

expenses, and they will invest. It is very important. It also helps consumers by allowing them to have a lower tax rate. It accelerates tax reduction that has already been passed by this Congress. It puts it into law, though, in the year 2003 instead of phasing it in over time.

This bill also allows reductions in the capital gains tax. If one sells something and they can keep more of their money, then obviously they are going to be more inclined to sell something. That is a novel concept in Washington, but back home people understand if I sell something, I have got more money in my pocket; it is a good deal. And the best part is less money will go to Washington bureaucracies which are just going to grow the government and reduce our personal freedom.

This jobs package has already passed the House. It just recently passed the other body. Now it is headed towards the Conference Committee. I hope we can get this thing done by the end of the week because folks back home in Georgia, and I am sure it is true in California and New York and Maine and all over this great country, they need jobs, they need work, they need it today. Let us pass this bill.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLE). Pursuant to rule XX, proceedings on the remaining postponed questions will resume tomorrow.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE 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 Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

CONSOLIDATION OF THE MEDIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw to the attention of the Members of the House an action that is about to be taken by the Federal Communications Commission. On June 2,

the FCC is going to act on a ruling which in all likelihood will be passed by a vote of three to two, two members of the commission voting against it and three voting for it.

This is a resolution that will continue a process that has been going on in our country now for a number of years. That process is the consolidation of the media, the means of communication in our Nation, the consolidation of that media into the hands of fewer and fewer people.

I think that many people across the country have noticed that in towns and small cities all across America, radio stations that used to be competing with each other and in doing so paid attention to issues that were taking place at the local level, community events, and also concentrating on local news that those radio stations now are not competing with each other but in fact they are owned by the same entity and often they are owned by a corporation that is not even located in that city. Often that corporation is located thousands of miles away and the broadcasting on those stations is actually piped in from distances and has no relationship whatsoever to what is going on in that town or in that city.

This consolidation, I think, is acting contrary to the best interests of the country; and I think it is also quite clearly acting contrary to the Federal communications law of 1934 which stipulated by the Congress that we ought to have in our electronic communications as much diversity of opinion as possible and that radio stations and then later television stations ought to in large measure reflect what is going on in the individual communities where those radio and television stations are located.

Increasingly, that is not the case. Increasingly, we are seeing the homogenization of content on radio and on television particularly. We are also noticing that radio stations are now beginning to charge communications companies and artists to have their artwork, their songs, their music played over those radio stations. That in and of itself may be running afoul of existing law.

There is also, of course, a growing concern about the availability of actual news and information as it is being handled and consolidated by these individual corporations. Suddenly, groups as well as individuals across the country are becoming concerned about this phenomenon, and those groups are very diverse and represent a very broad spectrum of the American people.

Let me give just a couple of examples. Just recently the National Rifle Association became aware of this ruling of the Federal Communications Commission which is pending and which will be acted upon on June 2. The NRA has come out against this ruling, stipulating that they believe that this ruling is not in the best interest of the American people, not in the

best interest of this Republic and not in the best interest of our democratic principles.

Also, the National Council of Catholic Bishops has come out against this ruling. They have come out against it for a slightly different reason. They have noticed that as we have seen the consolidation of media in America, in other words, radio stations and TV stations owned by big corporations and not reflecting the needs of the local community, that in addition to that we have seen a dumbing down of the programming that is being broadcast over radio and television and that often they are observing that the content is becoming lowbrow and demeaning and low grade and base, and they are deeply concerned about the kind of television broadcasting that young people particularly are being exposed to as a result of the fact that more and more of our television stations and radio stations are owned by these major corporations that have no interest whatsoever in the type of content they are broadcasting or the effect that content is having on the people in those communities.

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So the National Council of Catholic Bishops has come out opposed to this ruling and also the largest organization of television viewers. This organization represents about 750,000 television viewers across the country and has also come out against this ruling, which is pending on the 2nd of June.

I have introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives, and this resolution calls upon the House to notify the FCC that we want this process stopped. Already we have 96 cosponsors of this resolution, and I am inviting other Members of the House to join us. It is quite clear that the action proposed by the FCC is not in the interests of the country, and it is being opposed by a growing segment of the American community across a very wide spectrum. Please come and join us on this resolution.

TRIBUTE TO APACHE FIREFIGHTER RICK LUPE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, last summer Arizona saw the most devastating fire of the 2002 fire season, the Rodeo-Chedeski Fire. The fire burned 500,000 acres of land and destroyed over 400 homes and millions of dollars worth of property.

Fortunately, due to the efforts of Apache firefighter Rick Lupe, 42, the towns of Show Low, Pinetop, Lakeside, Honda, Whiteriver and others narrowly escaped the same fate as those seared by the Rodeo-Chedeski fire.

Rick, in charge of a division of men, worked to halt the eastward expansion

of the fire that was sending embers more than 2 miles ahead of the flames and headed right for Highway 60 and the town of Show Low. Rick directed and participated in implementing burnouts, dozier lines, back burns, and other efforts to create a line of defense protecting the towns from what seemed to be the inevitable. He continued these activities even after his first attempt was blown over by the flames. Fortunately for the towns of Show Low, Pinetop, Lakeside, Honda and Whiteriver, this line of defense did in fact stifle and prevent the fire's run through these towns.

