

I'm also concerned that the visit to Washington by President Aliyev, at this critical stage in the Karabagh negotiations, threatens to harm the peace process by undermining confidence in the role of the United States as an impartial mediator. Section 907 is a provision of the Freedom Support Act of 1992 which prohibits direct U.S. Government Aid to Azerbaijan because of the Azeri blockade of Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh. The administration's advocacy against Section 907, further reinforces the Azerbaijani perception that the United States, since the most recent OSCE summit in Lisbon, has tilted toward Azerbaijan.

The visit by President Aliyev could serve to encourage Azerbaijan to further harden its negotiating stance. This encouragement is particularly dangerous given President Aliyev's pattern of unacceptable behavior, including his use of oil as a weapon against Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, his blockades of Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, his rapidly expanding military capabilities, his threats of force and intimidation tactics, and his refusal to negotiate directly with the democratically elected representatives of Nagorno Karabagh.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues in joining Mr. PORTER and me in letting President Clinton know of our concerns about his upcoming meeting with President Aliyev and to push our State Department toward a fair solution to the very difficult Nagorno Karabagh conflict.

EXCITING TAX CUTS FOR AMERICANS

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

Mr. SOLOMON. Madam Speaker, what a difference 4 years makes. Four years ago, this Congress was raising taxes on the American people, they were increasing spending, they were bankrupting Medicare, they were trying to socialize medicine, and they were expanding welfare. What a difference 4 years makes.

What is going to happen in the next 2 days is so exciting, because in the next 2 days we are going to cut taxes for every single working American in this country. What a difference 4 years makes. We will cut spending; we will get a handle on many of these entitlement programs that have been running rampant; we will save Medicare from bankruptcy; and, more than that, Madam Speaker, we will stay on that glide path to a balanced budget, which is going to mean there is going to be a country, this United States, for my children and my five grandchildren, six grandchildren, excuse me, we just had another one, and that is what is so exciting about it, because we have been able to come together with the White House, with the Senate, and with this body and do what the American people finally want us to do. I am just so excited, I can hardly stand it. Let us get on to it. In the next 48 hours, we are going to do exactly what I have just outlined.

DEMOCRATS STAND FIRM FOR FAIR TAX TREATMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, it is particularly appropriate to have the gentlewoman from Missouri [Mrs. EMERSON] this morning presiding over these Chambers, because I believe that this tax bill reflects those individuals of goodwill who have worked so very hard to ensure that America's working women realize tax relief.

Let me just simply talk about credit. This is not about who did what, but as long as we are in the credit column, let me emphasize where the work was really done.

I am proud of this tax relief plan because it goes to the core of what America stands for: Our children. As the chairperson of the Congressional Children's Caucus, I can assure my colleagues of the hard work that the Democrats persisted on to ensure that \$24 billion, \$24 billion, a plan that was not in the initial Republican offering of tax relief, will now be given for children who are uninsured, \$24 billion.

Actually, we do not even know how many dollars will be saved by providing children who are uninsured some \$10 million plus with preventative care for working families who do not have the option of insuring their children through their work. Madam Speaker, \$24 billion.

Then there is a story that I think needs to be told, and that is one that I am not going to hide. There is no actual evidence whatsoever that showed that the Republican plan was going to give any consideration to families making under \$50,000 a year, none whatsoever, none, absolutely none, until the Democrats persisted time after time after time after time.

I am gratified that when the Republicans started with their 3.9 million families, resulting in 5.5 million that were going to get the \$500 a year tax credit, Democrats again, time after time after time, in negotiations and on the floor of the House, refused to compromise. What do we have now? Coverage of 8.7 families and 13 million children will receive the benefit of the \$500 a year tax credit. I do not know about my colleagues, but that is one thing that we are not going to step away from.

