

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, last year the Republican majority failed to act on the basic issues facing hard working Americans. Time and time again, they sided with special interests over the public interest.

Today, the Republican leadership continues to stall attempts to pass measures that would help middle class families such as saving Social Security and Medicare, improving our public schools and passing real HMO reform.

The American public wants to protect Social Security and Medicare first. We should also be paying down the debt, instead of giving tax breaks to the top 5 percent. We need to pass a real Patients' Bill of Rights that lets doctors and patients make medical decisions, not HMO bureaucrats. And we need to provide a prescription drug benefit for all seniors. These should be our top priorities.

The Republican leadership needs to put the public's interest ahead of the special interests. Our families and our communities deserve a Congress that fights for them. We need the opportunity to address the real needs of the American people.

BIENNIAL BUDGET PROCESS WOULD ELIMINATE ELECTION YEAR GRIDLOCK

(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, I support the biennial budget process. That is that we should have: The budget process every 2 years and not every year. I have a bill, H.R. 493, to provide such a process. Senator DOMENICI, in the Senate, has a companion bill.

Why is this an improvement over the current process? I believe that by adopting such a measure we would remove all this political in-fighting partisanship every year, plus all the pork barreling that occurs so often.

What I would like to see is that in the first session we pass the first 13 appropriations bills, then in the second session we do oversight to find out what has happened with all this legislation that we passed. Is it working? The second session could also be reserved for looking at the emergency spending.

I think the current process is very partisan and we should remove it. So please support H.R. 493, the biennial budget process.

CONGRESS SHOULD PUT ITS FINANCIAL HOUSE IN ORDER

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

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, it is time we put our financial House in order. We have the opportunity for the first time in a generation to do the right thing for ourselves, for our country, and for future generations.

We must begin to conduct our financial affairs in this country the way families across America have for years and years. For years they have observed three very simple but unspoken rules: Number one, do not spend more money than is made. Number two, pay off debts. And number three, take care of basics.

The basics for our country, Mr. Speaker, are Social Security, Medicare, national defense, and a number of other things that we could all talk about here.

Our willingness to do the right thing now will pay tremendous dividends to us now and to our children and grandchildren in the future in terms of lower interest rates, and in terms of \$243 billion that we paid in 1998 as interest on the national debt.

If we do this now, Mr. Speaker, we will do a tremendous thing for our country, and I ask all of my colleagues in Congress to join with me in an effort to begin the debate to pay down our national debt.

DO AWAY WITH MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

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

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, over the last several years many of us have asked a very fundamental question, and that is, is it right, is it fair that under our Tax Code if individuals get married they pay higher taxes than if they stay single? Is it right, is it fair that under our Tax Code that 28 million married working couples pay on average \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married?

Well, this House, under the leadership of the Speaker, is going to do something about that. Today, the House Committee on Ways and Means is going to have committee action on H.R. 6, legislation which will wipe out the marriage tax penalty for the vast majority of those who suffer it, providing marriage tax relief for 28 million married working couples; couples such as Shad and Michelle Hallihan, two public school teachers from Joliet, Illinois, who suffer the marriage tax penalty just because they are married.

Now, their marriage tax penalty is about \$1,000, just below average. But Michelle Hallihan told me, she said, "Tell your friends in Washington that the marriage tax penalty is real money for real people." That thousand dollar marriage tax penalty that Shad and Michelle suffer, they just had a baby, and she pointed out that that \$1,000 would purchase for her and her husband and her child 3,000 diapers.

Let us eliminate the marriage tax penalty. I am pleased a dozen Democrats have finally joined with us. We are going to make a bipartisan effort and wipe out the marriage tax penalty.

NEW DEMOCRATIC BUDGET

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

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, last week the Congressional Budget Office released its latest estimates for the budget surplus. The CBO laid out three different on-budget surplus estimates ranging from \$800 billion to \$1.9 trillion.

Depending on the actions of this Congress, we can use the surplus wisely or it can be unwisely spent, without paying off the debt, shoring up Social Security, or funding desperately needed programs, such as providing prescription drug coverage for Medicare recipients and school construction and modernization of our schools.

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that that we pay down the national debt. I fully support the President's goals stated in his State of the Union Address to eliminate public debt by 2013.

As has been indicated, this Congress, and implied by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, the Republican leadership will not adhere to the spending caps in the fiscal year 2001 budget. For this reason, it is imperative that we use the surplus to ensure the long-term solvency of Social Security and pay off the national debt.

Once we have done this, we can then use the remaining surplus and the money saved in interest payments on our debt to enact a voluntary prescription drug plan so that seniors do not have to choose between food and medication. We can help our crumbling schools and build new classrooms to relieve a system bursting at its systems. And, yes, we can even give targeted tax cuts to help hard working American families make ends meet.

