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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

O almighty God, creator of heaven and earth, we pray that in all the seasons of life we can have trust and confidence in Your word. In times of plenty, give us grateful hearts; in times of sadness or worry, grant us hope; in times of need, hear our petitions; in times of anxiety, give us serenity; in times of discouragement, grant us faith; and in times of loneliness may we have a full measure of Your love and Your grace. This is our earnest prayer. 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 New York (Mr. QUINN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. QUINN 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.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate, by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title, in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 900. An act to enhance competition in the financial services industry by providing a prudential framework for the affiliation of banks, securities firms, insurance compa-

nies, and other financial service providers, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 105-292, the Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, upon the recommendation of the Majority Leader, appoints Michael K. Young, of Washington, D.C., to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, vice William Armstrong.

The message also announced that pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 105-186, the Chair, on behalf of the Majority Leader, appoints the Senator from Oregon (Mr. SMITH) to the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States, to fill a vacancy thereon.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 94-304, as amended by Public Law 99-7, the Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, appoints the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. HUTCHINSON) to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki).

CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONERS EVENT

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, May 19, the members of this body will have an opportunity to hear the testimonials of former political prisoners and prisoners of conscience who have survived Castro's gulags.

For over 40 years, the brutal Castro regime has systematically violated the basic human rights and civil liberties of the Cuban people. During the 4 decades it has been in power, thousands of innocent people have been executed or subjected to beatings, torture or arbitrary detentions.

For some lucky enough to have survived, the opportunity to inform the

international community about the Cuban reality has become a mission. Their stories are graphic, compelling and horrific examples of the oppressive, violent and diabolical nature of the Castro regime.

Next Wednesday, we will hear these firsthand accounts of the physical and psychological torture of those who are willing to risk life and limb for freedom, liberty and democracy for Cuba.

I invite all of my colleagues to meet some of Cuba's true heroes, the survivors of Castro's gulags, on Wednesday, May 19, at 12 p.m. in room 2200 in the Rayburn Building.

BIG TOBACCO MONEY SEEMS MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUR NATION'S KIDS

(Mr. MEEHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, 5 million kids who are now under the age of 18 are likely to die from smoking-related illness. Decisive Federal action is needed now to address the historically high levels of smoking among our Nation's children.

Yet, this Congress is on the verge of waiving the Federal Government's portion of the tobacco settlement monies to the States without ensuring that any of these funds be spent to protect our kids. We are simply closing our eyes to the number one preventable cause of death in America. That is unacceptable.

Frankly, I am not surprised. Big tobacco gave an astonishing \$4.5 million in soft money contributions to the Republican party during the 1997-1998 elections cycle, effectively killing the leading tobacco reform legislation.

The fact of the matter is that public health groups simply cannot compete with big tobacco when it comes to soft money contributions. The pro-tobacco

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language in the supplemental bill is just another example of what happens when we allow big money to talk louder than kids' lives on Capitol Hill.

CHINESE INFLUENCE FOR SALE TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

(Mr. HAYWORTH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN), and I think there are goals that all Members of this House share in terms of public health policy. But when the gentleman from Massachusetts starts talking about campaign finance, the gentleman from Massachusetts and many on that side of the aisle would do well to heed the testimony yesterday of one Johnny Chung and would do well to connect the dots because of the relationship of the People's Republic of China to the Clinton-Gore campaign in 1996.

Mr. Speaker, there may be those who smile wistfully, but I do not believe our national security is something to be toyed with and to fiddle around with while this Nation is in danger of burning.

The fact is we should stand up, remain vigilant, have the Cox committee report released and get to the bottom of Chinese influence for sale to the highest bidder, sadly, it seems at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

GUN SAFETY

(Mrs. JONES of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise as a wife, mother, former judge and former prosecutor to urge the Speaker to bring to the floor the debate on the issue of gun safety and gun control before Father's Day.

As women, mothers and grandmothers, our goal is to prevent any more gun-related deaths. I joined with other members of the Women's Caucus to send a letter to the Speaker prior to Mother's Day seeking him to set the debate prior to Father's Day.