Is this a balanced tax plan? It has its ups and downs, but it does respond to working men and women, the school teacher, the bus driver, the rookie police officer, many of the folk who are not able to get to the U.S. Congress and even sit in these august bodies or even sit in the gallery and watch as we debate this issue, individuals who may not have had a vacation in the last 10 years or 5 years, individuals who did not get benefits from their work, but

they paid payroll taxes. And that was the accusation that was being made by our Republican friends, that they were on welfare because they did not pay tax or they got the earned income tax credit, which we all know they had to pay for.

I am proud of what the Democrats have done in this now tax relief, that is truly one that responds to all Americans.

Welfare to work? Yes, we passed the welfare bill. I happen to have voted for one that had more meaning than what we ultimately passed. Right now in our cities, we are seeing people cut off with nowhere to go, but we insisted, as Democrats, to provide \$3 billion for a real welfare-to-work program, a program that would be governed by our cities and also the Department of Labor who believes in increasing and encouraging work. This will give real meaning to welfare to work, moving young mothers and young families that heretofore did not have training into training and provide them with jobs.

What is the sense of moving people off of welfare when companies around the Nation will not hire them because they have no work experience or they have had no training? Democrats who have been down in the trenches with these individuals who represent these urban centers and rural communities understand and sympathize with what it is like to be someone who needs something. I am very gratified that it was the Democrats who stood here and fought to ensure that we had the kind of plan that we could stand up and be proud of.

Let me say this for those who have small family farms and small businesses, many of whom spoke to me in my district. There is nothing I am going to be ashamed about there as well, because Democrats forced the \$1.1 billion, forced it to occur in a sooner period of time in terms of relief for estate and small business farmers in order to ensure that they were included in the loop.

Yes, there are capital gains taxes, and I am going to be watching to see how that drives the economy, because in fact the 1993 budget bill and tax bill is the one that made this economy what it was, and that was under a President that was a Democrat and a Congress that was Democrat. We are thriving in this economy right now today because of the 1993 vote that all Democrats took who are here in this U.S. Congress.

We have many things to still fix: Disproportionate share in the State of Texas, where we have to pay for our Medicaid as opposed to other States. We must work on that across the board. But I can assure my colleagues that this tax bill is what it is because Democrats stayed in the fight and we will continue to fight to make sure that this is a tax bill for working Americans.

HEATED DEBATE CONTINUES ON
NAFTA

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, as the President prepares to ask Congress for fast track negotiating authority, heated debate continues on the economic effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement. There is no debate, however, on the serious threat that NAFTA poses to food safety in the United States.

In an effort to increase trade with Mexico, NAFTA limits border inspections of food, it allows Mexican trucks to enter the United States with limited inspection. As a result, NAFTA is directly responsible for a significant increase in imports of contaminated foods into the United States.

These lax inspection procedures contributed to a sharp increase in food imports from Mexico. Imports of Mexican fruit have increased 45 percent, and vegetable imports have increased 31 percent. More than 70 percent of these imports are carried into the United States by truck.

As the General Accounting Office recently documented, these trucks, many of which have been identified as dangerous themselves, pass through the border uninspected, bringing increasing amounts of food tainted with diseases and unhealthy pesticides. In fact, the GAO found that over 99 percent of Mexican trucks coming into the United States were never inspected, and of those that were inspected, almost half of them were found to be unsafe.

We were alarmed earlier this year when 179 Michigan schoolchildren contracted hepatitis after eating tainted Mexican strawberries. In order to prevent similar incidents in the future, the United States should, first, renegotiate the provisions in NAFTA which relate to border inspections and food safety and ensure that any future requests for fast track authority include strong food safety protections; second, increase the funding for border inspections or, alternatively, limit the increasing rate of food imports to ensure the safety of our food supply in this country so what happened in Michigan does not happen in other States across the country; and third, begin an aggressive program to label all food-stuffs, including fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables, and meats with their country of origin.

