

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, on January 4, 2007, I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall vote numbered 6, on adoption of Title I of the Resolution.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote numbered 6.

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 10, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the name of fairness and justice. American families who rely on the Federal minimum wage are struggling to make ends meet. Over the last decade, our poorest-paid workers have faced rapidly rising costs in health care, energy, and college while the minimum wage has remained the same.

H.R. 2, the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007, would increase the Federal minimum to \$7.25 an hour. At \$5.15 per hour, the current Federal minimum, a person working 40 hours per week makes \$10,712 per year, about \$5,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. I ask you, can you imagine taking care of your family much less yourself with that? In addition, millions of workers paid just a dollar or two more than the minimum also live in poverty. An increase to \$7.25 will have a spillover effect that could raise wages for many of those workers. Ladies and gentlemen, the time for an increase is long overdue.

Critics claim that increasing the minimum wage will have a negative effect on the economy, but after the last minimum wage increase in 1997, the economy enjoyed its strongest growth in more than three decades. This Congress was elected in a large part because our economy has not benefited the working poor as much as those at the high end of the pay scale. H.R. 2 is a first step and I encourage my colleagues to support the bill.

INTRODUCING THE SUNLIGHT
RULE**HON. RON PAUL**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis famously said, "Sunlight is the best disinfectant." In order to shine sunlight on the practices of the House of Representatives, and thus restore public trust and integrity to this institution, I am introducing the sunlight rule, which amends House rules to ensure that members have adequate time to study a bill before being asked to vote on it. One of the chief causes of increasing public cynicism regarding Congress is the way major pieces of legislation are brought to the floor

without members having an opportunity to read the bills. For example, concerns have been raised that in the opening days of the 110th Congress, legislation dealing with important topics such as national security are being brought to the floor before members have had an opportunity to adequately study the legislation.

In past Congresses, it was all-too-common to see large Appropriations bills rushed to the floor of the House in late-night sessions at the end of the year. For example, the House voted on the Fiscal Year 2006 Defense Appropriations Conference Report at approximately 4 a.m.—just four hours after the report was filed. Yet, the report contained language dealing with avian flu, including controversial language regarding immunity liability for vaccine manufacturers, that was added in the House-Senate conference on the bill. Considering legislation on important issues in this manner is a dereliction of our duty as the people's elected representatives.

My proposed rule requires that no piece of legislation, including conference reports, can be brought before the House of Representatives unless it has been available to members and staff in both print and electronic version for at least ten days. My bill also requires that a manager's amendment that makes substantive changes to a bill be available in both printed and electronic forms at least 72 hours before voted on. While manager's amendments are usually reserved for technical changes, oftentimes manager's amendments contain substantive additions to, or subtractions from, bills. Members should be made aware of such changes before being asked to vote on a bill.

The sunlight rule provides the people the opportunity to be involved in enforcing the rule by allowing a citizen to move for censure of any House Member who votes for a bill brought to the floor in violation of this act. The sunlight rule can never be waived by the Committee on Rules or House leadership. If an attempt is made to bring a bill to the floor in violation of this rule, any member could raise a point of order requiring the bill to be immediately pulled from the House calendar until it can be brought to the floor in a manner consistent with this rule.

Madam Speaker, the practice of rushing bills to the floor before individual members have had a chance to study the bills is one of the major factors contributing to public distrust of Congress. Voting on bills before members have had time to study them makes a mockery of representative government and cheats the voters who sent us here to make informed decisions on public policy. Adopting the sunlight rule is one of, if not the, most important changes to the House rules this Congress could make to restore public trust in, and help preserve the integrity of, this institution. I hope my colleagues will support this change to the House rules.

STEM CELL RESEARCH
ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 11, 2007

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3, the

Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007, introduced by my esteemed colleagues, Representatives DIANA DEGETTE and MICHAEL CASTLE. As a longtime champion of stem cell research and an original cosponsor of this legislation, I cannot stress enough how important this bill is to the future of medical research and to the health and well-being of Americans and people worldwide. Embryonic stem cell research holds unique promise for the treatment of illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, muscular dystrophy and many other degenerative conditions. We Members of Congress have the responsibility to ensure that this promise is realized.

