

gone right out and maybe paid a few bills or bought some extra food for the family or some clothes. Money would have gone directly into the economy and would have helped to create more jobs and stimulate growth.

But instead, what the House Republicans said is that she and her family are just simply not wealthy enough to have a tax cut because in the dead of night what happened to that Senate provision that would have given her a tax cut that would have given her a rebate, Vice President CHENEY went in and said, wait a minute, and he helped negotiate this, the bill that was passed goes too high. It spends too much money. So somebody is going to have to be cut out. And in the dark of night, in a secret negotiating deal, it was families like the Narvaez family who were cut out.

It is not just her. I talked to a mother of a Marine yesterday. I had breakfast with her. And she was telling me, he is in Iraq right now but she was telling me that when she went to visit him at his base there was a church nearby that had a big box in front of it and she said what is that box? And that is for donations of clothing for the military families. Understand that I am not talking about the generals and I am not talking about the people that are sitting at the Pentagon. I am talking about the young men and women, the privates, the privates first class who are over in Iraq who are risking their lives every day, some of them losing their lives, and we do not know how many have been injured in that war, those people also have been cut out of this bill, and this is what the majority leader said. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), the majority leader, said there are a lot of other things that are more important; and what that must mean is that it is more important to give an average of \$90,000 tax cut to millionaires, and it is more important to pass a tax dividend cut, the taxes we pay on dividends, to cut that, than to ensure families who are making less than \$26,000 to have a few extra dollars to spend on their families.

And the reality is that if Congress does not act by the end of June, 6.5 million low-income families will not receive their refund checks at the same time as the middle-class families do. So we are under a time frame here. It is not something that we can just chat about. Who does benefit then from the tax cut bill? Let us talk about who actually gets a benefit. Vice President CHENEY who negotiated that deal that cut this family out will reap about \$116,000 a year from the dividend and capital gains provisions in the tax bill. Maria will have to work about 10 years in order to have an income that equals the 1-year tax cut that the Vice President will get, and that is not the only thing. John Snow, the Secretary of the Treasury, will get in 1 year a tax cut about \$332,000.

She will have to work 16 years to get that. Let us talk about fairness here.

Let us talk about what is good for the economy and good for families. Let us do what the Senate did when they fixed it. Let us give a tax cut to working families.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 25 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon today.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at noon.

PRAYER

The Reverend Phillip Kaim, Diocese of Rockford, Illinois, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, as we open Congress for another day, we ask that You open the hearts and minds of our legislators to do Your will. We ask that You gift them with the wisdom to know Your will, the prudence to know the means to accomplish it, and the courage to follow through, to persevere, and overcome any obstacles put in their path.

As we open Congress, we keep in our thoughts and prayers all the men and women in our armed services, especially those still deployed in Iraq, who risk their lives every day to protect our cherished freedom. We ask You to keep them safe and out of harm's way. We also ask that You provide sufficient chaplains to serve this unique and challenging ministry.

We ask all of this in Your Holy Name. 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 Maine (Mr. MICHAUD) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. MICHAUD 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.

WELCOMING FATHER PHILLIP KAIM

(Mr. HASTERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTERT. Mr. Speaker, today the House opened with a prayer from our guest chaplain, Father Phil Kaim. Father Kaim is a newly ordained priest in the Rockford diocese in the State of Illinois. Father Kaim is also a close personal friend of mine and a former member of my staff.

When Phil worked in my office, I always admired his clarity of vision, his strong conviction, and his compassion for those around him. Phil had a knack for politics. He worked for me for almost 10 years.

He served in my office as my district director and was my eyes and ears back home in Illinois. Phil was very good at his job, but I guess he decided he had a higher calling. Six years ago he made a decision to become a priest, and after the election of November of 1998 he left my employment, packed his bags and moved to Rome to study at the North American College to become a Roman Catholic priest.

On May 17 of this year he was ordained. He will return to Rome later this year to continue his studies.

Father Kaim, thank you for your prayer today and good luck to what I know will be a bright future.

CLASS ACTION REFORM GOOD FOR FAMILIES

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

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, this week we will be taking up another bill that will directly benefit working families: the Class Action Fairness Act of 2003. And as we know, the class action process was designed to help consumers with similar troubles pool their resources for legal assistance and streamline what might otherwise be thousands, even millions, of separate claims.

But in the last 10 years, class action filings have risen 1,000 percent. For all their apparent popularity, one would think class action suits have suddenly become more beneficial to consumers, but the evidence suggests in that time the class action system has been abused more often than ever. A suit against the Bank of Boston, for instance, yielded just \$8.64 cents for every plaintiff, but cost \$90 each in lawyers' bills.

A class action against Blockbuster Video racked up more than \$9 million in legal fees, but yielded plaintiffs a mere \$1 off coupon for future rental at Blockbuster.

Class actions have become more popular, but not because they have suddenly started benefitting consumers more. After all, under the current system, the suits get bogged down in State courts where the settlements are often not equally distributed among members of the class. Meanwhile, the cost of all this litigation is being

passed on by companies to the American consumer. The courts, the companies, and the consumers are not benefitting them.