Our children are killing one another with guns at an ever-increasing rate. From 1993 to 1997, the death rate by guns increased 182 percent for children. To stop the death of our children, we urge the Speaker to bring this issue to the floor for debate prior to Father's Day.

VIOLENCE BEGETS VIOLENCE

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, after the terrible tragedy in Littleton, Colorado, there has been much soul-search-

ing and hand-wringing in America's public circles and in the media about violence and our youth. It has led to the President holding a conference Monday at the White House to discuss these topics. But are we truly surprised as a Nation about the atmosphere of violence that surrounds our children when our children are taught by our society that it is all right to kill the innocent unborn?

A Nation that allows the lives of babies to be taken for convenience will breed a disrespect for all life in our children. But where is the discussion about the effects of abortion on our society? I did not hear from the White House yesterday, and I have not heard it from one talk show that discussed this matter.

If we ignore the violence of abortion as a society, who really has the trouble of discerning fantasy from reality, our children or the adults in this Nation?

TAXPAYERS ARE STILL TAXED OFF

(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, we have taxes on income, death, gifts, investment, fuel and energy, capital gains. We have excise taxes, surtaxes, retroactive taxes, old taxes, new taxes. Unbelievable. Is it any wonder the American people are taxed off?

I say today, tax this. It is time to abolish the IRS, abolish income taxes and pass the National Retail Sales Tax Plan. It is time to reward work and savings for a change. Think about that.

I yield back what freedom and liberty we have left as taxpayers.

TAX FREEDOM DAY 1980-1999

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

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, in line with what the previous speaker had to say, the chart here is labeled "Tax Freedom Day 1980-1999." But maybe a better title for this chart would be "President Clinton's Road to the 21st Century."

He was elected in 1992. In 1993, Tax Freedom Day was April 30. Tax Freedom Day is the day when the average taxpayer has finished off paying what he owes to Uncle Sam and begins to work for himself.

In 1994, Tax Freedom Day was May 2. In 1995, it was May 3. In 1996, it was May 5. In 1997, it was May 7. Last year, it was May 10. This year, yesterday, May 11 was the day when taxpayers begin working for themselves.

This is the road to the 21st century under a Democrat administration. Ronald Reagan was able to push back Tax Freedom Day from May 4 to April 27. But since then we have lost ground.

It is considered progress to the tax and spenders in this body; but for mid-

dle-class taxpayers, it just means less freedom and more power in Washington.

GUN SAFETY

(Ms. CARSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, Mother's Day just passed, a day for celebration for some and, unfortunately, a day of mourning for too many women who no longer have a child to call them mother.

In Indianapolis, a young mother named Michelle Miller mourned her young son who was killed while playing with a loaded firearm.

In Littleton, Colorado, 12 mothers mourned their children, killed by two teens who found access to deadly firepower all too easy.

We have a number of good proposals pending before this 106th Congress on gun safety. I have a common-sense bill, H.R. 515, that has already been joined with 49 cosponsors, that will require child safety devices on handguns and establish standards for those devices.

We can move now to enact common-sense gun regulations that does not violate anybody's constitutional rights to bear arms but does protect the lives of a lot of innocents.

Mr. Speaker, let us celebrate Father's Day in a more profound way, by passing gun safety legislation.

NATIONAL SECURITY EMERGENCY CREATED BY CUTTING DEFENSE BUDGET

(Mr. KNOLLENBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, the Clinton administration has created a national security emergency by cutting the defense budget while spreading our troops all around the world.

Between 1960 and 1991, the Army conducted 10 operational events. In the past 8 years, the Army has conducted an astonishing 26 operational events. Strangely enough, this increased activity has occurred during a period in which our military has been shrunk by 40 percent.

This misguided policy is playing itself out in Yugoslavia. Already the President has had to call up thousands of reserves and divert planes from the strategically important Iraqi No-Fly Zone to carry out strikes on Milosovic's regime.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for Congress to replenish our national defense which has been substantially weakened by the Clinton administration. The Republican majority stands ready to provide the resources to address the problems related to troop morale and readiness. I implore my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join in this effort.