The expansion of federally funded embryonic stem cell research is supported by a majority of Americans and by Members of Congress from across the political spectrum. Therefore, I was disheartened by President Bush's decision to use his first and only veto to strike down stem cell legislation passed last year. However, I have fresh hope that we will see the enactment of this legislation this year. I am confident that we will pass this bill overwhelmingly today and that the Senate will do its part to secure final passage. I am also optimistic that President Bush will respect the wishes of the American public and will refrain from vetoing this important legislation yet again.

Countless lives could be saved with the passage of this legislation, and I therefore urge each one of you to vote with foresight, with optimism and with respect for life in favor of the Stem Cell Research and Enhancement Act of 2007.

REINTRODUCTION OF THE SAFE
COMMISSION**HON. FRANK R. WOLF**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, few are willing to admit—much less discuss—the looming financial crisis facing our country, but there is less than 1 year until the first baby boomer is eligible to retire.

On Wednesday, January 10, the Washington Post included an op-ed by Robert Samuelson which paints a poignant picture of the generational conflict approaching on the horizon. He makes a compelling case for why it is critical that Congress take action now to address the financial emergency facing the Nation with the retirement of the baby boomers.

That is why on Tuesday, Senator GEORGE VOINOVICH and I will reintroduce identical legislation to establish a national bipartisan commission that will put everything—entitlement benefits and all other Federal programs as well as our tax policies—on the table and require Congress to vote up or down on its recommendations in their entirety, similar to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) first created by former Rep. Dick Armey in 1988. This commission would be called the SAFE Commission, to secure America's future economy.

I first introduced the idea of the SAFE Commission last summer. Since that time, the proposal has received strong support from across the political spectrum including the Heritage Foundation; the Concord Coalition; former

congressional members from both sides of the aisle; and former Congressional Budget Office directors. It has been favorably endorsed by newspapers across the country, including the Dallas Morning News, the Orlando Sentinel and syndicated columnist David Broder.

There is near universal agreement that the longer we wait to deal with this problem, the tougher the medicine will be to swallow. As a father of five and grandfather of 12, the challenge posed by the pending retirement of baby boomers strikes me as much more than a routine policy discussion. Without action, just what kind of future are we leaving to our children and grandchildren?

My youngest grandchild is just 10 months old. By the time she is 15 years old, 29 cents out of every dollar paid in income taxes will be required to cover the needs of Social Security and Medicare to pay for my retirement. That's not including payroll taxes of almost 15 percent.

By the time she completes her undergraduate degree, more than 45 cents out of every dollar of income taxes then will be needed to cover the shortfall of Social Security and Medicare, rising to 62 cents out of every dollar if she decides to get her doctorate 10 years later. Again, this is on top of payroll taxes.

Sadly, before she retires—and looks into the eyes of her own grandchildren—retired baby boomers will be consuming 88 percent of every income tax dollar. With the baby boomers consuming so much, there will be little money left to meet the needs and challenges of her generation. Not only is this unacceptable, it raises serious moral questions. Is it right for one generation to live very well knowing that its debts will be left to be paid for by their children and grandchildren?

Abraham Lincoln, one of our Nation's greatest presidents, once said, "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." Yet that is precisely what we have been doing—avoiding our responsibility to future generations of Americans by passing on a broken system in the form of unfunded Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid obligations.

I deeply believe there is a moral component to this issue that goes to the heart of who we are as Americans. By that I mean, I wonder if we have lost the national will to make tough decisions that may require sacrifice? Moreover, have we lost the political courage to reject the partisan and special interest demands and do what is best for our country?

If we remember the legacy we have inherited, the debt we owe to previous generations—our grandparents and our parents and the sacrifices they made to make our country what it is today—we all will be moved to do our duty. The SAFE Commission should be embraced by both sides of the aisle. I am open to suggestions about the legislation from members of both parties. This is a national issue; not a Republican issue or a Democrat issue.

Last spring I took a trip to Antietam National Battlefield. As I walked along "Bloody Lane," the site of one of the most vicious battles of the Civil War, I was struck by how many individuals made the ultimate sacrifice.

September 18, 1862, was the bloodiest single day in American history. There were more than 23,000 casualties, nine times as many Americans killed or wounded in World War II's D-Day on June 6, 1944. More soldiers were

killed and wounded at the Battle of Antietam than the deaths of all Americans in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War and Spanish-American War combined.

