

benefited from these mitigation grants, would the taxation problem be taken care of? And at that time I could not actually assure that it would be.

A number of them filed extensions rather than turn their taxes in. They were not sure what their liability was going to be. If it were not for the action of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY), if it were not for the action of the people on both sides of the aisle, if it were not for the action of the other body, they would potentially be facing a tax bill that they never anticipated.

Again, I want to thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) for his extraordinary work in this regard. I want to tell him if he wants to run for office next time, come to Oklahoma. We remember our friends. And we appreciate very much his remarkable efforts.

I thank so much my good friend, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN).

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CARDIN. Further reserving the right to object, I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate that invitation, but I am quite proud of serving Florida.

I think it is important to thank the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JINDAL) has been a prime sponsor, as have been Democrats and Republicans. That is one of the joys of the process when we actually get something done with bipartisan support.

I want to thank the staff on the Committee on Ways and Means but specifically Elizabeth Nicholson from my staff, my deputy chief of staff who has labored very long, hard hours on trying to get this to fruition. We are here on the floor and I am very excited and pleased that we will be able to provide this relief for our taxpayers. And, of course, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE) clearly stated without their help and the entire delegation that this effort would have been for naught.

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So we appreciate all involvement and all support.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, further reserving the right to object, I want to just conclude by acknowledging the work of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY). He really does deserve the credit for being persistent to get this legislation passed prior to April 15.

I also want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), our chairman, and the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), our ranking member, for arranging this process.

It has been a pleasure to work with the gentleman. As the gentleman knows the problems we have had in Maryland with Hurricane Isabel and the hardship that that caused, I got to see firsthand the damage and devastation to families in my own State. This bill will help. It has been my pleasure

to join my colleague from Florida in sponsoring and supporting this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). Is there objection to the original request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1134, the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

CONGRESS AND THE JUDICIARY: RESTORING COMITY

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

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, 174 years ago, Supreme Court Justice John Marshall warned: "The greatest scourge in angry heaven ever inflicted upon an ungrateful and a sinning people, was an ignorant, a corrupt, or a dependent judiciary."

Despite Marshall's warning, quite remarkably, nearly 200 years later the very independence of the judiciary, a matter so fundamental to our separation of powers, is still a matter of contention for some, particularly in this Congress.

For 2 years in a row now, Chief Justice Rehnquist has used his year-end report to highlight the deteriorating relationship between the judicial branch and the legislative branch, the result of a recent systematic congressional attack on the independence of the judiciary. Since I arrived in Congress, I have been quite surprised by the dreadful state of relations between our branches and the absence of the comity that historically existed between the two.

The Federal caseload continues to rise at a record pace, reaching new levels. Courthouse funding is woefully inadequate, failing to meet the needs of our Federal courts in order to carry out their mission and to make necessary improvements in priority areas such as court security. Judicial confirmations continue to be mired in po-

litical brinksmanship. Judicial compensation has not kept pace with inflation and congressional inaction on an annual basis has led to delays in important adjustments, despite the President's admonition for Congress to act.

The House Committee on the Judiciary, on which I sit, has initiated investigations of judges charged with judicial misconduct, matters that were previously left to circuit judicial councils, and the word "impeachment" has been used quite loosely and frequently as a threat.

A few weeks ago, these threats reached a fever pitch with talk, from the highest leadership levels of this body, of intentions to "look at an unaccountable, arrogant, out-of-control judiciary that thumbed their nose at Congress and the President" and a warning that "the time will come for the men responsible for this to answer for their behavior, but not today."

The Congress has also renewed its appetite for legislation that would strip the Federal courts of jurisdiction on a piecemeal basis from areas in which some are not pleased with the results that have been reached from the courts, or in areas where some are worried about potential outcomes down the road.

We have considered one bill which would remove Federal court jurisdiction over issues concerning the free exercise or the establishment of religion or over marriage. Should any Federal judge take up any issue involving that, the free exercise or the establishment of religion, he is subject to impeachment under the bill.

We had another proposal to remove jurisdiction of the courts over the Ten Commandments, another over the Pledge of Allegiance, and yet another to remove jurisdiction over any issue affecting the acknowledgement of God as the sovereign source of law. Again, the penalty for a judge who inquires or exercises jurisdiction is impeachment, removal from office.

Perhaps we should simply remove the jurisdiction of the Federal courts over the entire first amendment and be done with it.

After moving to strip jurisdiction, we recently moved to provide jurisdiction, where the Federal courts should not have it, in the Schiavo matter; and the only common denominator seems to be the desire to obtain the preferred result from the bench, regardless of the constitutionally enshrined principles of the separation of powers and of federalism itself.

Congress has not stopped here, but has pursued proposals to split appellate court jurisdiction and even considered legislation that would decide for the judiciary what they may look at or include in their judicial opinions.

Does anyone in Congress believe that we can undermine the courts without belittling the Congress itself?

Some Supreme Court rulings, such as the decision with regard to the sentencing guidelines, remind us that

sometimes there will be judicial decisions that we believe are poorly reasoned and others we just do not like. However, efforts by the Congress to force the courts to look at our transient wishes, rather than the Constitution, would only serve to undermine the very institution in which we serve.

