

days after Paula Jones refused a settlement in her celebrated suit, she received notice that she and her husband would be audited for 1995 taxes. Since 1994 is the current audit year for the IRS, the administration's denial that the audit is related to the suit is suspect, to say the least.

Even if it is coincidental, do not try to convince the American people. Most Americans, justifiably cynical and untrusting toward the Federal Government, know the evidence exists that since the 1970's both Republican and Democratic administrations have not hesitated to intimidate their political enemies with IRS audits and regulatory harassment.

Even though the average IRS agent does not carry a gun, the threat of incarceration and seizure of property is backed up by many guns. All government power is ultimately gun power and serves the interests of those who despise or do not comprehend the principles of liberty. The gun in the hands of law-abiding citizens serves to hold in check arrogant and aggressive government. Guns in the hands of the bureaucrats do the opposite. The founders of this country fully understood this fact.

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

[Mr. GOSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks.]

THE STRONG NATIONAL ECONOMY

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Chamber today to talk about a very important issue to all Americans, and that is our economy, and specifically what I would like to address is some of the questions surrounding why is our economy doing so well.

There are lots of economists, people on Wall Street, who are marveling at the low unemployment rates, the low inflation rate, the very, very strong stock market. Indeed many people are saying that this is the best economy since World War II, possibly one of the best economies in our Nation's history. Why is that? What is going on? What are the causes for this?

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In particular, I want to address an issue that a lot of people have been bringing up, is it indeed secondary to the consequences of the policies and programs of the Clinton administration?

I have had the opportunity to hear both the Vice President and the President speak on a number of occasions, and, indeed, taking advantage of the situation with this strong economy and

taking some credit for the good times that exist right now.

I would like to just, first of all, begin by extending my opinion that I personally believe the single biggest reason why the economy is as strong as it is right now is because of the hard work of the American people.

It has, in my opinion, little to do with the policies that are emanating from Washington DC, but very much everything to do with people all over this country who are willing to get up in the morning, work hard to make a living, and, in particular, those people who are willing to take a risk and invest some of their hard-earned money in a new business, start a new company or, more importantly, many of the entrepreneurs all over this country who deny themselves pay raises and instead reinvest their money back into their business, and, in so doing, they create new jobs and make the country a better place to live.

Getting back to the issue I was talking about earlier regarding what impact have the policies of the Clinton administration so far on all this, as we all know, the economy began to turn around in 1992, even before the election when Bill Clinton was elected.

There were lots of economic indicators that we were coming out of the recession of the early nineties and that the economy was going to be turning around.

After being elected, the administration put forward its economic stimulus package to help jump start, quote-unquote, the economy, even though it was beginning to take off, and that was defeated in this House. That was one of the centerpiece issues of the economic package.

The other centerpiece piece was their health care plan, and their health care plan additionally was defeated. Their rationale for their health care plan helping the economy, of course, was by lowering health care costs, our businesses would become more competitive.

One of the most compelling reasons why this economy is going so well is revealed in this chart next to me on the left. What is shown here is interest rates, long-term interest rates, and this very much impacts the ability of businesses to borrow money, their competitiveness, their ability to be profitable and reinvest money back into creating new jobs.

After Bill Clinton was elected, interest rates went up and up and up, and that is because budgets were being presented and passed by this House that increased spending, deficits as far as the eye can see.

This line right here demonstrates the November election of 1994. You can see on this chart that interest rates dropped dramatically, almost 2 points, following the election of 1994, when, for the first time in 40 years, you had a Republican Congress that was going to hold the line on spending, you were going to get the budget balanced. And

when the Government is not out there borrowing \$200 billion every year, the cost of borrowing money goes down, and that not only helps businesses to do better, it helps moms and dads to make ends meet better because they can get a home mortgage for less money, they can buy a car for less money.

Now, interest rates went back up over here, and that was after the government shutdown. Now they have leveled off since then. In my opinion, yes, if you wanted to say who is responsible for this strong economy, it is the hard working American people.

But if anything coming out of this city has played a role in these economic good times that we are in right now, it has been Washington holding the line on spending, getting the budget balanced, and that was a consequence of the Republican Congress coming in and holding the line on spending.

There another dividend of the Government spending less. Interest rates go down, yes, and that makes it easier for businesses to be successful and for families to be able to refinance a home mortgage. But when the Government is not spending so much money, it helps keep the inflation rate low. That is why we have this good situation, a situation that has not existed since the 1950's, the last time there was a Republican Congress, where you have low interest rates, a strong economy, low unemployment rates, and, importantly, low inflation rates, because inflation robs people of their hard-earned money.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that though I believe that this economy is so strong, that there is a lot to be proud of, an economy is a fragile thing, and we need to continue to hold the line on spending, we need to continue to work toward balancing the budget.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

CLEAN MONEY, CLEAN ELECTIONS BILL

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

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon just to speak briefly on the issue of campaign finance reform.

As the Speaker knows, we have had very little opportunity for deliberation and debate of this issue in the current Congress, over the objections of a fair number of people who really believe strongly that the American people deserve and in fact are requesting that Congress deal with this matter.