I also visited the site of George Washington's crossing of the Delaware River in anticipation of the Battle of Trenton. Washington was down to only 3,000 soldiers and the war was almost lost. Yet, with great courage—and sacrifice—Washington and his forces were successful in changing the direction of the American Revolution.

I often think of the tremendous sacrifice being made by the thousands of men and women serving today not only in Iraq and Afghanistan, but around the globe. Their families here at home are also making great sacrifices. These examples of sacrifice for country are what led me to ask just what are we passing on to those who are coming after us?

In less than a year, the baby boom generation will begin trickling into retirement. A few years later, that trickle will become a flood that within five more years will become a tsunami that will begin to wreak havoc on our Social Security and Medicare systems. Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security consume 40 percent of the budget in 2006, but will consume 51 percent by 2016—and that is just the tip of the demographic iceberg.

As we tragically learned the lesson of Katrina in New Orleans, the best time to deal with a damaged flood wall is before the rains begin. Make no mistake; the levies that are our country's entitlement systems can only be plugged for so long. Without major repair and a long-term fix, we are facing a financial perfect storm like never before.

There is near unanimous agreement by all who have looked at this issue: Social Security and Medicare are amassing huge deficits and are ill-prepared for the coming flood of new baby boom retirees. When our retirement security programs like Social Security and Medicare were established, the ratio of workers supporting each retiree was more than 10 times the number supporting retirees today. In 1945, there were 42 workers for each retiree. Last year, the ratio dropped to three workers for each retiree and is expected to drop to just two workers for each retiree by 2030.

Perhaps even more troubling than the Social Security projections are those for Medicare. By 2010, the trust fund expenditures are projected to exceed annual income from all sources and the reserves will be depleted by 2018, 11 short years from now. According to the trustees, "Medicare's financial outlook has deteriorated dramatically over the past five years and is now much worse than Social Security's."

This coming crisis demands our immediate attention. While there is never a convenient time to make hard decisions, the longer we wait, the more dramatic the required remedy will be. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), balancing the budget in 2040 necessitates one of two alternatives: cutting total federal spending by 60 percent or raising federal taxes by two and a half times today's level. Either of these options would devastate our economy. But if we can summon the resolve to begin these difficult conversations now—and make some hard choices on the front end—we can change our current course.

Basic economics underscore the dangers inherent in our current national trends. America

is living on borrowed dollars and borrowed time. U.S. spending is outpacing income growth and personal savings rates have dropped to negative 1.3 percent in the first quarter, meaning that U.S. consumers are spending more than 100 percent of their monthly after-tax income.

In spite of this, our economy has remained strong, in large part because other countries have been willing to buy our debt. But borrowing hundreds of billions of dollars from countries like China, Saudi Arabia, Japan, South Korea, and others puts not only our future economy, but also our national security, at risk. More than \$2.6 billion a day is needed to fund our savings shortfall, which has left us with nearly 40 percent of our domestic economy in foreign hands.

As our fiscal deficit balloons, our current account deficit is projected to hit historically unprecedented highs, and our country's net investment position abroad is eroding rapidly. While the Asian Central Banks and petrodollar countries like those in the Middle East have no doubt contributed to our country's growth (the housing boom and the ability of U.S. consumers to spend), the purchase of U.S. securities by foreigners has, at the same time, enabled us to live way beyond our means.

This makes our country—and our children and grandchildren—much more vulnerable in the future. Will a geopolitical dispute with a major oil exporter cause it to stop funding our deficit, resulting in a sharp drop in the dollar, a spike in interest rates and a market meltdown?

If foreigners lose faith in the U.S. and our ability to put our own fiscal house in order, their investment decisions could send shock waves through our financial markets and even result in a collapse of U.S. real estate prices. If we don't address this issue, higher interest rates and inflation are inevitable. It would be only a matter of when and how high. If we don't change our current unsustainable path, our future economic growth, standard of living, and even our national security may be at risk.

Our children and grandchildren deserve a future that will allow them to respond to the challenges of their generation. Who could have predicted, even 10 years ago, that today our Nation would be engaged in a global war on terror. Each generation faces its own international threats, and we have an obligation to ensure that future generations have the flexibility to respond to the challenges of their time.

