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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 28, 1997.

I hereby designate the Honorable GIL GUTKNECHT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. McDevitt, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed bills and a concurrent resolution of the following titles, in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 833. An act to designate the Federal building courthouse at Public Square and Superior Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio, as the "Howard M. Metzenbaum United States Courthouse";

S. 1000. An act to designate the United States courthouse at 500 State Avenue in Kansas City, Kansas, as the "Robert J. Dole United States Courthouse";

S. 1043. An act to designate the United States courthouse under construction at the corner of Las Vegas Boulevard and Clark Avenue in Las Vegas, Nevada, as the "Lloyd D. George United States Courthouse"; and

S. Con. Res. 43. Concurrent resolution urging the United States Trade Representative immediately to take all appropriate action with regards to Mexico's imposition of antidumping duties on United States high fructose corn syrup.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by

the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. VISCLOSKY] for 5 minutes.

BALANCING THE BUDGET

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, the most important thing that we can do for our children and their children is to balance the Federal budget. Unfortunately, I fear that we will snatch defeat from the jaws of victory by enacting expensive new tax cuts before the budget is actually balanced.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear to me that the best tax cut we can give to the American people is to balance the Federal budget. It has been shown that by balancing the budget we can stimulate economic growth and reduce interest rates on everything from home mortgages to car loans. Keeping these considerations in mind, I firmly believe that we must resist the destructive idea of granting tax cuts at this time.

There is little question that we have made tremendous progress in reducing the deficit in the past 5 years. From a record high of \$290 billion in 1992, projections cited last week indicate that the deficit may fall below \$45 billion by the end of this year.

Unfortunately, this body missed a golden opportunity last week to make sure that we would finally reach a balanced budget by the year 2002. By rejecting a commonsense measure that would have applied enforcement procedures to the budget resolution, both parties put other interests above that of balancing the budget. This raises serious questions about a real willingness to make the tough choices needed to get us to a balanced budget.

Given the failure of the House to enact enforcement legislation, it is now more important than ever to keep our eyes on the goal of balancing the budget and finishing the job. Achieving this goal can only happen one step at a time. The first step should be to reduce spending by reforming entitlement programs.

With America's population aging and people living longer, the number of beneficiaries in programs such as Medicare is growing much faster than the working population. For this reason, Medicare and other entitlement programs are projected to run out of money early in the next century unless we make basic reforms to these programs right now.

Secondly, if no changes are made to Medicare and other spending programs, all the progress we have made in reducing the deficit will be in vain.

It should also be pointed out that the enormous growth of entitlement spending is threatening the discretionary programs that allow us to invest in the future of this country. Estimates from the Congressional Budget Office show that by the year 2002 mandatory spending will consume 70 percent of the Federal budget.

We depend on discretionary programs for building roads, putting more police officers on the street, and making our economy more productive. We must use the opportunity before us to slow the growth of mandatory spending and achieve a more sustainable balance.

While cutting spending is the first step in balancing the budget, I believe we will take a giant leap backward if we compound our current fiscal problems by granting significant new tax cuts that will increase the deficit. Studies show that the cost of the tax bill approved by the House on June 26 is heavily backloaded, hiding the bill's true cost and threatening to unbalance

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

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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the budget shortly after it is designed to be balanced.

It is clear to me that many Members of this body are only interested in using the balanced budget debate as a pretense to grant expensive new tax cuts. We are now so close to finally balancing the budget, it makes absolutely no sense to me to start moving in the opposite direction with tax measures that will drive up the deficit.

If we would simply pass the spending reforms called for by this year's budget resolution, and do no harm by enacting new tax cuts, we would balance the budget before the end of the century and achieve a surplus of at least \$20 billion in the year 2002. This, I believe, is the wisest course of action because it allows us to invest for the future needs of this country, and ensure that we do not produce a budget that is a 1-year wonder, balancing in the year 2002, but becoming unbalanced shortly thereafter.

Mr. Speaker, now more than ever it is imperative that Members of both parties, along with the President, come together in a unified effort. We must take this opportunity to pass meaningful entitlement reform, hold off on granting expensive tax cuts until we can afford them, and keep our promise to balance the budget once and for all.