"He's not one of those guys who sits on the ridge with binoculars telling you what to do," said Jim Paxon, a Forest Service spokesman during the Rodeo-Chedeski Fire. I personally was in Show Low during Rick's heroic action and he was credited by all present with stopping the fire's progress toward Show Low.

It was his hands-on management approach that nearly took Rick's life last Wednesday. Rick and several others were working on a controlled fire. As Rick walked into a canyon to check the edge of the fire line, a storm front caused the wind to blow up and the fire surrounded Rick, leaving him to face the fire. The winds were so strong that it blew away his emergency shelter.

Without shelter, Rick lay down among the flames waiting for the fire to burn over him, and then walked a half mile out to find help. According to Dr. Daniel Caruso, Rick was burned over 40 percent of his body and is currently in critical condition, being treated for severe burns and damage to his lungs.

A family man, Rick is married to his wife, Evelyn, and is father to three sons, Sean, Daniel and Brent, each of whom plans to become a firefighter.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the courage of this man and his success in saving so many from the destruction of fire.

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

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

POSSIBLE MISUSE OF OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY RESOURCES

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

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, most Americans have never visited the little west Texas community town of Hale Center. It is a good community, a little under 3,000 people, the heart of the west Texas Bible Belt. Having not been there recently, I imagine they probably have a local pharmacy and a great little public school. But according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security,

Hale Center, Texas, a town of under 3,000 people, must be a terrorist threat to the United States.

Why do I say that? Well, it is the only legitimate reason I can think of as to why last week, while al Qaeda was apparently planning and carrying out murders of citizens in Saudi Arabia, including Americans, and a terrorist attack in Morocco, our U.S. Homeland Security Agency, with the responsibility to protect American citizens from terrorism, was doing what? They were checking a private airplane flight leaving from Hale Center, Texas, that fine little Bible Belt community, a plane that was going to that other, I guess, center of Islamic radical terrorism, Ardmore, Oklahoma.

Now, the truth was that on that airplane was former Speaker and now legislator of the Texas House, Pete Laney, a fine American. Even his worst political enemies would never suggest he is a terrorist. Yet our U.S. Homeland Security Agency, working through the forces and offices in California, spent our tax dollars tracking down Mr. Laney as he flew in his own plane from Hale Center, Texas, to Ardmore.

Now, I will say, they do have on the 4th of July every year in Hale Center, Texas, a county fiddlers' contest. Perhaps Mr. Ridge and our Homeland Security Agency should go visit Hale Center and see if maybe that fiddlers' contest is a front for al Qaeda. Certainly if there is an al Qaeda cell headquartered in Hale City, Texas, Americans ought to know about it.

There is something else Americans have a right to know about. They have a right to know what is on the tape between the Texas Department of Public Safety last week and their phone conversation with the U.S. Homeland Security Agency that led to our using and abusing Federal tax dollars to track down Mr. Laney and his air flight from Hale Center, Texas. There is no justification for that kind of abuse of resources of an agency that ought to be focusing its attention on how to stop terrorism here in the United States.

This issue of the Texas legislators going to Ardmore is no longer just a Texas issue. It is the fundamental question of whether American taxpayers can have faith that our U.S. Homeland Security Agency is going to track down terrorists, rather than track down law-abiding American citizens.

I voted to create that agency. I voted to fund that agency. But if this agency is going to abuse tax dollars and undermine our ability to fight terrorists by tracking down in frivolous efforts a State legislator who is a great, respected law-abiding citizen of Texas, then something is wrong, something is amiss; and we need to make some changes at the Department of Homeland Security.

Now, the question I think American citizens, Mr. Speaker, have a right to ask Mr. Ridge and the Homeland Security Agency is, what are you afraid of?

Why are you unwilling to let the American people hear what is on that telephone conversation? In fact, that tape was made with U.S. public tax dollars. Why not let the public, the citizens who paid for that tape, listen to what is on it? Are they afraid it might implicate our Federal agencies and leaders who made the decision to abuse Federal tax resources to track down a law-abiding citizen involved in a Texas political dispute? Are they afraid that perhaps maybe the Speaker of the Texas House, Mr. Craddick, or even the House Majority Leader, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), were involved in asking the Federal agency to get involved in this inappropriate way?

Frankly, no one will know the answer to those questions until the Department of Homeland Security lets the public fulfill its right to listen to what is on that tape. If it exonerates these State and Federal officials, why has Mr. Ridge not already divulged the tape to the public? If it implicates Federal officials and State officials, perhaps that is the explanation as to why they have denied us the right to listen to that tape.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue. The Texas legislators are back at work in Austin. But this issue will not go away, for one simple reason: the American public and American taxpayers have a right to know whether their tax dollars have been used unethically and perhaps illegally. They have a right to know whether Texas State public officials were involved in asking the Federal agency to put aside its efforts for a moment in their fight against terrorists who might attack our homeland and focus on an internal Texas political dispute where no State or Federal law was broken.

When will we know what is on that tape, who is implicated in that tape? We have a right to know the answer to those questions, and the public and press will not stop until our U.S. Homeland Security Agency provides those answers.

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

(Mr. DEFAZIO 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 Colorado (Mr. BEAUPREZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

TEXAS AND TAXES

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

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I came down here to talk about taxes, but first