If current policies are left unchanged, in as few as 33 years and in no more than 40 years, there would be no discretionary money left for defense spending. All federal revenue would have to go to only four sources: Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and interest on past debt.

In addition to international considerations there are domestic factors. Getting our financial house in order will allow us to prioritize spending in areas such as cutting edge medical research for cancer, Alzheimer's and autism, and for education, particularly in mathematics and science, which are critically important to America's remaining the world's leader in innovation and technology.

It is with the hope of building consensus on this very difficult issue that I am offering legislation to set up a bipartisan commission charged with evaluating the scope of our fiscal problem and recommending tangible solutions.

One of the most critical responsibilities of this panel will be explaining the crisis we face and listening to the American people about how to get the country back on sound financial footing. It will also develop a strategic plan for the future. It will look beyond the Beltway for solutions, holding at least 12 town meetings—one in each of the Nation's Federal Reserve districts—over the span of 12 months in order to hear directly from the American people.

The SAFE Commission will be truly bipartisan—comprised of 16 voting members, four appointed by the Senate Majority Leader, three by the Senate Minority Leader, four by the Speaker of the House, and three by the House Minority Leader. Four of the 14 congressional appointments must be sitting members of Congress. Additionally, the director of the Office of Management and Budget as well as the secretary of the Treasury will serve as voting ex-officio members. The Congressional Budget Office and the Comptroller General of the United States will be appointed as non-voting ex-officio members of the commission to lend their expertise. The president will appoint bipartisan co-chairs from among the 14 voting members appointed by Congress.

I have heard criticism that such weighty decisions on the Nation's financial future are the responsibility of Congress. I couldn't agree more. The SAFE Commission has two provisions to protect congressional prerogatives. First, of the 14 members appointed to the commission, four must be sitting members of Congress. Second, if Congress takes on the task and enacts significant legislation aimed at addressing this looming crisis, the SAFE Commission would terminate and cease to exist.

The group will comprehensively review entitlement benefits, patterns in savings and insurance for retirement, tax policies and the long-term implications of increasing foreign ownership of the U.S. Treasury. But given the enormity of the challenge, the commission needs to be able to look at every component of our fiscal policy to fairly assess where we stand and how we can best move toward a sound fiscal future. Everything must be on the table. As a fiscal conservative, I believe that the economy grows when people keep more of their hard-earned money, and my voting record reflects this belief.

The SAFE Commission is tasked with addressing tax issues as well as spending policies because current law puts us on a track to sharply higher taxes as well as spending. If the current tax cuts are sunset, then beginning in 2011, taxes as a percent of GDP will jump and then rise each and every year to nearly 20 percent of GDP in 2016, less than 10 years from now. After that they will keep on growing to record levels, hitting over 23 percent in 2046. This happens because rising incomes push Americans into both higher brackets and into the alternative minimum tax (AMT). Yet even extending the tax cuts will have only one percentage point off these rising numbers.

Americans need to understand all the numbers to avoid the grim default of a rising burden of taxes and spending that will damage our economy. I believe that having revenues as part of the discussion, as one of the areas of reform for the SAFE Commission, will help us paint the full picture and help us confront the tax increases that the country faces in the coming years under current law.

In looking at revenues, I believe reform of the tax code must help simplify the system

and stimulate increased economic growth and thereby tax revenue. The late William Simon, who served as Treasury secretary under presidents Nixon and Ford, believed "the United States should have a tax system, which looks like someone designed it on purpose."

The IRS estimates Americans spend 6.6 billion hours per year filling out tax forms including 1.6 billion hours on the 1040 form alone and nearly \$200 billion on tax compliance. That amounts to 20 cents of compliance cost for every dollar collected by the tax system.

Shouldn't we have a system that people understand? One that encourages faster growth in business formation, jobs, family income and tax revenue? A simplified tax code also could help increase the personal savings rate, which went negative for the first time since the Great Depression earlier this year.

The SAFE Commission legislation provides an opportunity to simultaneously address the likely tax increases that middle class Americans are projected to face and the explosion in entitlement programs. It does this by focusing on reform. The legislation provides an opportunity to reform the tax code in ways that generate more rapid growth. We know from the recent revenue figures that tax policies that spur growth also bring in needed revenue. And the legislation also tasks the commission with exploring entitlement reforms that protect safety net programs while reining in total costs.

