

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1581, a bill introduced to reauthorize the existing Federal court arbitration programs established in chapter 44 of title 28 of the United States Code. This bill reauthorizes 20 pilot arbitration programs which have been in existence in U.S. district courts around the country for 20 years.

These programs have been unquestionably successful over the years in resolving Federal litigation in a fair and expeditious manner and improving the efficiency of those Federal courts which participate in the program. The current authorization expires on September 1 of this year, and thus there is some urgency in reauthorizing these very successful programs prior to that date.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this bipartisan bill.

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

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the gentleman from North Carolina.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. COBLE] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1581.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REGARDING COST OF GOVERNMENT DAY

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 102) expressing the sense of the Congress that the cost of government spending and regulatory programs should be reduced so that American families will be able to keep more of what they earn.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 102

Whereas the total cost of government spending and regulations (total cost of government) consumes 36.2 percent of the Nation's net national product;

Whereas the total cost of government now exceeds \$3,520,000,000,000 annually;

Whereas Federal regulatory costs now exceed \$785,000,000,000 annually;

Whereas the cost of government in general and excessive regulations in particular place a tremendous drain on the economy by reducing worker productivity, increasing prices to consumers, and limiting the economic choices and individual freedoms of our citizenry;

Whereas, if the average American worker were to spend all of his or her gross earnings on nothing else besides meeting his or her share of the total cost of government for the current year, that total cost would not be met until July 3, 1997;

Whereas July 3, 1997, should therefore be considered Cost of Government Day 1997; and

Whereas it is not right that the American family has to give up more than 50 percent of what it earns to the government: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that, as part of balancing the budget and reevaluating the role of government, Federal, State, and local elected officials should carefully consider the costs of government spending and regulatory programs in the year to come so that American families will be able to keep more of what they earn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SESSIONS] and the gentleman from California [Mr. WAXMAN] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SESSIONS].

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

Mr. Speaker, today we are recognizing the Cost of Government Day. Next week, Americans will have more than one reason to celebrate the ideals of freedom and independence. July 3 is the day on which we will be free to work for ourselves instead of the Government because this is the Cost of Government Day in 1997.

From January 1 to July 3, Americans will work to pay for all levels of government, plus the volumes of regulations brought into effect this last year. That is over half the year, or 183 days working to pay for the cost of government.

The total cost of government this year translates into \$13,500 for each man, woman, and child in America. Federal regulations consume at least \$3,000 of that total. It is simply disgraceful to force the hard-working Americans in each of our districts to fork over half of their earnings to pay for government.

I call on all Members to resolve to stop the chronic overspending and overregulating by supporting this cost of government resolution.

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

Mr. Speaker, this resolution has had no hearings before our committee. It was just introduced last Friday. The whole idea of it is that we should not have a waste of taxpayer's money because taxes are too high. Well, this is a pretty silly bill, and, if anything, it is wasting some taxpayers' money by even having it processed.

I would not argue against the bill because there is no harm, I suppose, that could be seen in this legislation. It will have very little impact.

So on our side of the aisle, representing the Democrats on the committee, we never had this before the committee, and this is more a political statement by the Republicans on how they do not want to waste money. To me, it is an ineffective bill that is wasting taxpayers' money to even bring it before us.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY], the author of this resolution.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I must say, the comments from the gentleman from California [Mr. WAXMAN], do not surprise me a bit, because it is his party that has led us to this point over the last 30 or 40 years, that have controlled this Chamber, that had led us to the point that we have to introduce legislation like this to call attention to the American people what they already know by looking at their bank statements every month and trying to balance their checkbooks and paying their taxes on April 15.

Mr. Speaker, I just wonder how many hard-working Americans really know just how long it takes them to earn enough income to pay for the cost of government. Many Americans mistakenly associate April 15 with the end of their financial obligations to the Government. Some believe Tax Freedom Day is the day which marks the end of their financial obligations to pay for the cost of Government.

But, unfortunately, both of these dates are wrong, because it takes until July 3, more than half the year, to free yourself and your family from the heavy burden of government spending at all levels, plus the cost of regulation.

Now, according to the Americans for Tax Reform Foundation, the cost of this Government this year equals \$3.5 trillion, or 36.2 percent of our country's net national product. Now, that amounts to \$13,500 for every man, woman, and child in America, \$13,500 a year per individual to run this Government.

Mr. Speaker, that means that the average American will work 183 days this year to pay for the government's insatiable spending appetite and the thousands of regulations that emanate from this town every year.

In the last 14 months, over 4,700 new regulations have been issued by Federal agencies of the Clinton administration. The era of big government goes on and on and on. Over 50 percent of a family's hard-earned income goes to the country. Fifty cents out of every hard-earned dollar a family makes goes to the government. No wonder it takes one parent to work for the Government while the other parent works for the family. So, Mr. Speaker, no American should have to work more than half the year to pay the cost of government. We need to commit ourselves to reducing this burden.

This week, when the House passes the Taxpayer Relief Act, we will have begun to make a down payment on providing middle-income American families the tax relief that they need, tax relief that they have not seen in 16 years, since Ronald Reagan was President of the United States.

