a fast one over on you. That is what is happening here this afternoon. The Republican majority of this Congress will try to gain the confidence of the American people with regard to the environment by passing some very simply, noncontroversial environmental bills, while all the time hiding the fact that over the course of the last year and a half throughout this Congress, they have systematically gone aggressively forward with attempts to destroy the environment. The figleaf of this confidence game that they will be promoting this afternoon, when that is taken away, shows clearly what the record is. There it is.

They voted earlier this year for including waivers of environmental laws to mandate salvage logging in the national forests. That will result in the cutting of old growth trees in national forests in the Northwest and all across the country. Fiscal year 1995 rescission bill, H.R. 1158, vote No. 204, on March 15, 1995, the Yates amendment to delete the salvage rider, the Republican vote was 208 to 17 in support of that kind of cutting, logging without laws, rollcall 204. They voted also for opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil and gas development. That was the Budget Reconciliation Act, H.R. 2491, vote No. 812 on November 17 of last year. The Republicans voted 232 to 1 in favor of the budget bill with the ANWR Act in it, oil drilling in the wildlife refuge, opening up the wildlife refuge to rapacious oil drilling. At least twice they voted for an Interior appropriations bill which guts the Endangered Species Act, increasing logging in the Tongass National Forest, allowing pesticides to be used in national wildlife refuges and undermining the Mohave National Preserve. That was the fiscal year 1996 Interior appropriations bill, H.R. 1977, vote No. 853. It occurred on December 13 of last year. And on that vote the Yates motion to recommit to conference was opposed, and the Republicans voted 229 to 3 against recommiting that measure to conference.

Also the veto override, vote No. 5 on January 4, 1996, the Republican majority in this House voted 225 to 4 in favor of overriding the President's veto; 98 percent of them voted for that veto override, which gutted the Endangered Species Act. And also they voted for slashing the Land and Water Conservation Act programs which protect fish and wildlife habitat, fiscal year 1996 Interior Appropriations Act, H.R. 1977, vote No. 502, which occurred on June 12, 1995.

The gentleman from California, GEORGE MILLER, introduced an amendment to restore the administration's $235.1 million budget request for Land and Water Conservation Act land acquisition. The Republican majority voted 228 against that act. So they slashed the land and water conservation fund.

So let us not be conned. Let us not be conned by the figleaf of environmental protection when what has really been happening here on a systematic and aggressive basis is an attempt by this majority to undermine every significant environmental protection law that this country has.

MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MILLER] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about Medicare, but my colleagues on the other side of the aisle keep bringing up the issue of the environment. I am glad the previous speaker talked about all the environmental Republicans from the fact that President Nixon was one that brought forth the Environmental Protection Agency. The real core difference we have, we are all for the environment. The difference is whether Washington has all the answers or we know better in Florida what to do with the Florida environment and New York knows better what to do with their environment. I do not believe that Washington is the expert on every single subject. We need to let the States have the power to make some of those decisions.

What I rise today to talk about is Medicare. There are two articles in today's papers about Medicare; one in the New York Times, the front page, and one in the Wall Street Journal.

The New York Times article talks about how Medicare is in a bigger financial problem than we realize. And the Wall Street Journal article talks about how the Democrats are making it a campaign issue, which is too bad because Medicare is far too important to play politics with and to scare seniors.

The New York Times article says that the Medicare Program is in worse than projected financial problems. They talk about the fact that last year, for example, in the Medicare Program, the part A Program, was projected to have a $4.7 billion surplus. Instead it ran a $35.7 million deficit. So we started the problem a year ago. In this current fiscal year, the first 6 months, during this whole year the projection has been that Medicare would have a $4.2 billion surplus. We are losing money already this year. We are projected to have a surplus of $45 million this year. Instead we are going to have a $4.2 billion deficit for the first 6 months alone. Medicare is going bankrupt faster than we ever thought it was.

We said it was going to go bankrupt in 7 years. It is probably going to go bankrupt now in another 5 years or so, and we are anxious to get the trustees' report to see how serious the problem really is.

