

the poverty level. Most are teenage workers: 52 percent under 25; 40 percent have never had a job before. It is an entry level job.

If the Democrat Party truly wanted to take on poverty, they would have to say, what is the relationship between marriage and the poverty level, and between hours worked and the poverty level. Because the truth of the matter is if people in poverty, if many of them would marry and many of them would work 40 hours a week, they would be out of poverty. It is not anything I claim to have the franchise on, the knowledge of, all of the information on, but it is an economic fact. I hope that we can have committee hearings on that and discuss that, because if we want to attack poverty, that is where we need to go.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN).

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have waited a long time for this day. This is a great day. It is a day that the American people have been waiting for a very long time.

Helping the poor is a theme that is stressed throughout the Bible, but it is our responsibility as Members of Congress to help raise the standard.

I am so pleased today that we are going to have an opportunity to have a clean vote on raising the minimum wage for the first time in 10 years.

You know, the sad thing is that a CEO before 12:00 earns more money than a person on minimum wage will earn all year long. In talking to some of the CEOs about it, they mention, maybe we are trying to help students or part-time workers. The truth of the fact is, we are raising the minimum wage. We are providing an additional \$4,400 per year for a struggling family to make ends meet and keep up with the rising cost of living.

This bill is not about students and part-time workers. No, it is about the nearly 13 million full-time workers, many with families to care for, who earn the minimum wage. In my State of Florida, the increase would directly benefit over 200,000 workers and have a positive effect on over a half million people.

Today is a great day for America and for the American worker. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this bill. I hope the Senate passes this version as soon as possible so that we can provide immediate relief to our Nation's workers.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) who has been a long-time advocate of the increase in the minimum wage, both in this Congress and before he came to this Congress.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it has been said, but it bears repeating, that a person working full time, full time at \$5.15 an hour, will make \$10,700 per year. If that person happens

to have a child, that person is living below the poverty line of \$13,461.

No one in this, the richest country in the world, should work full time and live below the poverty line. In this country, we want people to work their way out of poverty. What better way to have them do this than have a minimum wage that gives people a job and money that takes them above the poverty line.

□ 1400

Mr. Speaker, it is sinful for us to continue this debate without adding that in this country one out of every 110 persons is a millionaire. People don't want welfare. People want self-care. We want to give people the means by which they can say farewell to welfare. Raising the minimum wage will do this.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the staff of the Education and Labor Committee, Jody Calemine and Michele Varnhagen, for all of their work on this legislation. They have diligently worked for years to get this day to come before the House of Representatives, and I know they have the appreciation of all of the members of our committee.

I also want to thank our newer staff members, Megan O'Reilly, Brian Kennedy and Michael Gaffin, for their good work today and all of their efforts on behalf of this legislation, preparing it for the floor.

I also want to thank my colleagues on this side of the aisle who argued on behalf of this bill to increase the minimum wage, and I want to thank my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who said that they were going to support this measure. They may not fully agree with it, but they said they would support it.

And I want to thank the cosponsors of this legislation, including I believe seven Republicans who were original cosponsors of this legislation and over 193 Democrats on this side of the aisle.

I was especially taken with the remarks of my colleagues on this side of the aisle who understand that this debate is about more than dollars and cents per hour. This is about the values of this Nation. It is about the value we place on work. It is about the statement that we make to people who go to work every day and work terribly hard in very difficult jobs that most people in this country would prefer not to have. But they go to work every day to do that, to provide for themselves, to provide for their children or to provide for their families.

When you talk to minimum wage workers, whether they are providing for themselves or themselves and a child or a child and a spouse, it is tough. It is tough. As the gentleman said on the front page of The Washington Post today, "When I get all done, I have nothing left for me," be-

cause he is also taking care of his parents as he is earning the minimum wage.

So this is a big day. This is a big day because this is the first time in 10 years that the Congress signals that in fact we are going to raise the minimum wage.

It is what our leader, Speaker PELOSI, said she wanted to do in this first 100 hours. In this first 100 hours she wanted to address urgent parts of the national agenda that are of deep concern to the American people. And to over 80 percent of the American people in this country, they understand that the increase in the Federal minimum wage is a matter of morality, it is a matter of their values, it is a matter of the reflection of our Nation. They understand that these people, minimum wage workers in this country, have been working at a wage that is 10 years old. Ten years old. And they understand the unfairness of that, and they understand the difficulty of that.

That is why we brought this bill as a clean bill, because we wanted to highlight and to speak to the Nation about this group of workers who are toiling in spite of the fact that in 28 States they have raised the minimum wage at or above the levels we are talking about. In spite of that fact there are still some 13 million people who are directly impacted by the actions we take here today and the actions we take later on to send this bill to the President of the United States.

There are 13 million people whose economic viability is dependent upon this bill to increase the minimum wage. That is why we have to do this, and that is why I am so terribly proud of the Members who stood up today and argued for this increase in the minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, I will reserve 5 minutes of my time, yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON) so he may have a similar amount of time, and yield back the balance of my time over the 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 508 of House Resolution 6, further proceedings on the bill will be postponed.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 5 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1551

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Florida) at 3 o'clock and 51 minutes p.m.

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 508 of House Resolution 6, proceedings will now resume on the bill (H.R. 2) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. When proceedings were postponed earlier today, 10 minutes of debate remained on the bill.

The gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON) each have 5 minutes remaining.

Who yields time?

