

press conference with the help of the Chicago Federation of Labor.

The therapists, concerned about the impacts on patients' safety as a result of a planned 25 percent budget cut, expressed their desire to form a union. They have been confronted with a series of anti-union tactics by their employer. One nurse was fired because she spoke out in support of union representation.

Workers across the country, particularly in the health care area, are deciding that they need union representation to protect themselves, their families, and their patients. We should ensure that they have a fair opportunity to make that choice. It is as American as apple pie.

CELEBRATING FREEDOM OF WORKERS TO JOIN A UNION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 3 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I come to the floor in celebration of the freedom of workers to join unions. Would that it were only a celebration for 7 days in June. Workers across the United States are crying out for their right to join unions. Is this America? It is a sad day when we have to draw attention to the importance of the freedom to organize in a society like ours.

One of those 7 days in June will be this Friday, the day in the District of Columbia where Members of the region will sit and hear testimony from union members in this region about the difficulties they have had in joining unions and forming unions in this region.

I know something about this area. I continue to be a tenured professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center. When I was full-time, one of the major courses that I taught was labor law, and I saw and read and studied the deterioration of workers' rights, of the right to strike.

I saw the contrasts between a period of great prosperity in American life when business understood that part of the symmetry of the workplace was the right to organize. We have come to a point instead where there is no longer talk about occasional union-busting, but workers meet wholesale resistance to the development of unions in the workplace whereby most employers, confronted with workers who want to join unions, develop strategies to keep unions from even getting a vote on whether workers want a union, in fact.

Show me a society where the right to organize is in danger, and I will show Members a society without full democracy.

What has our society come to? Wall Street is bursting at the seams. We have had surpluses for years on end. We have the best economy of the century, and we do not want workers to orga-

nize to get a fair share of that economy? We are sending people out off the welfare rolls, as well we should, and we do not want them to be organized so they can get a fair share, so they can in fact support their families as they leave welfare?

What have employers to fear? After all, unions have to win a vote the way we have to win a vote in order to come back to this House every 2 years. That is hard to do with today's demographics, where workers are by no means automatically oriented towards unions. Why, then, do half of the employers threaten to shut down if their workers organize? Why do they fire one in four workers who in fact organize?

Despite these extraordinary efforts, unions are now having remarkable success. They are winning half of their elections of 500 or more unions. Minority and female workers in particular fare much better when they are organized than when they are not.

THE MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Madam Speaker, this is an important year. As I look back over the last few years and the challenges that we have, and of course there have been big challenges, doing some things we were told we could not do, I remember when I was first elected in 1994 we came to Washington to change how Washington works. There was a group of us in the majority here, and all of us were committed to doing some things there were those who told us we could not do, balancing the budget, cutting taxes for the middle class, reforming our welfare system, taming the tax collectors. But by sticking together and being persistent, we accomplished those very great challenges.

We balanced the budget for the first time in 2 years, we cut taxes for the first time in 16 years. In fact, in Illinois, my home State, 3 million Illinois children now benefit from the \$500 per child tax credit. When we think about that, that is \$1.5 million that now stays in Illinois, rather than coming to Washington to be spent. I personally think that the folks back home can better spend their hard-earned dollars in Illinois than I can for them in Washington.

On welfare reform, the first real welfare reform in a generation is working so well that in my home State of Illinois we have now seen our welfare rolls cut in half.

When it comes to taming the tax collector, we enacted a very fundamental change with IRS reform. If Members have ever been audited or gone to court with IRS in the past, they treated one as guilty until proven innocent. But thanks to this Republican Congress, we now have the same rights in the IRS that we have in the courtroom; that is,

we are innocent until the IRS proves us guilty.

Now we have some big challenges before us again this year, some challenges that the folks particularly on this side of the aisle say cannot be done. Republicans want to strengthen our local schools and make them safer. We want to strengthen social security and Medicare. In fact, we want to lock away for the first time in 30 years 100 percent of the social security surplus, so it is used only for social security. We want to pay down the national debt. We also want to continue working to lower the tax burden on middle class working families.

I believe, Madam Speaker, this year as we work to lower the tax burden on the middle class that we should listen to those concerns that I hear in the union halls and the South Side of Chicago and the south suburbs, in the VFW and local coffee shops and grain elevators.

Not only do people feel their taxes are too high, but they feel the Tax Code is too complicated, it needs to be simplified, and that the Tax Code is really unfair. I believe the first place we should start as we work to make our Tax Code fairer and more simpler is to address the most unfair consequence of today's Tax Code. That is something that has been nicknamed today the marriage tax penalty.

Why it is so important that we address this, this particular important issue that affects working middle class families, is to ask a series of questions. That is, do Americans feel that it is fair, do Americans feel that it is right, that a married working couple with two incomes pays on average \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married? Do Americans feel it is right, do Americans feel that it is fair, that 21 million married working couples, on average, pay \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married?