We must work with the President to address these serious deficiencies in our trade policy and to ensure that these same mistakes are not made in the future. Let us get off the fast track for unsafe foods. The health of our families is too important to go fast. Let us slow down on negotiating fast track. Let us slow down and craft trade agreements that contain meaningful food safety protections.

Again, remember these numbers: More than 99 percent of trucks that

come into the United States from Mexico have never been inspected. Of those that are inspected, almost half of them have been found to be unsafe, and only about 1 percent of food that is coming into the United States, fruits and vegetables, frozen and fresh, are inspected. That is what is so important as we debate fast track authority in September for the coming year. It is important that we include those food safety elements in the fast track agreement.

BIPARTISAN AGREEMENT ON TAX
RELIEF FOR AMERICANS

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

Mr. GANSKE. Madam Speaker, Congressmen and women from both sides of the aisle are just getting the details on the balance-the-budget plan and the tax cut plan that has been agreed to by the congressional leadership and the administration. The details look good, and I am happy to see this morning that we are getting bipartisan support for this tax cut bill and for this spending bill.

There will be a lot of important things in this bill for the average citizen in this country. One of the details I heard about last night was that we will move up the deductibility of our health insurance for the self-employed to 100 percent. I do not have the details to tell over what period of time, whether that will be immediate or not, but I know that this is part of the budget.

As a physician, I have been very much concerned about making health care more affordable for the average citizen, and by making 100 percent of one's premium deductible will help people afford health insurance. This will put an awful lot of people back on to health insurance that are not on it now.

One of the other issues that is in the tax bill that affects people in my district, where I have a large farming community, is that they will be able to income-average over 3 years. People who farm know that some years they have good years and some years they have bad years, but over a period of time is how one sets aside funds for one's retirement, one's pension. By being able to income-average over 3 years, one will be able to smooth out those bumps and those lows, and I think it will be a good thing for farm communities and farmers.

When we look at children's health, we are adding a lot more dollars into that to enable people to pick up health insurance for their children. There will be a number of ways for flexibility for people and States to implement that additional funding.

People say, well, look, why did we not come to this agreement earlier? Part of the reason is that a decision had to be made on where to find the funding. Part of that additional fund-

ing comes from an increased tax on tobacco. I favor that. As a physician, I have treated people who smoke who have had lung cancer and throat cancer, mouth cancer. It also increases heart disease. Tobacco is not good for our health; everyone recognizes that. An increase of 10 cents per pack will get some additional moneys back into the health system, and to help people afford health insurance I think is the right way to go.

When we look back over the last 4 years, we have had some immense battles here on the floor, but today and last night, as the administration, as Congress have come together on a bipartisan agreement, I think we are getting past that, we are getting on with the Nation's business. We are going to help save Medicare, we are going to provide tax cuts for working families, we are going to save Medicare for our senior citizens, and I think we are going to balance the budget.

Let us keep our fingers crossed that the economy goes well over the next 5 or 6 years. But by moving toward a balanced budget, we are going to help ensure that the economy does well, and by freeing up capital with capital gains, we are going to increase jobs and help the economy grow.

Madam Speaker, I think that we have made a lot of progress. I think we will see the rhetoric lowered on this floor, and I think the vast majority of people from the House and the Senate are going to support this piece of legislation, and I am very happy to be a Member of Congress today.

NAFTA HAS FAILED THE
ENVIRONMENTAL TEST

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

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in a discussion of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, because it is of significant importance, not only to our country, but to my district in particular.

NAFTA's rationales of the global economy, world trade and environment, are really local issues for those of us, as I do, that live along the United States-Mexico border. I represent part of the city of San Diego; I represent a good part of the California-Mexican border; and I will tell my colleagues that from our observation on the scene, NAFTA has failed the environmental test. NAFTA has failed the environmental test.

The region that I represent includes Tijuana, the fastest growing city in Mexico, thanks to NAFTA and the Maquiladora program. In Tijuana, over 100,000 people work at approximately 1,000 of these plants that we call maquiladoras. Most of them are United States-owned. These factories range