But who is? Who else? The trial lawyers. The American people get the joke, Mr. Speaker. No matter who loses in class action suits, the winners are always the same: The trial lawyers. Even if their clients do not get any money or are not being paid, the lawyers always seem to be paid.

So the reforms we will take up this week will streamline the class action system and provide for new consumer protection against abusive lawsuits. This Republican majority is committed to meeting the needs of the American people and reining in the excesses of our litigious trial lawyer community.

So I look forward to the debate on this bill, Mr. Speaker, to see if the same can be said of their friends on the other side of the aisle.

WORKING FAMILIES TAX CREDIT ACT OF 2003

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

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, the recent tax bill carelessly neglects 12 million children in America's low-income working families by cutting them out of the child tax credit plan.

I asked the House Committee on Government Reform to investigate what this would mean to the State of Maine. They found that in my home district, 21,000 working families will receive no benefit. These are families who work hard, pay taxes, play by the rules, and who were still left out in the cold.

Cutting these people out was just plain wrong. That is why I have introduced the Working Family Tax Credit Act of 2003, along with my good friend, the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL). This bill will fix the problem and assure that all working families get some benefit. In a tax bill that gives \$90 billion of its tax cut exclusively to millionaires, making sure that working families who make \$25,000 a year should be able to get some tax relief is the least this Congress can do.

FAMILIES SHOULD CHOOSE WHAT IS BEST FOR THEM

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, last week the House was scheduled to consider the Family Time Flexibility Act. But some of our friends on the other side of the aisle opposed the idea of allowing workers to choose what their overtime is worth, so we did not get to vote on it.

When workers spend extra time at work, they should determine how much that time is worth, not employers and not politicians. This bill would allow

them to do that. It gives employees the choice of how they are compensated for time they work over and above their normal work week.

In my district this is a big deal. There are a lot of hardworking people there who work a lot of overtime and a lot of close-knit families whose time is precious enough as it is. They should not be forced to take more money when what they need is some extra time at home.

But in order to appease special interests, our friends on the other side opposed this bill and prevented a vote on it. They opposed the right of workers to choose what is best for their families. They put the demands of big labor unions over the rights of parents to spend more time with their kids, and I think that is a crime.

EXTEND CHILD TAX CREDIT TO LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

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

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise again to discuss extending the Child Tax Credit to the families that need it most. This morning I came to the House floor to again call on my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to pass the legislation to give these 6.5 million taxpaying families what they have rightfully earned.

The other body has passed a bill. The President has said the House should take it up and he will sign it. Why is the Republican leadership so reluctant to lift a finger to help people who work, people who pay taxes, people who have children? Republicans pass tax cut after tax cut for the wealthiest Americans, and then they cut out the families of 12 million children, families that pay a greater percent of their incomes, 8 percent of their income in taxes; more than Enron did in the last 4 out of the last 5 years. They paid no taxes.

Now we hear the Republican leadership wants something in exchange. As I said this morning, there is always a deal with these people. It has nothing to do with values or fairness. It is all about taking care of their own. It is all about taking care of Enron, WorldCom, and Tyco.

Mr. Speaker, let us stop playing games. It is time for the House to take the other body's legislation. Let us help 6.5 million families share in the benefits of this tax cut. It is the right thing to do.

STATE DEPARTMENT IS AIDING ILLEGAL ALIENS

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

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, it is not bad enough that foreign governments are brazenly distributing identi-

fication documents to their nationals in order to make it easier for them to violate our immigration laws, it now appears that our government is aiding in the effort.

Perhaps I am a bit inaccurate in referring to the State Department as "our government." Anyone who has been around here any length of time knows that the State Department operates as a separate entity with its own agenda and set of rules and are often unconnected to the wishes of the administration and are often disdainful of any congressional input except when they are up here asking for money.

Recently a memo came into our possession, which emanated from our Embassy in Managua and was sent to Secretary Powell. It was asking for directions in the task of helping the government of Nicaragua create these ID cards to distribute to Nicaraguan nationals living illegally in the United States. They want to do this so that these illegal aliens can more easily obtain benefits, get breeder documents, and generally live here undisturbed while they violate our laws.

You got it. That is our government in league with a foreign government as they aid and abet their illegal aliens living in the United States.

Beam me up, as our friend used to say, Mr. Speaker, beam me up.

ADMINISTRATION MUST HAVE ACCOUNTABILITY

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, the credibility gap is growing. First the administration said the U.S. had to sweep aside the U.N. inspections and the Security Council because Iraq had weapons of mass destruction which were an imminent threat.

No weapons have been found to justify the war. So why did we go to war?

Now Paul Wolfowitz says, "The truth is that for reasons that have a lot to do with the U.S. Government bureaucracy, we settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on which was weapons of mass destruction as the core reason."

Now their story is changing. Iraq had a weapons program, they say. No longer weapons of mass destruction but a program. Is this now the core reason?

Bait and switch will not work here, nor will a pretense for war. If this administration can fabricate reasons for the war after the fact, where will America be headed for war next?

Congress must demand accountability for the wanton exercise of war power, loss of life, destruction of property, waste of tax dollars, and damage to America's reputation.

□ 1215

Thirty-three Members of the House have now signed the resolution of inquiry to demand the White House tell the truth.