But I emphasize, Mr. Speaker, this is only a small down payment. We have

to continue to reduce the tax and regulatory burden on working Americans because they are constantly struggling to hold on to their earnings. Whereas the parents' generation, their parents' generation got to keep 80 percent or more of the fruits of their labor, today's families are lucky to keep 50 percent of their earnings, and, for most families, that is with both parents working full time.

Speaker GINGRICH was right on the mark this weekend when he said that we would strive to make sure that no working American should have to turn over more than 25 percent of their hard-earned income to pay for taxes or other government costs. The Lord God only wants 10 percent, and the Government should have no more than 25 percent.

Also this week, Mr. Speaker, we will receive recommendations on the IRS from the National Commission on Restructuring the IRS. That will provide the necessary framework to begin the national debate on what kind of tax structure we need to rephrase today's 800,000 word maze, that takes 480 forms with 8 billion pages of instructions to administer.

□ 1300

So, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, this government is too big, it costs too much, and it increasingly impinges on the earnings and freedoms of our constituents.

I just urge my colleagues to think seriously about the implications of the Cost of Government Day, and to consider that any tax and regulatory relief that we can send to working families in our districts is much deserved and much needed and much demanded.

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

I want to point out as a public service that when we talk about the cost of Government, we are talking about the salary of the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY] and the cost of his staff, but we are also talking about protecting our national defense and supporting the brave men and women who are on duty for that purpose; we are talking about the cost to pay for our Social Security system, which has done more to stop the poverty rates among the elderly than anything else, as well as with the Medicare Program. We are talking about the expenditures to protect the environment, help students go to college; all of the things that people would have to pay for on their own if they could afford it.

If we did not have these Government services, a lot of people would not be able to afford it, and we would find that large numbers of people would be denied the benefits that they look to Government to provide.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from the State of Massachusetts [Mr. FRANK].

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, first I want to correct the gentleman from Texas. He used the fig-

ure of families spending more than 50 percent of their income, but that depends on the family. If one is rich enough, thanks to the Tax Code, one is spending a much smaller percentage of one's income, and by the time we get through with the tax bill, if one is rich enough, that will be even less. The CEO's who are making a couple of million dollars are not spending 50 percent of their income. We have very differential effects according to how much money one makes.

Second, I do welcome, though, the gentleman from California is of course correct. I do not think we are spending enough on the environment, I do not think we are spending enough on, for instance, the Cops on the Street Program, which is so helpful, or helping kids going to school. But we can economize.

We will be voting today and tomorrow on the military bill. The military bill, the National Security bill, represents 50 percent of the discretionary spending of the Federal Government. If we set aside Medicare, we set aside Medicaid and Social Security, 50 percent of what is left spent by the Federal Government will be voted on by this House over the next couple of days, and I am delighted at this spending, cutting zeal on the other side. I look forward to them helping us defeat the unnecessary B-2 bomber at the cost of tens of billions.

I will be offering an amendment, along with a Republican cosponsor, the gentleman from Connecticut, and the gentleman from California [Mr. CONDIT], to put a limit on the amount that we spend for NATO so that our European allies stop getting subsidized. We continue to subsidize our European allies.

So I agree we should be conscious of that spending, and while I hope we will not be passing a Tax Code that will make it more unfair, so that the bigger income families will in fact pay a bigger share, I also look forward to seeing some of this spending reduction zeal which we are hearing voiced today. I trust that the spending zeal in general we are hearing will not disappear when we get to the particular, because remember, the National Security bill represents 50 percent of the discretionary spending of the Federal Government.

The bill we are going to vote on today will contain more spending than the Department of Transportation and the Department of Labor, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and several other major Federal departments put together; throw in the Environmental Protection Administration.

So let us see some more of that cost-cutting zeal, and we will begin today when we start to vote on the military budget.

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

I thought that having this bill up today would be a useless exercise, but I

think it is quite valuable in light of the comments that the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. FRANK] has made about how we need to cut back on spending in areas where we are spending too much.

I also want to point out that if we look at some of those higher income Americans who are going to get a huge tax break, rather than find July 3 as their tax independence day, some of them are going to celebrate on Valentine's Day, because at that point they will have paid all they are going to pay in for the Government funding for all of these different services, while a lot of hard-working Americans, especially middle-income Americans, will continue to pay on into the months to the summertime.

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

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

Once again today, Mr. Speaker, we have an argument, we have a discussion, we have a debate here on the floor of the House of Representatives, to talk about not only Government, but its performance and how that works. As we have seen for many, many years, the other side refuses to understand that what we are talking about here is that we need a Government that works, a government that does not put more rules and regulations on people. Even if Government were free, there were certain parts of it that I would not want.

I would like to bring us back to what is germane about this argument, and that is the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY], in offering House Concurrent Resolution 102, talks about expressing the sense of Congress that the cost of Government spending and regulatory programs should be reduced. We are talking about the governmentwide programs. We are not just talking about the military today. We are not just talking about the men and women who preserve freedom for America.

