

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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

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

TAX FREEDOM DAY

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

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, it has been a long day. The Chamber is thinning out. Members are on their way back to their districts. But tomorrow is coming. Tomorrow, May 9, is Tax Freedom Day, the day that working Americans can finally begin to keep the money they earn rather than paying it to the Government in taxes.

The fact is the tax burden most Americans face has been increasing every year. I am pleased that Congress, through the balanced budget agreement reached with the President, is actively pursuing some relief in the areas of the family tax credit, capital gains, and estate tax relief.

The budget agreement provides for a total of \$135 billion in tax relief over the next 5 years. That is a big step. I hope this will be a first step on a longer road toward true tax relief, including real tax reform. Congress has to find ways to provide additional relief and give due consideration to alternatives to the current tax system, which is unfair and inefficient.

Mr. Speaker, dare we look forward to a day when the average American no longer spends more in total taxes than on food, clothing, and housing combined? We are spending more on taxes than we are spending on food, clothing, and housing for our families. Something is wrong.

Washington speaks of this beginning tax relief as Washington's generosity. I have a bulletin for taxpayers: It is not Washington's money, it is your money. Yes, most Americans agree we should pay some taxes; a safety net for the less fortunate, national defense, things like that we all understand. Most Americans also agree we are now taxed too much to support too much government.

But I think all Americans, every American, agrees that not every hard-earned dollar sent to Washington is well spent by Washington. There is waste and fraud and abuse and redundancy and patronage and other spending foolishness, and we all know it. So spend smarter and less, and tax smaller and fairer. That would be a very good wake-up call tomorrow morning across our land on Tax Freedom Day.

I wonder how many Americans, Mr. Speaker, remember back to New Year's Eve, December 31, 1996? I wonder how many Americans know that ever since then, every dollar earned by the average American worker has been taken for taxation by the Government. I wonder how many Americans are as disgusted by that fact as I am.

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in commemorating National Public Service Recognition Week. I spoke earlier tonight of teachers. This more general recognition week was established in 1986. It is a week of national effort to educate and inform Americans about the range and quality of services provided by our public employees on the Federal, State, and local level.

As part of the national recognition effort, this weekend down on the Mall there are scores of exhibits that allow everyone to explore and learn more about the important work our civil servants perform across the country. I encourage any who can to attend.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity to pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of hardworking civil servants across the country, many of whom devote their entire careers to serving others and strengthening this great Nation.

At the outset I would like to commend the efforts of my friend, the gentleman from Baltimore, MD, Mr. ELIJAH CUMMINGS, the new ranking member of the Subcommittee on Civil Service. I would also like to thank the members the Bipartisan Federal Government Task Force, which I cochair, for continuing to fight for the hard-working Federal employees.

Mr. Speaker, in describing our Nation's civil servants, President Clinton recently noted, and I quote, "Each day in schools and offices across the country, in hospitals, parks, museums, and on military installations, America's public employees dedicate their time, energy, and talent to create a brighter future for their fellow citizens and for our Nation."

I could not agree with the President more. Of course, I hold a special affinity for our Nation's Federal work force. I represent thousands of Federal employees and retirees. I have worked hard to protect and preserve their pay and benefits over the years. Mr. Speaker, I will continue to do so.

Last Friday, I joined President Clinton to announce the balanced budget deal at a press conference in Baltimore. While it is not the deal that I would have written, I am pleased that the final package will apparently not contain a delay in cost of living adjustments for Federal retirees or require

Federal employees to pay a higher percentage of the overall contribution to their health benefit package. I hope that ends up being in the agreement. We are working toward that end.

Over the last 20 years the Federal work force, Mr. Speaker, has lost an estimated \$220 billion in pay and benefits to which it was entitled under law existing in 1980.

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Let me repeat that for those who are listening. We have a budget deficit. The Federal work force has contributed mightily to solving that deficit by facing changes in law affecting their pay and benefits to the extent that they have received in pay and benefits \$220 billion less over the last 17 years than they would have if the law had not been changed.

We must remain vigilant to ensure that we do not single out our Federal employees for cuts to pay and benefits. We must not balance the budget on the backs of hard-working Americans, hard-working Americans who work for the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, all too often some paint a picture of our public servants as incompetent, uncaring paper pushers. At times we even vilify our hard-working Government employees, sometimes with tragic results.

Mr. Speaker, last month we paid tribute to the men and women who lost their lives in the tragic Oklahoma City bombing. The majority of these people, the overwhelming majority were hard-working Federal employees. They were not nameless, faceless, presumably defenseless bureaucrats, as some would say.

Let me be perfectly clear and to the point. I get angry, and I hope many Members in this House do, over those who would denigrate our civil servants. All too often it is the prevailing habit of this body to attack the character and devotion of our Federal employees, even our own.

Mr. Speaker, we must stop the senseless scapegoating and needless bashing of our civil servants. Federal employees play an integral, albeit often invisible, role in our daily lives. Federal employees make sure that our senior citizens get their monthly Social Security checks and that our veterans get the care and treatment they need. Federal employees are responsible for printing our money and even insuring it when it makes deposits at the bank.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this time to stand and say that we appreciate the efforts of those who work for our Federal Government, including most specifically those who work for this House of Representatives.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I am very disturbed by what has been going on around here lately. We have a disaster bill that is awaiting action by this body, but it is getting bogged down by all kinds of shenanigans, every shenanigan known to man. Granted, a supplemental appropriations bill always ends up being a Christmas tree that everybody tries to hang their favorite ornament on, but in the meantime we have people who are desperately in need of assistance.