One of the bills that has been presented of the many bills that are before this Congress that could be debated and deliberated and voted upon this session, if the Republican leadership so desired, is the clean money, clean elections bill which I was proud to sponsor, H.R. 2199.

I would like to take a little bit of this time to explain some of the concepts in this bill so people will understand just what one of the proposals is that could be dealt with in this particular session.

The clean money, clean elections bill would have a privately funded candidate, if so desired, and a publicly funded candidate. That would be the option.

If you are a clean money candidate, or the publicly funded candidate, then the campaign would start six months before your primary date. That is when the effort would begin.

Anything before then would only be an opportunity to collect seed money, so-to-speak, just \$35,000 or less in contributions of \$100 or less to fund the operation of an office and a campaign staff to help you get your grassroots organization to get together. There would be no money involved in that small seed amount for TV or radio or other advertising.

From that period of six months prior to the primary date onward up until the thirtieth day before the election, one month before the election, candidates would seek to qualify these public funded candidates by collecting a set number of \$5 contributions from individual residents of the state.

Once that amount was received and you were qualified for the primary, if in fact you won the primary, you would be qualified for the final. The total amount you could receive as a clean money candidate for the primary and the general election would be 80 percent of the national average of campaign expenditures by all winning House candidates for the previous three election cycles. That amount would be limited and set. In addition, if you opted to be a publicly funded candidate, you would receive TV and radio time free, and that would be compensation to the broadcast companies for the spectrum that they already receive from the American public.

This should be a strong incentive for people to forego the private money chase, to become a member of this system of clean money financing.

Soft money would be prohibited. And, yes, if you elect to have private funding, you can certainly go about and raise as much as you want, but there are strong disincentives for you not to do that.

Issues campaigns run for a private money candidate against a clean money candidate would count toward the private money candidate's sum. If they surpassed the limits allowed in the campaign, the clean money candidate would get offsetting moneys, so that this would always be an evenly balanced campaign.

The five objectives that are basically addressed in this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, are as follows: It would eliminate any perceived and real conflicts of interest caused by the direct financing of campaigns by private interests; it would limit campaign spending by requiring that candidates who choose to participate in the clean money system spend no more money than the fixed amount of funding that they receive; it allows qualified individuals to run for office, regardless of their economic status or their access to large contributors; it frees candidates and elected officials from the burden of the continuous money chase; last, it would shorten the effective length of campaigns by defining the point at which candidates receive clean money financing to pay for campaign expenditures.

Mr. Speaker, this bill creates a voluntary system. Candidates may choose to rely upon private financing, though the system provides strong incentives not to do that. For candidates, it also gets rid of the system of disfavored soft money.

It creates a level playing field. There would be no unilateral disarming of any party. In effect, Mr. Speaker, I find that is generally the complaint of one side of this House or another, that many of the campaign finance bills would disarm unilaterally one faction against the other. That is not the case with this bill. It sets an even, level playing field, so the candidate with the message, with the ability to organize, get their message out, put together a strong grassroots campaign, would be the candidate that would get the voters' attention.

It is, I think, Mr. Speaker, a fact that best organized candidates would prevail, and voters would in fact prevail. They would own back their own electoral process and they would once again have faith and the system would have credibility.

Mr. Speaker, I put that out there as one of the options that are available for people as they wonder why it is that this House under the Republican leadership has not dealt with the issue of campaign finance reform.

I say there are a number of other credible bills up for consideration that deserve a chance to be debated, deserve the deliberation of this great body, and deserve to come to a vote in a meaningful way.

I would urge the Republican leadership to put this matter on the floor of the House before we go home for recess this fall, and I hope that other Members who have presented their bills will take the opportunity to address to the public the substance of their bills so

that we can in some fashion have a debate that I think is much deserved and long overdue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington [Mrs. LINDA SMITH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. LINDA SMITH of Washington addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

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

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

PERSIAN GULF WAR SYNDROME STILL A MYSTERY AFTER 6 YEARS

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

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I want to address one of the most important issues facing American veterans and one of the great medical dilemmas facing our entire country, and that is that over 70,000 veterans of the Persian Gulf war, including hundreds in my own State of Vermont, continue to suffer from gulf war illness, and 6 years, 6 years after the completion of that war, there is still no understanding of the cause of that illness and no effective treatment for it.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS], who is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Resources, has held 10 hearings on gulf war illness since March, 1996. As a member of that committee, I cannot begin to express the frustration that many of us feel regarding the ineptitude of the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration in responding adequately and effectively to the needs of those veterans who continue to hurt.

Pure and simple, the bottom line is that 6 years after the end of the Persian Gulf war, the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration still have not developed an understanding of the cause of gulf war illness or an effective treatment protocol. In fact, their record has been so inadequate that several weeks ago the Presidential Advisory Committee on Persian Gulf War Veterans Illnesses indicated that it will be recommending to the President that an independent agency outside of the Pentagon take responsibility for investigating the health effects of low level chemical and biological weapons exposure.

According to Arthur L. Kaplan, a bioethics professor at the University of