

that they can be trained as doctors. But they are showing that it can be done there. Over 60,000 doctors have been produced in Cuba.

Having said that, my real reason for being there was to follow up on a commitment that I made 11 months ago when I visited Cuba.

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When I visited Cuba 11 months ago to basically try and get a handle on the pros and cons of the embargo, I discovered that we have a waiver on medical supplies and equipment. However, not one aspirin had been sold in Cuba. I talked with people to try and understand why this was true.

We finally came back and we got together with representatives from the Treasury Department, from Commerce and from the State Department to try and understand the rules and the laws as it related to the waiver. We finally all got on one track and we got with those individuals who have been trying for years to get a medical trade show going in Cuba, and we finally got it on track and that trade show did open. I was there to help cut the ribbon, along with the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) and many of our representative of our business community.

I was very pleased that we had almost 300 representatives there from various businesses in the United States representing over 90 of our largest businesses who were delighted to be there to show their medical supplies and equipment. We had companies like ADM. We had companies like Eli Lilly, Procter Gamble, Pfizer, many of the huge companies of America with goods and products that they want to share, that they want to sell.

I think it is foolhardy for the American business community to allow China and Germany and Canada and all of these countries to be in Cuba selling their goods, selling their supplies, and we are just 90 miles from Cuba.

They have many, many needs. They want to do business with us, particularly with medical supplies and equipment. They have trained the professionals. They have trained the doctors. They have children who desperately need the supplies, the state-of-the-art equipment. I think that our American firms should continue to seek these opportunities and to be there.

Now, having said all of that, none of this happens in a vacuum. As you know, the center of debate in Cuba and it appears in the United States is Elian Gonzalez, this young child who is in Miami, who one side is saying he should be kept there, he should be given citizenship, he should not be allowed to return to Cuba to his father.

Well, I met with his father while I was there, Juan Gonzalez. There is no logical argument, none that anybody can make, that should take this child from his father. This child lost his mother on the sea. This child should not be deprived of his father. This child should be returned to Cuba immediately.

This political spectacle that is being created in Miami is unconscionable. There is no reason a little child should be a political pawn. This is not about whether or not we like Castro. This is not whether or not we agree with the revolution, that we are one of the Batista people, that we do not believe in what is going on there. This is about parental rights. This is about the right of a father to have their child and to raise their child.

By all accounts, this man is a good father; he had a great relationship with his child. Let us stop the political madness. Let us allow little Elian to go home.

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TAX RELIEF FOR FAMILIES: ELIMINATION OF MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, it is great to be back here for another session of good and hard work.

I represent a pretty diverse district. I represent the south side of Chicago, the south suburbs, and Cook and Will counties, a lot of industrial as well as farm communities. And even though this district that I represent is so very, very diverse, I find there is a common message; and that is the folks back home want us to come here, Republicans and Democrats, and work together to find solutions to the challenges that we face.

That is why I am so proud that over the last 5 years we have done so many things we were told we could not do. We balanced the budget for the first time in 28 years. We gave a middle-class tax cut for the first time in 16 years. We reformed our welfare system for the first time in a generation. And a great accomplishment just this past year was we stopped the raid on Social Security for the first time in 30 years.

That is progress on our agenda, and we are continuing to move forward to find better ways to help find solutions.

Our agenda is pretty simple, paying down the public national debt, saving Social Security and Medicare, helping our local schools. And we also want to bring fairness to the Tax Code. That is one of the issues I want to talk about today. Because I believe that as we work to bring fairness to the Tax Code, particularly to middle-class working families, that we should focus first on the most unfair consequence of our current complicated Tax Code and that is the marriage tax penalty which is suffered by almost 21 million married, working couples.

Let me explain what the marriage tax penalty is. Under our current Tax Code, if they are married, both husband and wife are working, they pay more in taxes than they do if they stay single.

