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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The prayer was offered by the guest chaplain, Rev. Richard Anderson, First Presbyterian Church, Aurora, IL:

Let us pray. O mighty God, the source of all goodness, please bless those who are in positions of power and authority in this country. Bless the President and his family, all members of his Cabinet and all legislators in Congress. Enrich them with Your grace and fill them with Your spirit, that they may be governed with wisdom and godliness by these Your servants.

And watch over those who help form public opinion, the press and the broadcasting services; that we may be enabled to exercise our rights as citizens in a manner which is responsible and in accordance with Your will.

As the Ruler of all nations, may we represent You well as Your instruments of peace and justice to the world.

In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "In helping our neighbor to wholeness and freedom, we assure wholeness and freedom for ourselves. So shall we nobly save or meanly lose the last best hope of Earth." So help us God. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. TRAFICANT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REV. RICHARD ANDERSON

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

Mr. HASTERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to welcome to this House and to introduce our guest chaplain for today, Pastor Dick Anderson of the First Presbyterian Church in Aurora, IL. He is a spiritual leader of one of the largest congregations in my 14th District of Illinois. I thank him for his message as we open this session.

First Presbyterian has taken an active role in the life of the community, and it is home for outreach ministries which include programs for at-risk teenagers and other young people.

It is also fitting that Pastor Anderson is here today on the 12th of February as we mark the birthday of one of our greatest Presidents, Abraham Lincoln. A noted student of Lincoln's speeches and writings, Pastor Anderson has masterfully portrayed our 16th President on literally hundreds of occasions throughout the State of Illinois and this Nation, including the reenactment last year of the great Lincoln-Douglas debates in Illinois.

As recently as yesterday he represented and portrayed Lincoln here in Washington, DC, on the celebration today of Lincoln's birthday.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask you and my colleagues to join me in welcoming my friend, Pastor Dick Anderson, to our House of Representatives.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The Chair will entertain 10 one-minutes on each side.

MEXICAN REPAYMENT OF LOANS

(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, headlines said: Bailout a success, Mexico repays Uncle Sam.

Yellow brick road time. Do not bet your pesos on it. Reports now say that all of the money used to repay the loan was borrowed at interest rates so high they would make John Gotti blush.

Folks, I say there is a big con game going on here. Mexico is in a shambles, and what is worse, the cancer from Mexico is spreading to Uncle Sam. Eighty percent of all narcotics are now coming across the border, and there are two giant sucking sounds here, folks: No. 1, American jobs going to Mexico; and, No. 2, Mexican cocaine going up American noses.

Beam me up. If this is a success, then General Custer at Little Big Horn's victory must have been called a victory.

Let us stop the propaganda. Let us get a trade policy with Mexico. Because the truth is, it simply sucks.

TAX RELIEF

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

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, it has become popular to say that there are no significant philosophical differences in this town anymore. I do not buy it. Take, for one small example, an exchange that took place here in Washington just yesterday. One of our distinguished colleagues, the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. HAYWORTH], asked President Clinton's Treasury Secretary a very good question yesterday: Why does the President propose to cut off the \$500 per child tax credit for any parent whose child reaches the age of 13? Why is it somehow less expensive for a working mom to care for a 12-year-old than it is to care for a 13-year-old? Well, said the Treasury Secretary,

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

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the Government has to be careful how it, quote, spends its scarce resources.

Now, that is where I have a major difference with the administration. When a parent is able to keep some of the money that he or she works very hard to earn, that is not an example of the Government spending money. It is not our money, to begin with, here in Washington. It belongs to the people who earn it. We ought to cut taxes, and let us begin to do it now.

CREATION OF BIPARTISAN TASK FORCE TO REVIEW ETHICS PROCESS

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

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to thank my colleagues that are waiting for their 1-minute for their willingness to let me intercede at this time. I appreciate their grace and patience.

Mr. Speaker, over the past few months the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. GEPHARDT], the minority leader, and I have been talking about the need for a comprehensive review of the ethics process. We have had several good discussions culminating in our joint appearance before the House today to announce the creation of a bipartisan task force to conduct a review of the ethics process and to report to the bipartisan leadership on how the process might be improved.

For this review to be successful, I think we need three key elements:

First, the process must be truly bipartisan. Like the Ethics Committee, it should be composed of an equal number of Republicans and Democrats. Furthermore, and as the majority leader you will not find me saying this too often, I think this task force should be cochaired by a Member from each side of the aisle.