After spending 12 months conducting town meetings around the country to determine the scope of the problem and consider solutions, the commission will present to Congress a report describing the long-term fiscal problems, public suggestions and views expressed during the town meetings and policy options available to ensure federal programs and entitlements are available for future generations.

With a bipartisan three-fourths majority vote, the commission will send to Congress a legislative package to implement the commission recommendations no later than 60 days after the interim report. The administration and Congress will have 90 additional days to develop actuarially equivalent proposals to achieve the same cost savings. Essentially, no later than 16 months from the organization of the commission, Congress would be required to vote—up or down—on each proposal.

For example, if the commission's report is delivered on January 1, 2008, then the commission's legislative package would be due by March 1, 2008, and any alternative developed by Congress or the Administration would have to be presented by June 1, 2008.

All proposals must include a 50-year CBO score in addition to disclosing any impact on future federal liabilities. If more than one proposal receives a majority, the one garnering the greatest number of votes would prevail.

I have put in the legislation procedures for expedited consideration of the commission's legislation to ensure that the Congress acts. I do not want this to simply be another blue-ribbon commission whose findings end up on a bookshelf somewhere only to collect dust and never be acted upon.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to enact this legislation. I also welcome a forthright national dialogue. Only by working together in a truly bipartisan manner will we be able to secure America's future economy. I believe most Americans will welcome it as well, especially considering we all want what is best for our children and grandchildren.

I will close with the cautionary words of George Washington's 1796 farewell address: "We should avoid ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden of which we ourselves ought to bear."

REMEMBERING CALVIN WILLIAM VERITY, JR.

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, former Secretary of Commerce Calvin William Verity Jr., 89, of Beaufort, South Carolina, died Wednesday, January 3, 2007, at the Beaufort Memorial Hospital. He was born January 26, 1917, in Middletown, Ohio, the son of Calvin William Verity, Sr. and Elizabeth (O'Brien) Verity.

Secretary Verity was a graduate of the Phillips Exeter Academy and Yale University. He served as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy from 1942–1946. Mr. Verity worked for Armco Steel from 1946 until his retirement in 1982 as CEO and Chairman of the Board. He was named Secretary of Commerce by President Ronald Reagan in 1987 and served two years in that position. During the 1970s and 80s he served as Chairman of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and as Chairman of the U.S.-Soviet Trade and Economic Council. He was also the Chairman of the Presidents Task force on Private Sector Initiatives under President Reagan.

Secretary Verity is survived by his daughter and son-in-law, Peggy "Happy" Verity Power and J.P. Power of Edwards, Colorado; two sons and daughters-in-law, Jonathan George Verity and Victoria Verity of Beaufort, South Carolina, and William Wymond Verity and Paula Verity of Beaufort, South Carolina; seven grandchildren, William Verity Power (Kate), Jonathan Warfield Power (Jody), Jonathan Edward Verity, Victoria Heye Verity Nellen (Bill), Elizabeth Wymond Verity, George Murray Verity, and Hannah Bakewell Verity; four great grandchildren, James Matthew Power, John Gray Power, Thomas George Power, and Brooks Verity Power; and two sisters, Betsy Verity Blakey of Columbus, Ohio and Jean Verity Woodhull of Dayton, Ohio.

On January 5, Sandra Walsh of the Beaufort Gazette penned the below tribute to Mr. Verity:

FORMER SECRETARY OF COMMERCE DIES IN BEAUFORT

Serving as President Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Commerce, Calvin William Verity Jr., shared the stage with political giants.

But in Beaufort, where Verity shared his Spanish Point home with his beloved wife, he is remembered by friends as a 'giant of a man.'

Verity died Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2007, in Beaufort Memorial Hospital. He was 89.

Verity, who suffered from asthma, had been hospitalized for four days and died from complications of pneumonia, his oldest son John Verity said Thursday.

"I think the key to his success over the years was his ability to work with people," John Verity said.

"His leadership was based on building consensus and creating an environment where people would work together."

Verity was sworn in as President Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Commerce Oct. 19,