Citizens Committee for the Passaic County Vocational High School.

Bessie's many honors included the War Against Poverty Award, presented to her by the Paterson Task Force for Community Action, the Major's Award for Civic Contributions, and the Paterson Chapter of the Black Women's Health Project Award.

Bessie is survived by her husband Louis Gilmore, her daughter Deborah Jamison Jeter, and two brothers, Charles June, Jr., and James Jackson, Jr.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me, our colleagues, Bessie's family and friends, and the city of Paterson in paying tribute to the loving memory of Bessie Gilmore.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2378, TREASURY, POSTAL SERVICE, AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

SPEECH OF

HON. ROB PORTMAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 30, 1997

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for the overall fiscal year 1998 Treasury, Postal Service Appropriations

Conference Report. But I also want to restate my concern over the way in which we were not given the opportunity to vote up or down on the cost-of-living adjustment for Members of Congress during the fiscal year 1998 appropriations process. If I had been given the chance, I would have voted against it.

I am a strong supporter of a number of important provisions in the conference report that has returned from the House/Senate Conference Committee, and that is why I feel compelled to support it. These provisions include funding levels that are consistent with the bipartisan IRS restructuring and reform legislation I am sponsoring, including \$377 million of critical funding to address the Year 2000 problem in IRS computer systems. It also includes \$326 million in needed information technology investments for the IRS.

Furthermore, this conference report includes \$1.6 billion for activities related to drug abuse. It includes critical funding for the Drug Free Communities Act, which I authored this year to encourage effective community-based drug prevention programs.

And, given the recent reports about questionable usage of the White House for political fundraising, it has important provisions to increase accountability for the financing of political events at the White House to ensure that taxpayers are not subsidizing fundraisers.

After weighing the overall effect of this legislation, I felt it would be improper to oppose the entire legislation package over the issue of the COLA. That issue has already been debated before this body—where I expressed my opposition.

HARLEM'S HISTORIC SYLVIA'S RESTAURANT IS GOING ON THE ROAD

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, not long ago, I was honored to present to Herbert and Sylvia Woods an award as New York State's Parents of the Year. The owners of Harlem's world-renowned Sylvia's Restaurant had earned the accolade as a married couple who had raised four children and had been blessed by many grandchildren.

I said then that the Woods' had demonstrated what life is truly about: nurturing, educating, and inculcating in their children the values that had allowed them to carry on successfully in their own lives. But in addition, the Woods', who came from the humblest of backgrounds in South Carolina, have made a huge mark in the world of business, building a small family-owned restaurant in Harlem into a national operation in the culinary industry—restaurants in several cities and a line of bottled spices.

Recently reporter Michel Marriott chronicled their story in an article in the New York Times. That inspirational story of hard work, perseverance, and determination follows for the edification of my colleagues.

[From the New York Times, Sept. 3, 1997]
QUEEN OF SOUL FOOD TAKING "DOWN HOME" ON THE ROAD

(By Michel Marriott)

The scene on the broad, cracked sidewalk outside Sylvia's Restaurant in Harlem

looked like the opening of a department store sale, as tourists from around the world, in sneakers, shorts and T-shirts, along with other diners in waiting, some in their Sunday best, anticipated the moment when they could surge inside.

When the door opened at 12:30 P.M., about 100 customers pressed forward, eager for fried chicken, salmon croquettes, collard greens, candied yams, black-eyed peas and the live music of Sylvia's Sunday gospel brunch.

For those for whom soul food has literal meaning, the weekly four-hour feast, in which hundreds gather, was a reaffirming evocation of down home. For other toe-tapping diners, it was a plateful of black culture, a taste of church suppers, backyard cookouts and old-fashioned, black hospitality.

The only thing missing was the queen of soul food herself, the owner, Sylvia Woods. Mrs. Woods doesn't work on Sundays anymore. After 35 years of 15- and 16-hour days to establish her restaurant, on Lenox Avenue near 127th Street, as a temple of black Southern dining up north, Mrs. Woods, 71, and her husband, 72 Herbert, are taking it a little easier.

They may need the energy: from modest beginnings in rural South Carolina, they are on the cusp of national success.

Mrs. Woods's mother mortgaged the family farm so that her daughter, then a waitress, and son-in-law, then a cabdriver, could open the restaurant in 1962. But now, investors led by the J.P. Morgan Community Development Corporation are helping to take the Woodses' vision of a cozy place to break cornbread and transplant it across the country.

Mrs. Woods, a round-faced woman with outsize eyeglasses and a generous smile, finds that prospect pleasing.

"We've come such a long ways, but in a sense it feels like it was just yesterday," Mrs. Woods said, with her husband at her side. "I put my life in this restaurant."

Her regulars enjoy the couple's success. "I have watched their development," said Percy Sutton, a leading Harlem businessman and former Manhattan Borough President. "I know of no two more deserving and gracious people than the two of them. I am deliriously happy for them."

The expansion began in February, when the first Sylvia's branch opened in downtown Atlanta. Others are planned for Brooklyn, St. Louis and Baltimore.

Another arm of this food empire is being masterminded by their eldest son, Van DeWard Woods, 52: a Sylvia's line of bottled spices, sauces, dressings and canned seasoned beans, greens and peas—with Mrs. Woods's smiling face on the front. The products are appearing on the shelves of specialty shops and supermarkets chains in New York and nationally, including D'Agostino, Pathmark and A.&P./Food Emporium.

The Woodses are at the leading edge of a new interest in soul food. This fall, 20th Century Fox is set to release the feature film "Soul Food," a sentimental homage. The cuisine, born on slave plantations and relying heavily on cast-off cuts of meat, fried foods, gravies and spices, is being reimagined, often for diet-conscious customers, at popular restaurants like George's in Los Angeles and the Soul Cafe and Motown Cafe in midtown Manhattan.

In recent years, Mrs. Woods has given a nod to the calorie-conscious by offering a few items on her menu that are baked and grilled, not fried. She also seasons her collard greens with smoked turkey, rather than the traditional ham hocks, after some customers asked if they could get their greens sans pig.

Even with these accommodations, it's still the same restaurant that has become world renowned.