ELIMINATE THE MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago my wife, Libby, and I walked down the aisle. And we were lucky, we had a lot of family and friends there, who showered us with gifts. My wife seemed to have written thank you notes for a month or two afterwards trying to catch up.

Now, we got married in October. Well, come April we got a little notice from Uncle Sam. It was not a wedding gift, though. It was the marriage tax penalty. Because we decided not to live with each other; because we decided to get married, we had to pay more money. And just like Michelle and Shad Hallihan in Joliet, Illinois, we in Savannah, Georgia, had to pay extra.

Now, as the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) said, Michelle is pregnant. She is going to have a baby. Uncle Sam is going to take away about

\$1,000 worth of diapers because of the marriage tax penalty. But they will also be having to buy diaper changing tables and cribs and all kinds of other things, such as car seats and so forth. Why? Because they are doing the right thing. Because they are making a lifetime commitment.

Because they are going to become property taxpayers, to send their kids to the schools, they are going to contribute to the United Way and to all the charities and the churches, for that Uncle Sam is penalizing them. Common sense says we need marriage tax relief. It is a good bill. I hope that we can pass it soon.

WHEN AND HOW MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY IS ELIMINATED IS IMPORTANT

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

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, it appears that the debate of the day is over the marriage tax penalty, and we have had a very attractive picture of a young couple at their wedding and an indication of what it costs that young couple. I do not think there is any real disagreement in this body over the importance of eliminating the marriage tax penalty. The real question is when do we do it and how do we do it.

There have been estimates circulating in Washington that the plan that the Republican leadership will be trotting out this week will cost three times as much as would be necessary to eliminate the marriage tax penalty if it were limited to moderate income taxpayers, such as the couple whose picture we have seen.

Also, there is a great deal of concern as to how we avoid simply being caught up in the enthusiasm of doing something by Valentine's Day. Well, for one thing, we ought to at least be adopting a budget in this body on a timely basis and making sure that our elimination of the marriage tax penalty fits into the budget that we are dealing with.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we would do well to admonish ourselves to proceed in a very deliberate fashion, to consider the alternatives, and to make sure that by the time we are done we are proud of our product and we are proud of our process.

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MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

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

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, the problem is there is no surplus. Even though CBO has projected a \$1.9 trillion surplus over the next 10 years, they made false assumptions in coming up with that surplus.

For example, if we project the current level of appropriations and only

increase by the rate of inflation, not assuming population changes or any attempt to improve quality of life of the American people, then more than a trillion dollars is going to be used up in meeting just the need to increase by inflation. It does not assume that we will sustain any of the tax extenders.

Obviously, we are going to do that. It does not assume that we will fix the alternative minimum tax. If we do not do that by 2009, we are going to have more than 15 million people paying the alternative minimum taxes. It is going to reach down to people with incomes below \$50,000 a year. That has to be fixed.

It is going to cost as much as \$230 billion just to sustain the kind of rational tax cuts that are necessary. We want the marriage penalty fixed but not when half of the people that are benefited are now getting a marriage bonus. Because they get married, they pay less taxes. Half of the money in today's bill that is being marked up would go to those families. That is not of the best use of our resources.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2005, WORKPLACE GOODS JOB GROWTH AND COMPETITIVENESS ACT OF 1999

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, by the direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 412 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 412

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2005) to establish a statute of repose for durable goods used in a trade or business. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on the Judiciary now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. No amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII and except pro forma amendments for the purpose of debate. Each amendment so printed may be offered only by the Member who caused it to be printed or his designee and shall be considered as read. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening

business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURR of North Carolina). The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my friend, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. All time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 412 is a modified open rule providing for the consideration of H.R. 2005, the Workplace Goods Job Growth and Competitiveness Act. The rule provides for one hour of general debate, equally divided between the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on the Judiciary.

After general debate, the bill will be considered under an open amendment process, during which any Member may offer any germane amendment as long as it is preprinted in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

And the minority will have an additional opportunity to change the bill through the customary motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

So I think it is fair to say that this rule encourages a full debate and accommodates any Member who wants to improve upon the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this act is a bipartisan bill that creates a uniform statute of repose for durable goods. In layman's terms, that means that 18 years after a product is sold, durable goods manufacturers will have some protection from the liability for injury caused by use of their products.

The thinking behind this legislation is that if a product has been used safely for a substantially long period of time, it is not likely that it was defective when it was originally purchased. If an injury occurs after almost two decades of use during which time the manufacturer had no control over the product, it is more likely that the product was either misused or not well maintained. In such cases, it is unfair to hold the manufacturer liable.

The encouraging news is that, in most cases when manufacturers are sued for injuries caused by old products, the manufacturer wins; but this justice is not won without a price. The costs of defending a case involving an old product are more burdensome because establishing a strong defense