As a Member of Congress with a strong interest in improving the relationship between the legislative and judicial branches, I have formed, with the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT), a bipartisan congressional caucus dedicated to this goal. Our caucus consists of some 30 Members from both sides of the aisle, and I encourage my colleagues who share our goal to join our efforts to restore the historic comity between our two branches.

One hundred and seventy-four years ago, Mr. Speaker, Chief Justice Marshall warned of the great scourge of a dependent judiciary to be inflicted upon an ungrateful and sinning people. Let us not forget his wise admonition.

IN SUPPORT OF LIEUTENANT PANTANO

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

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have spoken several times about Second Lieutenant Ilario Pantano, a Marine who served our Nation bravely in both Gulf Wars and who now stands accused of murder for defending himself and this country.

During his service in Iraq last year, Lieutenant Pantano was faced with a very difficult situation that caused him to make a split-second decision to defend his life. He felt threatened by the actions of two insurgents under his watch; and in an act of self-defense, he had to resort to force; 2½ months later, a sergeant under his command, who never saw the shooting, accused him of murder. Lieutenant Pantano now faces two counts of murder.

Mr. Speaker, what is happening to this young man is an injustice. Lieutenant Pantano has served this Nation with great honor. My personal experiences with him and his family convince me that he is a dedicated family man and a man who loves his corps and his country.

But I am not the only one who believes he is innocent. Yesterday, I read excerpts of pieces from the Washington Times and respected journalist Mona Charen defending Lieutenant Pantano.

I have received letters and e-mails from Vietnam veterans who sympathize with him and ask that I do something to help him. They know what it is like to be in battle with an unconventional enemy. One second can make the difference between life and death.

I have read excerpts from his combat fitness report in which his superiors praised his leadership and talent, even recommended him for promotion.

Mr. Speaker, Lieutenant Pantano was, by all accounts, an exceptional Marine.

Yesterday, Lieutenant Pantano and his attorneys waived his right to have an article 32 hearing and had decided that they want to go straight to trial. They are so convinced that he will be proven innocent that they want to speed the process along.

In a letter yesterday, Lieutenant Pantano's mother wrote: "My son, our family, and millions of concerned citizens, Marines and soldiers were assured that the article 32 pretrial hearing would bring everything out in the wash, and we have been patient with a process that has been grueling for my son's family. The problem is that if the government is the machine and my son is the laundry, they are not adding any water."

Thus far, the prosecution has not presented the witnesses and the evidence that they claim to have, and Lieutenant Pantano had no reason to believe that they would do so at the hearing. No such evidence appears to exist.

Mr. Speaker, I have put in a resolution, House Resolution 167, to support Lieutenant Pantano as he faces trial. I hope that my colleagues in the House will take some time to read my resolution, look into this situation for themselves. Lieutenant Pantano's mother also has a Web site that I encourage people to visit. The address is www.defendthedefenders.org.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I ask the good Lord in heaven to please bless our men and women in uniform whether in Iraq or Afghanistan, to bless them and their families across this country, and also I ask the good Lord to please be with the family of Lieutenant Pantano and that I believe he will be exonerated, and he is a great man, a great Marine; and God bless America.

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

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

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to address the House and take the time of the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

BANKRUPTCY REFORM LEGISLATION

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the word "bankrupt" as we know it today comes from the 16th century Italian *banca rotta*, which literally means broken bench. It refers to a legend that said when a money trader became insolvent, the bench or table which he used in the market was literally broken. The Latin root of the word includes "corrupt" in the meaning.

The bankruptcy bill that the Republicans forced on the American people in this House today is as broken a bench and as corrupt a piece of legislation as I have seen in this House.

Republicans are providing nothing less than money tribute of, by and for credit card companies; and just like the tribute demanded by the corrupt leaders in ancient times, this money will be extracted from the American people, even if it means children will go hungry.

Do not let the Republicans mislead my colleagues for one money-grubbing, greed-pandering minute. The Republican bill threatens single mothers and children who rely on child support from a spouse who files for bankruptcy.

Credit card companies demanded, and the Republicans caved in, on a provision that says credit card debt will survive bankruptcy and compete on an even basis with kids and moms for the limited dollars left in bankruptcy. One of the Republican Members said, well, we have to do that. What if all the money went to the mothers and kids? Well, now, what kind of family values are those? They ought to go to the children and the mothers.

The Republicans shout family values, but they just sold the women and the children down the river. Single mothers and children will have to fight the credit card companies in court for whatever meager assets remain after bankruptcy. It will not be any just division. They will have to go in and arm wrestle with the credit card companies to make sure that they get food and shelter for their kids.

One credit card company television commercial says, "Don't leave home without it." Maybe they can make a new commercial that says: You might not have home, or food, with it.

Protecting children is more important than satisfying the insatiable greed of credit card companies. Any person who supports this bill opposes our responsibility as a Congress and as a Nation to protect our most vulnerable population, the children.

The line must be drawn. The vote should have been the other way in this House, but the American people must know who is willing to feed corporate greed ahead of feeding vulnerable kids.

My distinguished colleague, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), had proposed an amendment which would ensure that the debtors make child support payments ahead of credit card payments. The Republicans would not even allow it to be heard in this House. They had their marching orders, and these orders come directly from the credit companies.