

find out if there were violations of labor laws, he went and he paid off on this.

What has happened is that the garment industry in the Northern Marianas has gone down. And where is Mr. Willie Tan now operating his garment factories? In China. I think it would be important for our Republican colleagues first to understand, we are not exempted under the standards of the Fair Labor Standards Act. I want to make that point clear and I really, really appreciate the gentleman allowing me to correct these sweeping statements made by our colleagues from the other side suggesting that our Speaker has made this special provision just to exempt one of her corporate constituency which happens to be Del Monte. This is not true. This is absolutely not true.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. There is so much going on right now that is working on behalf of the American people. There are some Members of the minority party that feel that they need to come to the floor and raise objection to that, with the blessings of the Republican leadership. Because when you come to the floor, you have to have the okay of the leadership of your side of the aisle. I went through earlier this afternoon about Republicans joining Democrats in these votes. This bipartisan spirit, that is the only way I can figure this out because the misinformation that is coming to the floor and that is being given out to the American people, Mr. Speaker, you represent the area that they are so concerned about and they don't even bother to pick up the phone and say, is this true or that true or even doing the research. You can look in the law.

Mr. FALEOMAVEGA. Not even the courtesy, to my colleague from Florida, to make such statements and to say that the honorable Speaker from San Francisco is being hypocritical in saying that one of her constituent companies is being let off the hook in this exception for American Samoa because we have the presence of Del Monte through the Starkist Company that does the packing of canned fish in my district. It is right there. I wanted to be very plain and clear on this and wanted to note, also, that Mr. GEORGE MILLER for the last 15 years as the senior member of the House Education and Labor Committee has brought this to the attention of the Republican Congress how many times, to say something is going on that is wrong with the sweat shops that were developed out of some of these business people only to take advantage of the cheap labor.

I say that, yes, the beginning salaries of the workers that we have there is below Federal minimum wage. But there is a reason for it and that is the reason why the Federal Government through an act passed by the Congress since 1956, we followed that religiously for the last 2 years. I have disagreements also at times with the two major

corporate companies that do business in my district, but that is part of the process and I have always advocated that we should get better, higher salaries for our workers. But in the process, the point that I wanted to make to our colleagues and friends in letting them know is that, yes, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Federal law relating to Federal labor standards does apply to the territory of American Samoa. However, in the Northern Marianas there is nothing.

There is a real interesting question. Because the Northern Marianas came into this unique political relationship with the United States which is called a covenant relationship, there may be some provisions in there that are going to be questioned. It is my intention that I am going to call Chairman RAHALL as well as Mr. MILLER. We hope to have an oversight hearing on this issue as soon as we can at the earliest possibility, maybe sometime next month. We want to find out exactly the whole thing.

But for them to say that there is a double standard that our side of the aisle have taken is utterly not true. I want to make that firmly established in the RECORD. I will elaborate on this issue more specifically sometime next week when I take a special order, but I do want to thank my good friend and colleague from Florida for giving me this opportunity to clarify this, I wouldn't call it a misunderstanding but a misaccusation, I suppose, is a better word for saying it. But I do want to thank my good friend for allowing me to say this.

□ 1715

Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit some documentation to be made part of the RECORD.

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 10, 2007.

FALEOMAVEGA COMMENTS ON MINIMUM WAGE
BILL NOW BEFORE CONGRESS

Congressman Faleomavaega announced today that in response to articles by the Washington Post and inquiries by the Washington Times he is speaking out about the minimum wage bill recently introduced by the House leadership.

"Despite recent claims made by the Washington Post which suggest that American Samoa is exempt from the federal minimum wage process, I wish to set the record straight," Faleomavaega said.

"The Fair Labor Standards Act has applied to American Samoa since 1938. After enactment, Industry Committees were established to phase low-wage industries in to the minimum statutory wage making American Samoa, as well as all other US Territories, exempt from mainland minimums but bound by minimums determined by Special Industry Committees. At the time, Congress believed that application of mainland wages to territorial island industries would 'cause serious dislocation in some insular industries and curtail employment opportunities.'

"For this reason, since 1956, and in accordance with Sections 5, 6, and 8 of the Fair Labor Standards Act (29 U.S.C. Sections 205, 206, 208), the Wage and Hour Division of the US Department of Labor continues to con-

duct Special Industry Committees every two years in American Samoa to determine minimum wage increases.

