sides of the aisle that want to help working families. Let us not get confused by the calculations that are being used to determine whether people are rich or not.

We know whether people work or not, we know whether they pay taxes or not. Americans would be amazed to find out that the calculations that are being used to determine their wealth include the rental value of their home. If they own their home or are making payments on their home, the payment on their home is less than their home would rent for. Suddenly, they get a big rental value added to their income. Those things that their employer may have given them as benefits are added to their income.

More than half of the family incomes of teachers, of construction workers, of mechanics would be classified as rich if we calculate family income the way the White House wants to. We cannot do that.

Let us be fair, let us work with each other, let us help working families make ends meet.

## LABOR DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATION IS POLITICAL WITCH-HUNT

(Mr. KIND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, as a new member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, I was surprised to learn last week that the Speaker had just awarded the subcommittee $1½ million out of a political slush fund to conduct an emergency investigation on labor unions and working men and women around the country. First of all, when we are trying to balance the budget, where are we coming up with an additional $1.5 million for a political witch-hunt that will send us on a fishing expedition all over the country. Just another investigation.

Here is a novel idea, if the Committee on Education and the Workforce has an additional $1.5 million, why do we not spend it on education and worker training such as the TRIO Program. That is a program that goes to low-income students to prepare them for higher education learning.

In fact, the two largest universities in my district in western Wisconsin, Eau Claire and La Crosse, service roughly 2,000 low-income students in the TRIO Program. Another $1½ million will double that amount.

I think we should use our taxpayer dollars wisely instead of going on another fishing expedition conducting an unlimited investigation on unwarranted charges.

## UNCLE SAM CAN GET BY ON LESS FROM MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES

(Mr. RADANOVICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, if we had a rich uncle and we were barely making ends meet, would we be giving him more of our paycheck every 2 weeks? I think that is what we are doing. We are giving Uncle Sam more and more of our hard-earned money every year. Is it not time the rich uncle started letting us keep a little more?

Republicans in Congress think so. We have a tax relief plan that gives taxpayers a break at every stage of life. It helps middle-class families who have been hit hardest by expanding government these past 40 years. It helps middle-class families save for college by providing tax incentives for kids to go to college. It lowers the tax on savings and investment, which means a stronger economy and more jobs. And it reduces the death tax, which means that fewer families will have to sell the family farm or family businesses when the owner dies.

Uncle Sam can get by with a little less. Let us support the Republican tax package that provides tax relief to middle-class families at every stage of life.

## INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR PROVISION IN TAX BILL WILL HURT MIDDLE-INCOME WORKERS

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, there is a real snake in the woodpile in this tax bill that nobody is talking about. There is a little provision in there that says an employer can declare an employee an independent contractor. That $500 tax credit per child will not mean a heck of a lot to a taxpayer if suddenly they find out they are responsible for all their own health insurance, paying their own FICA, and paying their payroll tax.

This is something that will also cost the American taxpayer an estimated $2.2 billion over the next 10 years. Let me quote Secretary of the Treasury, Robert Rubin, and what he has to say about this one provision.

''The provisions for independent contractor status would permit employers to avoid essential worker protections.'' Think about this, constituents. I want everyone to know about this one. At a time when we are trying to expand health and pension coverage, this proposal could lead to widespread shifting of employees to independent contractor status.

No longer an employee, but on their own. They would take away the protections such as pension and health coverage and, consequently, wage and hour protections, unemployment insurance benefits, and compensation for work related injuries. Wake up America, it is coming.

## TREASURY DEPARTMENT NOT BEING STRAIGHT WITH AMERICAN PEOPLE

(Mr. CAMP asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Department is not being straight with the American people. The Treasury Department is using misleading, bogus information about the bipartisan tax relief package.

For example, they use something called family economic income. Now, people are probably wondering what is family economic income? That is the imputed rental value of a home, even though one does not plan to rent it; inside buildup on a pension or benefits one may receive at work.

That is a definition of income that was dropped by the Joint Tax Committee, which is a bipartisan committee, Democrat and Republican, House and Senate, and they dropped that definition of income when the Democrats were in control of the Congress.

I think those who are calling family economic income the correct definition will have a hard time explaining to the schoolteachers, truck drivers, waitresses, factory workers, farmers, and nurses in my district that they are rich.

According to the Treasury Department's absurd calculation, family economic income would take someone earning $45,000 a year and, for purposes of that calculation, say they earned $75,000 a year. I guess anything to deny middle-class tax relief.

## REPUBLICAN TAX RELIEF—TAKE A TURN ON THE WEB

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, yesterday Speaker GINGRICH stood in the well of this House and he invited the American people to visit the House Republican web site, calculate their estimated tax savings under the Republican plan.

So I thought, let us see how an average working tax-paying mom with two kids would fare under the Republican plan. Let me just say I received an error message saying they could not calculate her savings. Perhaps that is because this family would get a big fat zero. No tax break at all under the Republican plan.

Then I entered in the data for someone making $1 million a year, half of that in capital gains. The Republican calculator had no problem figuring out their tax break: $40,000.

That is true. A millionaire gets $40,000 back and a working taxpaying mother in this country gets zero.

The Washington Post editorial this morning hit it right on the nose. ''The Republicans have written a tax bill

tilted heavily toward the better off.'' They target this as ''tax trash''. If anything, this was an understatement. Everyone should take a turn on the web and see for themselves.