Let me give this example, a marriage tax penalty example: A machinist and

a schoolteacher, middle-class working folks in Joliet, Illinois, with a combined income of \$63,000 pay more. And here is how they do it. If they have a machinist making \$31,500, he is in the 15 percent tax bracket. If he marries a schoolteacher with an identical income of \$31,500, under our Tax Code they file jointly. Their combined income of \$63,000 pushes them into the 28 percent tax bracket. And for this machinist and schoolteacher, they pay the average marriage tax penalty of almost \$1,400 more just because they are married under our Tax Code.

Now, if they chose to live together instead of getting married, they would have saved that \$1,400. Our Tax Code punishes them if they choose to get married. That is just wrong.

It is a pretty fair question: Is it right, is it fair that, under our Tax Code, this machinist and schoolteacher in Joliet, Illinois, pay more in higher taxes?

Let me give my colleagues another example here of two schoolteachers also of Joliet, Illinois, Michelle and Shad Hallihan. They were just married in the last couple of years, a wonderful young couple. I have had a chance to sit down and talk with them. And, of course, I have a nice wedding photo.

The point is that Shad has taught a little longer than Michelle, and he makes \$38,000 a year. His wife Michelle makes \$23,500. Because they chose to get married, to live together in holy matrimony, they suffer the marriage tax penalty because their combined income when they file jointly pushes them into the 28 percent tax bracket.

For them, for Michelle and Shad Hallihan in Joliet, Illinois, two schoolteachers, they pay almost a thousand dollars more. Michelle has pointed out to me, since they have just had a baby, that is almost 3,000 diapers that \$1,000 of marriage tax penalty would pay for in that family if they were allowed to keep it.

Now, the Republicans in this Congress believe that eliminating the marriage tax penalty should be a priority; and we believe that, in this era of budget surpluses, when the Federal Government is taking in more than we have been spending, that we should give some of it back. We want to focus that on bringing fairness to the Tax Code.

This past year we sent to the President legislation that would have wiped out the marriage tax penalty for people like Michelle and Shad Hallihan. Unfortunately, the President and Vice President GORE chose to veto that legislation because they wanted to spend the money on new Government programs.

My colleagues, should it not be a priority to help people like Michelle and Shad Hallihan, married working couples who work hard and who are unfairly treated by our Tax Code?

We have legislation today which now has 230 cosponsors, a bipartisan majority of this House, that is cosponsoring the Marriage Tax Elimination Act,

H.R. 6, cosponsored by myself and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. DANNER) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MCINTOSH) as well as 230 Members of the House.

That is why it is so important, we want to bring fairness to the Tax Code. That is why I am so pleased that the leadership of this House, led by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), the Speaker of the House, has made a decision to move a stand-alone piece of legislation, a stand-alone bill, which wipes out the marriage tax penalty for the vast majority of those who suffer. In the next few weeks, the Speaker intends to bring that legislation to the floor. That is good news as we work to bring fairness to the Tax Code by eliminating the marriage tax penalty.

I was just informed earlier today that the President in his State of the Union Speech tonight is going to discuss eliminating the marriage tax penalty. That is good news. Because it is time to make it a bipartisan effort. And while the President and Vice President GORE vetoed the legislation last year, he is now coming our way. I am very pleased. Let us make it a bipartisan effort. Let us wipe out the marriage tax penalty and let us send the President a stand-alone bill and let us bring fairness to the Tax Code.

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MARSHA PYLE MARTIN: A LEADER FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, during the short interlude we call life, we sometimes have the rare and memorable occasion to meet someone who exudes such a sense of positive accomplishment that we are forever changed just from that encounter.

I had that special experience when I met and heard Marsha Pyle Martin, who served as chair of the Farm Credit Administration Board. She appeared before our Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies of the House Committee on Appropriations to thoughtfully and persuasively argue that we need to be concerned about the financial condition of America's farmers and the future of agriculture in rural America.

I am sad to tell our colleagues that Ms. Martin passed from this life to her blessed rewards on January 9. This afternoon she is being celebrated in a memorial service at the Farm Credit Administration Offices in McLean, Virginia.