"While these Industry Committees have been phased out in other US Territories due to their more diversified economies, American Samoa continues to be a single industry economy. In fact, more than 80 percent of our private sector economy is dependent either directly, or indirectly, on two U.S. tuna processors, Chicken of the Sea and StarKist.

"As has been repeatedly stated at our Special Industry Committees, a decrease in production or departure of one or both of the two canneries in American Samoa could devastate the local economy resulting in massive layoffs and insurmountable financial difficulties.

"For this very reason, I do not support efforts to apply mainland minimums to American Samoa at this time. The truth is the global tuna industry is so competitive that it is no longer possible for the federal government to demand mainland wages for American Samoa without causing the collapse of our economy and making us welfare wards of the federal government.

"However, I continue to believe it is a crying shame that for years StarKist's parent company, Heinz, paid its corporate executives over \$30 million per year in salary and stock options and bonuses while workers in American Samoa have not been paid decent wages on scale with our local economy. This is why I have fought year after year for increased wages for our tuna cannery workers and I will continue to make my views known before Special Industry Committees which have been established by federal law.

"CNMI should follow suit and support Special Industry Committees which are in place to protect workers from labor rights abuses. Ten years ago, I suggested to CNMI leaders that they should come under the umbrella of federal law and support Special Industry Committees but CNMI failed to take action. In other words, unlike American Samoa, CNMI is operating outside of the scope and intent of the Fair Labor Standards Act and this has led to well-documented worker abuse. For this reason, my colleagues have taken a stand and said enough is enough and I support Chairman George Miller's actions.

"Finally, I am aware that some may point a finger at American Samoa as a result of labor violations at the Daewoosa garment factory. But, in response, let me say that I personally called for a federal investigation into the reported abuses and the federal government took immediate action. Consequently, the owner of the factory, Kil Soo Lee, was prosecuted in federal court and the factory was subsequently shut down. Since this time, American Samoa has had no further labor violations.

"While I understand that for partisan purposes some might like to compare American Samoa and CNMI in terms of the federal minimum wage debate, I conclude by emphatically stating that CNMI and American Samoa are not alike in terms of our political relationships with the United States. CNMI is under a 'covenant' relationship and American Samoa is an 'unincorporated' and 'unorganized' territory. Our situations involving minimum wage are entirely different. American Samoa complies with the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act as determined by Special Industry Committees.

"By terms of its covenant, CNMI is exempt from compliance. However, with the minimum wage bill now before Congress, there is some question as to whether or not CNMI should be brought under the purview of federal labor laws.

"Whatever Congress decides for CNMI, I am hopeful that Members of Congress will recognize that American Samoa is different

and that what Congress has established for our Territory is necessary for economic stability," Faleomavaega concluded.

[From the Saipan Tribune, Jan. 11, 2007]

WHY IS AMERICAN SAMOA EXEMPTED FROM WAGE HIKE?

WASHINGTON.—Republican leadership aides are accusing the Democrats of using a double standard by imposing the higher minimum wage on the Northern Mariana Islands—considered a Republican protectorate—while continuing to exempt a Democratic territory, American Samoa.

Under a Democrat-backed legislation that is now before the House of Representatives, employers on the Northern Mariana Islands would have to pay workers the federal minimum wage. American Samoa and the tuna industry that dominates its economy would, on the other hand, remain free to pay wages less than half the bill's new mandatory minimum.

Democrats have long tried to pull the Northern Marianas under the umbrella of U.S. labor law, accusing the island's government and its industry leaders of coddling sweatshops and turning a blind eye to forced abortions and indentured servitude.

Samoa has escaped such notoriety, and its low-wage canneries have a protector of a different political stripe, Democratic delegate Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, whose campaign coffers have been well stocked by the tuna industry that virtually runs his island's economy.

Faleomavaega has long made it clear he did not believe his island's economy could handle the federal minimum wage, issuing statements of sympathy for a Samoan tuna industry competing with South American and Asian canneries paying workers about 67 cents an hour.

The message got through to House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller, D-Calif., the author of the minimum wage bill who included the Marianas but not Samoa, according to committee aides. The aides said the Samoan economy does not have the diversity and vibrance to handle the mainland's minimum wage, nor does the island have anything like the labor rights abuses Miller claims of the Marianas.

The wage bill coming to a vote this Wednesday (Thursday on Saipan) would raise the federal minimum from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 over two years, the first such increase since 1997. The 10-year stretch between wage increases is the longest since the mandatory minimum was created, and passage is expected to be overwhelming.