## EXTENDING AGREEMENT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OF UNITED STATES AND GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA CONCERNING FISHERIES OFF COASTS OF THE UNITED STATES—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. 105–106)

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD) laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on Resources and ordered to be printed:

*To the Congress of the United States:*

In accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), I transmit herewith an Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the People's Republic of China Extending the Agreement of July 23, 1985, Concerning Fisheries Off the Coasts of the United States, with Annexes and Agreed Minutes, as amended and extended. This Agreement, which was effected by an exchange of notes at Beijing on June 6 and July 1, 1996, extends the 1985 Agreement to July 1, 1998.

In light of the importance of our fisheries relationship with the People's Republic of China, I urge that the Congress give favorable consideration to this Agreement at an early date.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *July 16, 1997.*

□ 1145

## DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Pursuant to House Resolution 184 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 2158.

□ 1145

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2158) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, with Mr. COMBEST in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose on Tuesday, July 15, 1997, the amendment by the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] had been disposed of and the bill had been read through page 8, line 8.

The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

MEDICIAL ADMINISTRATION AND MISCELLANEOUS OPERATING EXPENSES

For necessary expenses in the administration of the medical, hospital, nursing home, domiciliary, construction, supply, and research activities, as authorized by law; administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, architectural, engineering, real property acquisition and disposition, construction and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including site acquisition; engineering and architectural activities not charged to project cost; and research and development in building construction technology; $60,160,000, plus reimbursements.

GENERAL POST FUND, NATIONAL HOMES

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For the cost of direct loans, $7,000, as authorized by Public Law 102–54, section 8, which shall be transferred from the ''General post fund'': *Provided,* That such costs, including the cost of modifying such loans, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, as amended: *Provided further,* That these funds are available to subsidize gross obligations for the principal amount of direct loans not to exceed $70,000.

In addition, for administrative expenses to carry out the direct loan programs, $54,000, which shall be transferred from the ''General post fund'', as authorized by Public Law 102–54, section 8.

DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES

For necessary operating expenses of the Department of Veterans Affairs, not otherwise provided for, including uniforms or allowances therefor; not to exceed $25,000 for official reception and representation expenses; hire of passenger motor vehicles; and reimbursement of the General Services Administration for security guard services, and the Department of Defense for the cost of overseas employee mail; $853,385,000: *Provided,* That funds under this heading shall be available to administer the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act: *Provided further,* That funds under this heading shall be available for the conduct of medical examinations requested by the Veterans Benefits Administration in connection with claims for benefits under title 38, United States Code: *Provided further,* That none of the funds made available under this heading may be used for the relocation of the loan guaranty divisions of the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in St. Petersburg, Florida to the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia.

NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM

For necessary expenses for the maintenance and operation of the National Cemetery System, not otherwise provided for, including uniforms or allowances thereof; cemeterial expenses as authorized by law; purchase of three passenger motor vehicles for use in cemeterial operations; and hire of passenger motor vehicles, $84,183,000.

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

For necessary expenses of the Office of Inspector General in carrying out the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, $31,013,000.

CONSTRUCTION, MAJOR PROJECTS

For constructing, altering, extending and improving any of the facilities under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or for any of the purposes set forth in sections 316, 2404, 2406, 8102, 8103, 8106, 8108, 8109, 8110, and 8122 of title 38, United States Code, including planning, architectural and engineering services, maintenance or guarantee period services costs associated with equipment guarantees provided under the project, services of claims analysts, offsite utility and storm drainage system construction costs, and site acquisition, where the estimated cost of a project is $4,000,000 or more or where funds for a project were made available in a previous major project appropriation, $155,600,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided,* That except for advance planning of projects funded through the advance planning fund and the design of projects funded through the design fund, none of these funds shall be used for any project which has not been considered and approved by the Congress in the budgetary process: *Provided further,* That funds provided in this appropriation for fiscal year 1998, for each approved project shall be obligated (1) by the awarding of a construction documents contract by September 30, 1998, and (2) by the awarding of a construction contract by September 30, 1999: *Provided further,* That the Secretary shall promptly report in writing to the Comptroller General and to the Committees on Appropriations any approved major construction project in which obligations are not incurred within the time limitations established above; and the Comptroller General shall review the report in accordance with the procedures established by section 1015 of the Impoundment Control Act of 1974 (title X of Public Law 93–344): *Provided further,* That no funds from any other account except the ''Parking revolving fund'', may be obligated for constructing, altering, extending, or improving a project which was approved in the budget process and funded in this account until one year after substantial completion and beneficial occupancy by the Department of Veterans Affairs of the project or any part thereof with respect to that part only.

AMENDMENTS OFFERED BY MR. LEWIS OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I offer two amendments, and I ask unanimous consent that they be considered en bloc.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will report the amendments.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendments offered by Mr. LEWIS of California:

On page 11, line 7, strike ''$155,600,000'' and insert in lieu thereof ''$159,600,000''.

On page 12, line 21, strike ''$175,000,000'' and insert in lieu thereof ''$176,500,000''.

On page 13, line 19, strike ''$60,000,000'' and insert in lieu thereof ''$54,500,000''.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate being recognized. I will not take the entire 5 minutes. These two amendments are noncontroversial and supported by the Members from the areas that are affected.

The first amendment adds $4 million to VA's construction major projects account for a columbarium at the National Memorial Cemetery in Arizona.