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of time. I appreciate the debate. I appreciate the job that you have done as Speaker.

This debate, Mr. Speaker, has been a good one, one marked by thoughtful dialogue on both sides of the aisle. Unfortunately, that thoughtful dialogue is limited to the last 3 hours, and only the last 3 hours. We didn't have any dialogue in the Committee on Education and Labor, we didn't have any dialogue at the Rules Committee, and because of the unprecedented terms for today's debate, the dialogue that did take place here on the floor certainly won't lead to any improvements in this legislation, at least here in the House. However, I do hold out hope that in the weeks to come, as those on the other side of the Capitol take up this issue, we can build upon this unbalanced legislation and extend proper protections to small businesses and their workers.

Nevertheless, the measure we are poised to vote on in a few minutes is marked more by what is not in the bill than what is in it. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They create two-thirds of our Nation's new jobs, and they represent 98 percent of the new businesses in the United States. What protection does this bill provide them? None whatsoever.

The same small employers are looking for a more cost-effective way to offer health care benefits to their employees, just as large corporations and labor unions across our Nation can do because of economies of scale. What protections does this bill offer these same small employers? None whatsoever. They are the ones that are going to be providing these jobs that are going to be paying the higher wages, and they are getting no relief, no help. As a consequence, people, many people, one study says 1.6 million people, will end up losing their jobs as a result of this.

Working families, many of whom would benefit from a minimum wage increase and many of whom depend upon small businesses, are looking to Congress for innovative solutions that would improve their access to affordable health care. What protections does this bill provide them? None whatsoever.

My colleagues, we can do better. In the interest of sending the President a

final measure that provides consideration for small businesses and their workers, the very men and women who are responsible for our economy's recent growth and strength, we must do better. And I believe, once Congress completes its work, we will do better. In the meantime, I urge my colleagues to oppose this unbalanced legislation.

As this debate continues in the weeks to come, I am hopeful that all of us will be mindful of the concerns and the sacrifices of small businesses in each and every one of our districts. If we do that and if we provide them the protections they need and deserve, I am confident that the final product we send to the President's desk will be far superior to the unbalanced and scaled-down measure that we are about to vote on.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by commending you for the job you did in the chair today and the manner in which you conducted the debate on this issue; and I appreciate the professionalism with which you handled the gavel.

Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, I want to thank all of our colleagues who participated in the debate today. We have our differences of opinions, but I thought that the debate was well conducted.

We have waited for over 10 years to have this vote on the minimum wage, a clean vote on the minimum wage for the poorest workers in this country who have worked at a wage that is 10 years old.

You know, very often Members of Congress will take the floor and they will harken back to the time in their youth when they worked at the minimum wage and they will talk about the different jobs they had. Well, let me share with you that I, too, share those experiences.

I cleaned out oil tanks; I cleaned out ships; I drove trucks in the pear orchards; I picked fruit; I worked in the canneries; and sometimes I did two of those at the same time. I worked at night in the cannery and in the daytime in the oil refinery. I worked at the minimum wage. I wonder how I would have felt about that minimum wage if it had been 10 years old. If I was working at the minimum wage and my wages were 10 years into the past and everybody else working around me had current wages, I wonder how angry I would have been if I would have had to support a family—at one point I was supporting a family with those minimum wage jobs—I would have been very angry. I would have thought this was a very unfair system, that my wages were stuck 10 years in the past and everybody else's wages were current.

Well, that is what has happened to these workers up until today. Today, we finally release them from being frozen in time, where their wages are from

10 years ago, but when they go to the supermarket, the food prices are higher; when they put gasoline in the car, the gasoline prices are higher; when they pay the utility bills, the utility bills are higher; when their kids get sick, the medical bills are higher. All of those things are higher. They are living in 2007, but in their wages they are living in 1997. There is something terribly, terribly wrong with that picture.

That is why overwhelmingly throughout the country the people support this effort now to raise the minimum wage. Eighty-nine percent of the people believe that we should do this, and they basically believe it as a matter of economic fairness, of economic justice to these people who are working so hard at minimum wage, who, as we say over and over again, but remember what they are, they are the poorest paid workers in America today.

And when they turn on the TV, when they watch it on their lunch break, they see a CEO walk away with \$210 million and a golden handshake after that CEO took a good corporation and ran it into the ditch. They see people backdating stock options, they see people defrauding the corporation for extra compensation, and yet their wages are back in time.

This is a question of economic fairness that the American public overwhelmingly responded to in this past election; and it is this issue of economic fairness that our new speaker, NANCY PELOSI, said would be the subject of this hundred hours, that we would begin by trying to make America a fairer place for those who go to work and for those who try to provide for their families. We would make America a fairer place and we would begin by increasing the minimum wage, and that is what we are going to do in the next few minutes, when we receive a strong and a bipartisan vote to increase the minimum wage for these workers.

It is terribly important that we do this. It says something about us as a Nation. When it is questioned all over the world about the economic disparities in American society, the unfairness of it, we get a chance to begin that process to change that dynamic.

□ 1600

I think this is a wonderful moment for the House of Representatives, no matter what side of the aisle you sit on. We, the people's House, are going to address the needs of the people that we were elected to serve. They grant us, they grant us the authority and the ability and the honor to come to the Congress of the United States; and today, and today we are going to address their needs. Today, we are going to address the needs that have concerned them in their communities.

If I have any time left, I want to thank the new majority leader for his efforts over these 10 years to try to bring this vote to the floor when time