Second, we must have dedicated Members who will do what is right for all Members and, more importantly, for the institution of the House of Representatives.

Third, after the past few tumultuous months, I think we must have a brief cooling-off period where Members can sit back and examine where the ethics process works, where it does not and how it might be improved, and in a climate temporarily free from potential ethics charges.

After a great deal of discussion, I am pleased to announce that the distinguished minority leader and I come to the floor today to announce the creation of a 12-member bipartisan task force cochaired by a Republican and a Democrat.

Ethical review of our peers, and the process by which we conduct that review, is a constitutional responsibility. It is an important job that few Members are excited about performing. I have given a great deal of thought to whom the Republican side of the aisle should ask to do this. I want Members

who are well respected and who are committed to doing what is right and what is in the best interests of the institution.

While we have many Members who meet this criteria, I believe I have found six who will work well with Members, to be appointed by Mr. GEPHARDT.

Members are the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. LIVINGSTON], who I have asked to be one of the cochairs, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS], the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. CASTLE], the gentleman from California [Mr. THOMAS], the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON] and the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN], who as chairman of the Ethics Committee will serve as an ex officio member of the task force.

Minority Leader GEPHARDT and I have also agreed on a moratorium on the filing of new ethics complaints until April 11. This 2-month cooling-off period will give the task force members an opportunity to meet, review and discuss how the ethics process can be improved and in a climate free from specific questions of ethical propriety.

The task force is free to look into any and all aspects of the ethics process. Some of the questions I think the task force will want to address include: Who can file a complaint and upon what basis of information, what should be the standards for initiating an investigation, what evidentiary standard should apply throughout the process, how has the bifurcation process worked, does it take too long to conduct a review, should non-House Members play a part in a reformed ethics process, should we enlarge the pool of Members who might participate in different phases of the process?

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Missouri for working with me to create this important task force.

I yield to the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. GEPHARDT].

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

I would agree that we believe on the Democratic side, I think, with our friends on the Republican side that there needs to be a complete review of the ethics process with a view toward recommending changes to the whole body, that the body might considerate at some point in the future.

We also agree that there should be six Members, one ex officio and five other Members. In that connection, I today am appointing the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. CARDIN] to be our cochair, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. FROST], the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MOAKLEY], the gentleman from California [Ms. PELOSI] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] to be part of this bipartisan task force.

We are also asking the gentleman from California [Mr. BERMAN] to be ex officio, as he will be our recommended

ranking member on the permanent Ethics Committee.

So we will be joining with the majority leader in the unanimous consent request for their appointment and for the understanding that there will not be a filing of ethics complaints for this, I believe to be, 65-day period in which this group should be doing its work.

I thank the gentleman and Members on his side for working with us on this process. I think it is an important step forward in working together to improve the ethics process for the body. I look forward to receiving recommendations from this group.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

I should also advise Members of the body that, during this interim period, the regular work of the Ethics Committee under the leadership of the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] and the gentleman from California [Mr. BERMAN] will continue to advise Members with respect to requests they might make about the appropriateness of courses of action they may take. That advisory function, I know, is being carried out well because I just got some advice back from the committee myself yesterday on a trip that I am looking at. So let me just say that I believe this accommodation enables every Member to feel they have a place to make their inquiries. They can get a quick, accurate, reliable response and at the same time this committee can work. Again, I want to thank the minority leader for his congenial efforts to work this out with me.

ESTABLISHING BIPARTISAN TASK FORCE ON REFORM OF ETHICS PROCESS

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, in furtherance of this understanding concerning the establishment of a bipartisan task force on reform of the ethics process, I ask unanimous consent that during the period beginning immediately and ending on April 11, 1997:

First, the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct may not receive, renew, initiate or investigate a complaint against the official conduct of a Member, officer or employee of the House;

Second, the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct may issue advisory opinions and perform other noninvestigative functions; and

Third, a resolution addressing the official conduct of a Member, officer or employee of the House that is proposed to be offered from the floor by a Member other than the majority leader or the minority leader as a question of the privileges of the House shall, once noticed pursuant to clause 2(a)(1) of rule IX, have precedence of all other questions except motions to adjourn only at a time or place designated by the Chair and the legislative schedule within 2 legislative days after April 11, 1997.