I have seen in my home State of South Dakota and the States of North Dakota and Minnesota the displaced families, the devastated homes and businesses, the dead livestock, some 200,000 in my State alone. I have seen the roads and bridges that have been obliterated by this year's weather. If we are going to help these people, then let us get on with it. Construction season in my State is very short. We have a limited amount of time to get the work done that is necessary to get our people back on their feet.

I would be the first one in this body to admit that we have a budget process that is broken. In fact I am willing to lead the charge to fix it. An automatic continuing resolution has been suggested as a possible solution. I am the cosponsor of a bill that I think is a better solution, a budget reform act that would change the 1974 Budget Act and make it workable. But I do not think this is the time or the place to have a discussion about this issue. We are going to have an automatic continuing resolution. It may be good policy, but it is bad timing.

I would suggest to this body that the people of my home State of South Dakota—and those like them in North Dakota and Minnesota and around this country who have been affected by disasters and are waiting the assistance that is in this disaster package—deserve to have that assistance. I am getting tired of all the games that are being played, the political games. We have loaded up this bill to the point that we cannot even recognize it anymore.

The supplemental appropriations bill has desperately needed disaster assistance in it, and I think that it is high time that we took the action that is necessary to move the disaster bill forward through the House. The bill came out of the Senate today. Let's get it to conference and get the assistance to the people who really need it. If we do not do that, the people who have been affected by this disaster are going to be the real losers.

I urge my colleagues in the House to move quickly and decisively next week to see that we in a very expeditious way get disaster assistance in the hands of the people in our States who are desperately in need of assistance.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. THUNE. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to comment on the gentleman's

statement, as I just spoke about Federal employees. Obviously the shutdown of Government which the continuing resolution to which he speaks attempts to preclude that from happening, but I want to join the gentleman in his remarks that getting this disaster relief and getting this bill to the President as soon as possible ought to be our priority. Then he and I and others who want to make sure that the Federal Government does stay in operation so that not only employees but, as important if not more important, those who government serves are not adversely affected, will continue. But I agree with the gentleman that we ought to stop trying to load up this supplemental and move it as quickly as possible. I hope the gentleman's efforts are successful in that regard.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman from Maryland that I very much want to avert any future Government shutdowns. This is not the appropriate vehicle to deal with that.

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. WYNN].

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

There was no objection.

ANNUAL COMMEMORATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I wish to call attention of our colleagues to the annual commemoration of Public Service Recognition Week and to related activities occurring here in Washington this week. As I do so, however, I wish to take just a moment to point out that, as we celebrate the good news about Federal employees' achievements, they have just received a dose of bad news from the budget negotiators who have agreed to cut Federal pay in order to reduce the deficit.

I am opposed to this cut and I along with the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. HOYER] have recently introduced House Resolution 71, which rejects it. The gentleman from Maryland [Mr. HOYER] is to be commended for his tireless work on behalf of Federal employees. I thank him for his leadership in this area.

Mr. Speaker, each May the President's Council on Management Improvement and the Public Employees Roundtable launch activities in cities across our Nation which highlight excellence in public service at the Federal, State, and local government levels. The organization's objectives are

to inform Americans about the contributions of public employees, to the quality of our lives, to encourage excellence in Government and to promote public service careers.

Activities in my own hometown were kicked off last Friday by the Baltimore Federal Executive Board which held its 30th annual excellence in Federal career awards program at Martin's West in Baltimore County. Forty-one Federal agencies submitted a total of 202 nominations for the board's consideration. Among the 13 first-place gold award winners were Henry Powell, a customer service representative with the IRS who was recognized for community service; Mary Lisa Ward, a special agent with the U.S. Customs Service, who was recognized as an outstanding administrator; and Richard Laughlin, a quality assurance specialist at the Defense Contract Management Command, who was recognized as an outstanding technician.

Mr. Speaker, while I only have time to call a few names out, I believe that each award recipient and each person nominated deserve recognition and our thanks. This past Monday, the Public Employees Roundtable held a ceremony here on Capitol Hill and presented its breakfast of champions awards to representatives of exceptional programs at each level of Government.

Among the 1997 award winners at the Federal level were the Internal Revenue Service telefile program and the Department of State's Overseas Citizens Service. Other programs receiving special recognition this year were the Defense Personnel Center in Philadelphia, PA, the Veterans Benefits Administration in Muskogee, OK, and the U.S. Army Europe's foreign military interaction program.

Beginning today, May 8, and continuing through May 11, over two dozen Federal agencies and employee organizations will have exhibits set up in large tents on the national Mall at Third and Independence Avenues here in Washington. The public is invited to come out to learn more about the functions of these agencies and the services that each provides. Some of our military bands and other groups will provide entertainment during this family oriented event.

Mr. Speaker, Public Service Recognition Week offers all Americans, especially young people, the opportunity to learn more about the Government and the rewarding careers available. It also provides the opportunity to thank those who serve us daily for their efforts. I believe that our public service employees should be valued and respected by all Americans, and the activities occurring this week across the Nation make it crystal clear why this is so.