The one thing good about the New York Times article is Chris Jennings, who is a special assistant to President Clinton, says, Republicans and Democrats should work together to address the problem. That is exactly what we need to do. This is a bipartisan problem. It is too important to demagog and scare seniors. I have an 87-year-old mother who is dependent on Medicare. In 11 years I will be on Medicare. We all have family and relatives and friends on Medicare. We cannot allow the program to go bankrupt and we are not going to. We are going to save the system. We all agree to save the system.

President Clinton, my friends on the other side of the aisle, everybody wants to keep the system alive, keep it going. We have to do that. It is too important. But we should not scare seniors. Being from Florida, we know what happens when you scare seniors, Gov. Lawton Chiles used that in his campaign back in 1994, and there were hearings in the State legislature how they had a mediscare campaign in Florida. That is wrong and we should stop doing it here.

It was brought out in the Wall Street Journal article today. Let me read a couple comments from that.

> Democrats and their allies are mounting an aggressive drive to paint Republicans as Medicare's undertakers, ignoring the Democrats own overhaul proposals and charging instead in a national advertising campaign that the GOP wants to savage the program.

Come on. Let us get serious about this. Medicare is too important. We agree; they agree. We have to save the program. Stop using rhetoric like that. These are ads run by, whether it is the Democratic Party or the AFL–CIO spending their $35 million to beat up on Medicare, they say it is wrong to start cutting Medicare.

Minority Leader GEPHARDT has a quote in here, the extremist Republican Medicare cuts would destroy and devastate the program.

Again, let us get serious. That is not right. That is scaring seniors. I have more seniors in my district than anyone else. We have to take care of Medicare and we will.

Robert Reischauer is quoted in here, former head of the Congressional Budget Office, appointed by Democrats, saying, if you keep it in proper perspective, we are within striking distance of each other. We are going to spend $1.6 trillion over the next 7 years on Medicare. The difference between the Republican proposal and the Democratic proposal is $44 billion. We are not talking about big differences.

We have learned a great deal over the past year about what is wrong with it. It is full of waste and fraud and abuse. If we cannot find $44 billion over 7 years, more waste, fraud, and abuse, then we are not doing a very good job.

That is what we have to focus on, the waste, fraud, and abuse. The Republicans are allowing Medicare to be the fastest growing part of our budget. If you look at it on a per person basis, we are going from $4,800 per person on Medicare to $7,100 per person on Medicare over the 7 years, more money every year to spend on Medicare. So we

are going to take care of Medicare but we have to slow the rate of growth. To say we are destroying and devastating the program, that is wrong, and all you are doing is getting senior citizens scared. I have got too many senior citizens to have scared like that. I think it is wrong and we need to stand back and say this is a bipartisan issue. Let us work together to save the Medicare Program.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized during morning business for 4 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, every person who works desires to earn a livable wage. That is the reason for working.

That is not true today.

Some 12 million workers earn a mere minimum wage.

What is a minimum wage?

A minimum wage is the least, the lowest, the smallest wage possible—a minimal wage.

It is not a wage that reflects the cost of living.

It is a wage that the law allows an employer to pay, without regard to the cost of basics—food, clothing, and shelter.

A worker can work very hard and be productive—40 hours a week—and his boss is only required to pay the least, the lowest, the smallest possible wage—a minimal wage.

Mr. Speaker, is it fair to allow employers to pay a wage that is 50 cents less in value than it was when the wage was set 5 years ago? That is a 40-year low.

The price of living has steadily risen, while the pay for working has steadily fallen.

The proposal to increase wages to make them more livable is a constrained proposal.

The increase would be a barely significant 90-cents per hour—in two installments of 45 cents each, over 2 years—raising the minimum wage from $4.25 to $5.15.

Yet, while the 90-cent increase is barely significant when compared to wage and income increases among managers, politicians, and other professionals—it is an increase that could make life livable for millions of Americans.

A 90-cent raise in pay for minimum-wage workers would add $1,800 in additional income over a year.

That amount of money—$1,800—could buy 7 months' worth of groceries for the humble and unassuming family.

That amount of money—$1,800—for a single mother, with children—could cover 4 months of basic housing costs; 9 months of utility bills; more than a full year's tuition at a junior college; and 1 year of health care costs.