She is a woman who deserves this celebration, for she has helped so many by her caring for America's farmers and her advocacy on their behalf and for building a sound farm credit system in this country.

Marsha Pyle Martin was the first woman who ever served as chair of the Farm Credit Administration. While

that was a first for FCA, it was far from that for her. After all, she was the first woman senior executive in the Farm Credit System when she served as vice president of the Farm Credit Bank of Texas. She also was the first woman to serve as a director of the Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation.

I remember most vividly when she appeared before our subcommittee. Her dedication, her passion, her knowledge both overwhelmed and imposed her sense of purpose on our committee. She wanted efficient and competitive credit markets for borrowers, and it showed. She recognized the changing face of agriculture in America and wanted to both embrace and support the changes that are necessary for America's farmers to continue as the finest in the world.

Those who know agriculture know that the availability of credit at reasonable terms is critical, vital to success; and those who knew Marsha Pyle Martin knew that such a system was both her goal and her mandate to those who worked for and with her.

To her husband Britt, to her daughters Michelle and K.B. and her two grandchildren, I can only extend our deepest sympathies for the unexpected loss of their loved one. But may they be comforted and inspired by the fact that each and every day she tried to make a positive difference for people. Each and every day positive change was her goal and her accomplishment.

If only more people shared her vision, her energy, her commitment, just imagine how much better a place this world would be.

Mr. Speaker, I ask our colleagues to join me in thanking Marsha Pyle Martin for her lifetime of contribution. May her eternal reward be no less than triple what she gave in this world. For, because of her, many people live each day as a better one than they might have were it not for her.

May I ask the House, in her memory, for a moment of silence.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DIAZ-BALART addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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DEMOCRATIC AGENDA FOR PROGRESS IN 2000

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, let me say that I am glad to be back.

I think my colleagues know and I am sure most of the American people or many of the American people know that the House of Representatives has

been in recess, has not had a session, for approximately 2 months since we adopted the budget at the end of November for the next fiscal year.

Tonight, of course, the President will give his State of the Union Address, which represents really a new opportunity. This is the second session of the 2-year Congress. And when we come back today, we know that although we perhaps only have about 10 months before the House adjourns and the Congress adjourns there is this 10-month period when we can pass legislation and get things done that will positively impact the American people.

Of course, the President will give his speech tonight and we will not know exactly what is in it until we hear it from him. But we know that he is going to talk about how the state of the Union is strong, how the country is strong economically, record new surpluses, overall crime rate down 25 percent, welfare rolls deeply cut.

A lot of progress has been made under President Clinton, certainly in the 6 or 7 years now that he has been in office.

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But part of the problem particularly in the last year is that many times when the President suggests a positive agenda, progressive agenda to the American people as he did in his last State of the Union address, the Congress, which of course is dominated by the Republican majority, the Republicans are in the majority, resists his recommendations and do not pass the legislation or provide the resources so that we can move his agenda. And so I hope that this year that will not be the case again.

If we look at what happened last year in the Congress, particularly in the House, there really was a resistance and most of the President's agenda was not adopted. I hope that is not the case this year. I hope that this year the Republican majority in the Congress will go along with the President's programs. If they differ slightly, fine, we can come to accommodations, but let us try to work together to come up with an agenda to pass legislation that helps the people and that moves this country quickly in a positive way into the next millennium.

I wanted to talk a little bit about President Clinton and the Democratic congressional leaders' agenda for a few minutes if I could. What we want to do is to get the job done, if you will, for the American people in the year 2000. I am going to talk about a few specific points. Basically our Democratic agenda for progress in 2000 includes, first, repairing, renovating and renewing our schools. Second, cutting taxes while maintaining fiscal discipline because obviously we want to maintain the balanced budget that we have had and the surpluses that we continue to generate. Third, the Democrats want to modernize Medicare and include a voluntary prescription drug benefit.