By including the Northern Marianas, Democrats say they hope to put an end to abusive sweatshops, especially in the garment industry. "I have been trying to fix the deplorable situation in the Northern Marianas since I first held hearings on the issue in 1992, 15 years ago," Miller said. "But under Republican control, the House never even held a hearing."

American Samoa has had a smattering of its own negative publicity, and an Education and Labor Committee aide said Monday that Miller probably will seek a review of the island's labor relations.

Last month, the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii upheld the conviction of a Korean sweatshop owner, who held 17 workers in involuntary servitude in American Samoa, imprisoning them in his garment factory compound.

But in American Samoa the tuna industry rules the roost. Canneries employ nearly 5,000 workers on the island, or 40 percent of the work force, paying on average \$3.60 an hour, compared to \$7.99 an hour for Samoan government employees. Samoan minimum wage rates are set by federal industry com-

mittees, which visit the island every two years.

Faleomavaega's aides said Monday that the delegate was in American Samoa for the opening session of the island's government and would not comment.

When StarKist lobbied in the past to prevent small minimum wage hikes, Faleomavaega denounced the efforts.

"StarKist is a billion dollar a year company," he said after a 2003 meeting with StarKist and Del Monte executives. "It is not fair to pay a corporate executive \$65 million a year while a cannery worker only makes \$3.60 per hour."

But after the same meeting, Faleomavaega said he understood that the Samoan canneries were facing severe wage competition from South American and Asian competitors.

Department of Interior testimony last year before the Senate noted that canneries in Thailand and the Philippines were paying their workers about 67 cents an hour. If the canneries left American Samoa en masse, the impact would be devastating, leaving Samoans wards of the federal welfare state, warned David Cohen, deputy assistant secretary of the interior for insular affairs.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you so very much. I am glad you came to the floor to share that. There is nothing like a representative of the American people that the Republican minority seems to be so concerned about all of a sudden, sharing misinformation, that the representative of the people comes to the floor to set the record straight.

The good thing about it is that we are in the majority right now, Mr. Speaker, and knowing that the issue will continue to receive the kind of attention it deserves, but making sure that mistruths are ironed out here in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, so that when we reflect on the facts, as I speak so fondly of, that we are on the right side of those facts.

I would also like to share with the Members, since we try to provide information to the Members, mainly, and hopefully we will get to the American people, we want to make sure that Americans stay tuned on behalf of the rest of this 100-hour agenda that we are carrying out right now, with the Student Loan Relief Act, which is on Wednesday; and repealing big oil subsidies, that will be coming up; and also investing in renewable fuels, that will be coming up.

All of this along these lines are going to make us a stronger America, a better America. These are issues, or issues that have been presented before Congress before, some of them passed on a committee level. Even some of them have passed in some amendatory form in a bigger package of legislation this House of Representatives, out of this House of Representatives. It should not be a surprise or a shock.

As I mention it here now, well before next week, I am pretty sure we will have some Members on the other side of the aisle who will come up and say, you know, I was walking down the hall and someone told me we were taking tax breaks away from the big oil companies. What happened to the hearing?

Well, I can tell you not only prior to the election, I know for sure I said it

here on the floor in the last Congress, the 109th Congress, in the last Congress. If they did not know, if they did not know that this was going to take place, prior to the election, then I suggest you pick up a newspaper.

We notice that some people don't read the newspaper here in Washington D.C., but that is another commentary. But I am excited about the fact that we are getting some of these issues done.

We always encourage the Members to log onto www.speaker.gov. You can get any information that is coming up, if you want to learn more about the 100-hour agenda, but I would say if you want to e-mail the 30-Something Working Group, www.speaker.gov/30something, and you can send us information on things that you are concerned about or questions that you may have.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing me to come down to the floor. The 30-Something Working Group will be back on floor next week. We want to not only ask Members but also staff and all Americans to celebrate the memory and the legacy of Dr. King and his entire family along with Mrs. Coretta Scott King for their contributions, not only to this country but to the world.

As we carry out this day of service that the King Center for the Advancement of Nonviolence calls for every year, try to create some sort of public service project within your family of something that you can do for somebody else, because that is what his philosophy was all about.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. LEVIN (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

Mr. McHUGH (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of official business.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. HOLT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. TAYLOR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HOLT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. WOLF) to revise and extend