That amount of money could make a substantial difference in the quality of life for the working poor in America.

Who are the working poor in America, Mr. Speaker?

Most are adults—20 years old or older. In fact, more than 7 out of every 10 of the working poor are adults.

Also, most are women, and many are single, heads of households, with children. In fact, about 6 out of every 10 of the working poor are women.

Mr. Speaker, the least, the lowest, the smallest possible wage—the minimum wage—that the working poor can earn has increased just once in the past quarter of a century. That one increase in 25 years was by 90 cents in two installments as well.

Thoughful economists and scholars throughout the United States have closely monitored and studied the impact of minimum wage increases on the economy.

An impressive list of those economists and scholars have concluded that increasing the minimum wage had no significant, long-term, adverse impact on employment.

Indeed, a higher minimum wage can make it easier to fill vacancies and can decrease employee turnover.

We will soon debate welfare reform proposals. How can we realistically expect cooperation from those on public assistance when, at current minimum wage levels, a person who leaves welfare and takes a job would simply move from one poverty status to another?

In 1955, more than four decades ago, the value of the minimum wage was a little less than $4. Today, the value of the minimum wage is a little more than $4. Surely, we should not expect a worker in 1996 to live on 1955 wages.

Historically, the issue of a fair minimum wage has enjoyed broad, bipartisan support. The issue deserves no less today.

I urge all my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, to join in supporting a livable wage for all Americans.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 940, a bill with a modest increase in the minimum wage.

MORE ON THE MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to rise to address the minimum wage issue for just a moment as one of seven Republicans who a few weeks ago voted for a procedural motion on this floor that would have allowed the House to then consider actually a vote on increasing the minimum wage and as 1 of 20 Republicans who have now joined together to introduce our own version of legislation increasing the minimum wage. This is our competing version with the version that has been offered by our Democratic colleagues.

What I wanted to first point out before this minimum wage bandwagon gets too far along in the process is that some of our Democratic friends, especially those in the other body, are not leveling with the American people. They are not telling the American people, for example, that during the past 2 years, when they controlled both Houses of the Congress and of course the Presidency, they did not entertain legislation to increase the minimum wage. That sort of begs the question: Why, if you think it was such a high priority, if you think it is such a high priority now, why did you not address it when you had the chance, when you controlled both Houses of the Congress and the Presidency?

Second, Mr. Speaker, let me say that one reason, in fact the main reason that I supported increasing the minimum wage is because I believe we have to make work more attractive than welfare. I campaigned in 1994 on a promise of supporting an increase in the minimum wage provided it was coupled with meaningful welfare reform. I was concerned, first of all, that the minimum wage has lost a lot of its purchasing power to inflation and that we ought to increase the minimum wage to at least keep pace with inflation. Second, we ought to increase the minimum wage, as I said before, to make work more attractive than welfare.

Over the past 15 months, the new Republican majority in the Congress has been attempting to help President Clinton, who, as candidate Clinton back in 1992, campaigned on a promise of ending welfare as we know it, made good on the promise. We have been dealing with meaningful welfare reform. We want to end the Federal entitlement for welfare. We want to make block grant programs which the States would administer. We want to impose a time limit of 2 years or less at the discretion of the States on receiving welfare benefits and a 5-year lifetime limit on receiving welfare benefits.

Second and probably even more importantly, we want to require able-bodied welfare recipients to work at least part time or enter a job training program in exchange for their benefits. That is emphasizing work over welfare. We recognize because so many welfare recipients are single mothers and that they struggle against heroic odds that we have to increase funding for child care and transportation to help those welfare recipients make that difficult transition from welfare to work. But again part of making that transition from welfare to work, at least in my view, is to increase the minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am cosponsoring legislation which would increase the minimum wage, the Federal minimum wage to $5.25 per hour over the next year. If we are going to reform welfare by moving people from welfare to work, they need to be able to earn a more living wage. They ought to be in a position as a former welfare recipient to enter the work force in an entry level position, at least being able to meet their own needs, hopefully as well as the needs of dependents.