What we are talking about is the Government that is made up of bureaucrats, those faceless, nameless people who we never see in our lives, but who have a controlling factor on us.

Mr. Speaker, what this is all about is a resolution by the House of Representatives that this is a sense of Congress that is part of balancing the budget and reevaluating the role of Government. Federal, State, and local elected officials should also carefully consider the cost of Government spending and regulatory programs in the coming year. That is exactly what this resolution is all about.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. JONES].

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, many Americans mistakenly associate April 15 with the end of their financial obligation to the Government. Some believe Tax Freedom Day is a day which marks the end of our financial obligation to pay for the cost of government. Unfortunately, it takes until July 3,

more than half the year, to free yourself and your family from the heavy hand of the Government's costs.

The average American will be working 183 days this year to pay for the ever-growing spending and regulations that originate from this town every year. According to the Americans for Tax Reform Foundation, Government spending at all levels equals more than \$3.5 trillion.

The resolution of the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY] sends a message to American taxpayers that this Congress understands their burden and we are committed to doing everything possible to deliver tax relief as well as relief from the web of regulations that burden so many Americans each year.

I urge my colleagues to support resolution 102.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina. I appreciate his comments.

In summary, I would like to say that House Concurrent Resolution 102 talks directly about the problem that we have about Government spending and overregulation in our Government. Whereas there are \$3 trillion 520 billion that are spent each year, of this, \$785 billion is related to Federal regulatory costs. This body will be taking under hand the opportunity just in the coming weeks to talk about a tax cut for hard-working Americans that is only \$85 billion. Mr. Speaker, of that figure, we can see that \$785 billion, a larger, much larger figure, is just for regulation. We can do a better job.

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

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, we have no further requests for time.

I yield myself such time as I may consume only to point out that this resolution does not save a dime of taxpayers' money. It simply tells the American people we feel your pain, and we are spending a little bit more money to process a resolution on the House floor to tell you that. I do not know what other purpose it serves, and I have no other point to make.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY] that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 102.

The question was taken.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Concurrent Resolution 102.

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

There was no objection.

EXTENDING AUTHORIZATION OF JOHN F. KENNEDY ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1553) to amend the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 to extend the authorization of the Assassination Records Review Board until September 30, 1998.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1553

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

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD.

The President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (44 U.S.C. 2107 note) is amended—

(1) in section 7(o)(1), by striking "September 30, 1996" and all that follows through the end of the paragraph and inserting "September 30, 1998,"; and

(2) in section 13(a), by striking "such sums" and all that follows through "expended" and inserting "to carry out the provisions of this Act \$1,600,000 for fiscal year 1998".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SESSIONS] and the gentleman from California [Mr. WAXMAN] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SESSIONS].

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1553 is extension of authorization of the Assassination Records Review Board. Mr. Speaker, the House is considering a very important piece of legislation, H.R. 1553, which extends the authorization of the Assassination Records Review Board for 1 year and authorizes \$1.5 million for the review board to complete its final work, which will be done during fiscal year 1998.

This bill was introduced by the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BURTON], chairman of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight on May 8, 1997, and included as its original co-sponsors the gentleman from California [Mr. WAXMAN] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], who sponsored the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Reports Collection Act, and who also chaired the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

In 1992, almost 30 years after the assassination of President Kennedy, nearly 1 million records compiled by official investigators of the assassination still have not been made public. Congress decided to set up a process for

reviewing and releasing to the public the records surrounding the Kennedy assassination. The result was that on October 26, 1992, President Bush signed the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 into law. The original act provided a 3-year timetable for a review board to complete its work.

Unfortunately, extensive delays in the appointment of the review board's members delayed the board from beginning its work in a timely manner. In 1994, Congress restarted the clock and extended the 1992 law's termination date for 1 year until September 30, 1996. The review board subsequently exercised its authority under the statute to continue operating for 1 additional year.

I believe that the public has a right to know what is contained in the Federal Government's records on the Kennedy assassination. By releasing these documents to the public, we advance the cause of total accountability to the citizens of our country. As a representative of the city of Dallas, TX, I want to assure the American people that all Texans from all over the State will stop at nothing less than knowing the whole truth about this tragedy as it occurred in our Nation's history.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1553 extends the authorization of the Assassination Review Board for just one year to allow the board to finish reviewing, and then to make public, the records relating to the assassination of our President John F. Kennedy. Under current law, the authorization expires at the end of fiscal year 1997.

In his testimony last month before the Subcommittee on National Security, International Affairs and Criminal Justice, review board chairman John Tunheim assured the members of this subcommittee that only 1 additional year would be needed for the board to finish reviewing and releasing the remaining documents related to the Kennedy assassination and to issue its final report. I believe that it is important that we see this progress through to its conclusion, and accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

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

I rise in support of the reauthorization of the JFK Assassination Review Board. The board has performed a valuable service to the public in guiding the release of over a million pages of information relating to the assassination of President Kennedy. Unfortunately, the work is not complete. This bill will give the review board an additional year to finish the task, and the board has assured us that 1 year is sufficient.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1553, which I introduced in