THE SPECTRUM GIVEAWAY IS A MISNOMER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. STEARNS] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, you might title my 5 minutes this afternoon "The Spectrum Giveaway is a Misnomer." The spectrum issue has generated a lot of misinformation, and as a member of the Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade and Consumer Protection, I feel obliged to clear up the confusion. Some pundits and politicians have the notion that providing broadcasters access to the digital spectrum represents a massive giveaway. They are not understanding the point.

But first let us talk about what the spectrum is. It is broadcast airwaves, a series of frequencies for transmitting signals. The spectrum had no impact on human life until Mr. Farnsworth developed broadcast television. I might add, Mr. Speaker, that there is a statue of Mr. Farnsworth in Statuary Hall here in the Capitol.

Almost literally, something was made from nothing. Over the years, the media have invested billions of dollars to put the previously idle analog spectrum to productive use. As a Nation, we have benefited from these broadcasts through weather alerts, political debates and coverage of the first Moon walk.

With the advent of high definition technologies, the broadcasters need access to a new spectrum, the digital

spectrum. Again, the broadcasters will invest billions of dollars to deliver free TV over these frequencies. Individual stations will also have to convert at a cost of up to \$20 million each.

Now, obviously, this is a huge cost, particularly for most broadcasters in small- and medium-sized markets like many in my home State of Florida, where they have assets under \$10 million. However, there are many who want broadcasters to give up the old analog spectrum, spend billions of dollars on new equipment to convert to digital TV, and then continue to deliver free TV and pay for the digital spectrum all together. Well, it cannot be done.

Mr. Speaker, heaping auction costs on top of this transition cost will make it virtually impossible for many local broadcasters to provide free, over-the-air programming in the digitized world. It does not take a genius to figure out that if enough broadcasters are forced out of these auctions by these costs, consumers will have fewer choices in their viewing options.

Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with those advocating the up-front auction of the digital spectrum loaned to broadcasters. These advocates should look at this issue in the proper context. In the 1980's, the government and broadcasters developed an understanding to develop and promote high definition television over digital transmissions. The Federal Communications Commission, with the endorsement of Congress, agreed to provide broadcasters an additional 6 megahertz of spectrum. This added 6 megahertz of spectrum is necessary to assure that the old analog transmissions, current over-the-air TV, is not disrupted in the transition to digital transmission.

This does not mean that I support a government giveaway to the media. We can still, Mr. Speaker, generate government revenue from this exchange, and let me explain.

Once the transition from analog to digital is completed, we can then auction off the analog spectrum for cellular and other transmissions. In addition, the government may charge broadcasters a fee if they provide ancillary service such as paging or faxing in the new digital spectrum.

Last week William Safire, a leading columnist, called this exchange a sweet payoff to broadcasters and compared it with the prospect of, "giving Yellowstone National Park to the timber companies." Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer a different analogy this afternoon: The Homestead Act of 1862.

Mr. Speaker, through this act, the Federal Government parceled out billions of acres of what it considered worthless western land. Now a settler received a 160-acre plot of land and the government got a pledge that the land would be cultivated and put to productive use. What was then considered the "great American desert" is now among the most valuable land in the world.

My position is that a rational approach providing a win-win situation

for all should be involved. The government wins because its coffers will be filled with analog action proceeds and fees from supplemental digital services. Those who care about free, over-the-air broadcasting win because television will not be interrupted in the transition from analog to digital. Broadcasters win because they will remain competitive in the new information age. But above all, consumers win with continued free access to news and information and more competition among information and entertainment providers.

The up-front auction of the digital spectrum could be a roadblock to the new era of communications. Combined with other technologies, digital TV will yield a single box sitting in our living rooms; one device functioning as our TV, telephone, computer, modem, radio, and VCR. Mr. Speaker, let us not let misguided policies stand in the way of progress.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 42 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. GOODLATTE] at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

O God, as You have brought us together from many backgrounds and diverse traditions, so we may strive to demonstrate a unity of spirit that reflects the solidarity You have given us at creation. We are grateful that we are blessed by our diversity and we learn from each other. We accept the challenge of celebrating our own heritage even as we celebrate the heritage of others. We thank You, gracious God, for our history as we pray that Your spirit will lead and guide us in the days ahead. This is our earnest prayer. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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 pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Florida [Mr. HASTINGS]