It is just plain wrong that a married working couple pays \$1,400 more in higher taxes than an identical couple living together outside of marriage. That is wrong. The marriage tax penalty on average is \$1,400. Back home in the South suburbs and in the South side of Chicago that is one year's tuition at a junior college, a local community college. It is 3 months in day care. It is several months worth of car payments. It is real money to real people, and it is just wrong that under our Tax Code married working couples pay more just because they are married.

Let me give an example here of a south suburban couple on the south suburbs of Chicago. We have a machinist, who of course works at the Joliet Caterpillar Plant making that big equipment. He makes \$30,500 a year.

Under our current Tax Code, if he is single and files as a single taxpayer, after we subtract the standard deduction and exemption, if he makes \$30,500, he is in the 15 percent tax bracket. But if he meets and decides

that he wants to get married to a schoolteacher with an identical income, and her income is \$30,500, of course, she is in the 15 percent tax bracket if she is single and stays single, but if she decides to marry this machinist their combined income is \$61,000 because they file jointly, which pushes them into the 28 percent tax bracket.

With the marriage tax penalty, they pay on average the almost \$1,400 in marriage tax penalty if they choose to get married. If they choose not to, they do not pay that marriage tax penalty.

Madam Speaker, the Marriage Tax Elimination Act has 230 cosponsors, a majority of this House. Let us make elimination of the marriage tax penalty our number one priority as we work to lower taxes for American families. Let us simplify to make the Tax Code fair to eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

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 1 o'clock and 33 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. PEASE) at 2 p.m.

PRAAYER

The Reverend Steven L. Wolverton, Lee Street Memorial Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland, offered the following prayer:

Our most gracious Father in heaven, we humbly acknowledge Your majesty and Your Lordship over everything. Father, I pray that with all Your glory, Your power, Your mercy, and Your grace, that You would make yourself known here, and that Your presence, and Your truth might be breathtakingly crystal clear to all.

Father, I pray that You would deliver us from vain hypocrisy and impress upon us as a Nation, as individuals, and as leaders, the values of character, honesty, and integrity.

Father, humble us and direct our attention towards You for true wisdom and discernment. Father, I pray that each Member of this Congress might be absolutely mindful of Your existence, Your presence, Your deity, and Your will as they conduct the business You have entrusted them on behalf of Your people. Lord, help us love one another.

In the name of my Lord and my Savior Jesus Christ, 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 California (Mr. LANTOS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. LANTOS 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING AMENDMENT PROCESS FOR H.R. 1802, FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE ACT OF 1999

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, the Committee on Rules is expected to meet later this week to grant a rule which may restrict amendments for consideration of H.R. 1802, the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999.

Any Member contemplating an amendment to H.R. 1802 should submit 55 copies of the amendment and a brief explanation of the amendment to the Committee on Rules no later than noon on Thursday, June 24. The Committee on Rules office is in H-312 of the Capitol.

Amendments should be drafted to the text of the bill as reported by the Committee on Ways and Means on June 14.

Members should use the Office of Legislative Counsel to ensure that their amendments are properly drafted and should check with the Office of the Parliamentarian to be certain their amendments comply with the rules of the House. All of this with reference to the H.R. 1802, the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, Members are so notified.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1658, CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE REFORM ACT

Mr. GOSS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106-193) on the resolution (H. Res. 216) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1658) to provide a more just and uniform procedure or Federal civil forfeitures, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.J. RES. 33, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AUTHORIZING CONGRESS TO PROHIBIT PHYSICAL DESECRATION OF THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. GOSS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106-194) on the resolution (H.

Res. 217) providing for the consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 33) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

COST OF GOVERNMENT DAY

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, today is Cost of Government Day, and as George Bernard Shaw once said, "A government which robs from Peter to pay Paul can always depend upon the support of Paul."

Well, the tax paying Americans have been robbed because during the first 173 days of the year, every penny earned by the hard-working men and women of this Nation has been used to pay for government bureaucracy and the added cost of government regulations.

It did not go to pay for their kids' education. It did not go to pay for medical costs or expenses. It did not go to pay for the home mortgage. It all went to pay for government bureaucracy and regulatory agencies.

Almost one-half of the year's effort of these hard-working Americans was spent just to pick up the tab for government bloated bureaucracy. Decades, decades of unchecked growth and deficit spending by the tax and spenders have left the hard-working men and women of this country with this crushing tax burden.

The vast majority of Americans do not object to paying their fair share of taxes, but they do object to the suffocating level of taxation that exists today.

Mr. Speaker, for our children's sake, let us allow hard-working families to keep more of their money, not less. Let us stop robbing Peter to pay Paul.

I urge my colleagues to support meaningful tax reform this year.

SALUTE TO DALLAS STARS, STANLEY CUP CHAMPIONS

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

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Dallas Stars, the 1999 NHL champions.

The Stars electrified all of North Texas en route to winning the oldest trophy in sports, the Stanley Cup.

Along the way, the champs gave us some unforgettable performances. Whether it was the clutch play of Center Mike Modano, the sparkling saves of veteran goalie Eddie "the Eagle" Belfour, the crushing defense of Captain Derian Hatcher, or the bravery of Brett Hull, who scored the Cup-winning goal, it seemed like every game a different Star player stepped up and inspired the team to victory.