embargo. Since the bill was introduced, 44 other members have signed on as co-sponsors, again representing the range of the ideological spectrum.

The Cuban Humanitarian Trade Act of 1997 would overturn a particularly insidious clause in the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 that made the importation of foods and medicines technically not illegal, but so bureaucratically complex as to amount to a de facto secondary embargo.

The 1992 legislation was sold as a means of putting the squeeze on Castro and his Communist government after Cuba's long-time patron, the Soviet Union, had collapsed, wiping out more than 70 percent of the island nation's trade. Rather than constricting Castro, whose regime remains as unrepentantly communist as ever, it slowly began to sap the strength of average Cubans.

The Periodo Especial, as Cubans refer to the miserable hand that life has dealt them, strictly rationed everything, from food to gasoline to times when electricity and other utility services are available. Work schedules were altered to account for the breakdown in public transportation facilities, and school days were shortened. Bicycles became a principal way of getting about.

Then Castro pulled another fast one on his Yankee tormentors. He pegged the peso to the U.S. dollar, opened the doors to tourism (but for only a few Americans, thanks to the embargo) and allowed a measure of free enterprise to not only exist, but flourish.

When I accompanied a delegation led by Trimino last November to inspect the effect the embargo was having on health care facilities, I was stunned to find a country that was enjoying a 7 percent growth rate, a building boom in parts of Havana and in regions designated to handle the influx of tourists, and a general sense that the worst of the Periodo Especial, or special period, was over.

Yet, there were plenty of caution flags that it wasn't; indeed, that perhaps the worst was yet to come.

For one, a Foreign Ministry official confided that the 7 percent growth rate was relevant only when one gauged how far Cuba had fallen. Cubans with access to dollars could shop for food in well-stocked markets, including the supermarket once reserved for members of the Soviet diplomatic corps.

But those who were still in the internal economy, where the unofficial peso is little more than script, were at the mercy of the state-run systems, where shelves were empty save for rice and beans.

More telling, however, were my conversations with several doctors and other medical personnel throughout the island. Cubans take great pride in the medical system they built from scratch since Castro came to power in 1959. And discussions would always begin with the typical boasting about what type of services that medical system could provide.

Pressed, however, these practitioners would drop the hyperbole and cut to the chase: The embargo was denying them not only the medicines needed to administer to the sick, but the tools and the educational materials needed to keep up with their practices.

In a major Havana hospital, the lead physician in one ward took me into a room where ambulatory patients were being fed their noon meal, a concoction that appeared to be something near a rice and bean soup. All of the patients received the amount of calories needed for their recovery, he noted even if variety in their diet was lacking. Then he drove home another point: Patients were fed even if the staff had to forgo its minimum daily dietary requirements.

At another major medical center, this time in the southern port of Cienfuegos, the director admitted that he feared the outbreak of any epidemic, because the combination of the shortages of antibiotics and the limitations on nutrition would make it impossible for his doctors to put up a fight.

But that was November. Despite the Helms-Burton Act that vows to punish foreign corporations for doing business in Cuba, the re-election of President Clinton held the hope out to Cubans that a warming might be near. Clinton himself had fed this perception by his refusal to sanction the most draconian of Helms-Burton provisions, a decision he reaffirmed this summer.

If the president is squeamish about implementing those provisions, however, his administration has done little else to indicate that it is interested in patching things up, almost four decades since the U.S.-sponsored invasion to topple Castro went disastrously awry at the Bay of Pigs.

Meanwhile, Trimino reports, the situation has become graver, especially in the Oriente, or eastern provinces normally out of sight to tourists. In the provincial city of Holguin, she told of recently visiting with a young girl just out of the hospital who had been treated for severe malnutrition; her daily intake consisted of a biscuit made from sweet potatoes. She had been receiving a liter of yogert , as a substitute for milk, every four days.

This is something I cannot independently corroborate, although I have no reason to doubt it. While I did not see any starving people during my visit last November, I saw enough too-thin people, especially in the countryside, and emaciated livestock to convince me—the relative prosperity in Havana and other cities notwithstanding—that Cuba could be on the verge of a major health crisis. It might still be. Or worse, it might be sliding into the middle of one, the outcome of which could be too horrific to consider.

The question Americans have to ask is simple. Is this what we want? Does our hatred for Castro and his communist system so blind us that we are willing to allow a humanitarian tragedy of immense proportions to unfold 90 miles off our shores, just in hopes it will overthrow him?

Over his long reign, Fidel Castro has survived numerous American attempts at removal, including those of assassination and the threat (almost to the brink, in fact) of nuclear war. Most experts who follow Cuba say only Castro's naturally appointed date with the Grim Reaper will allow Washington to say it has finally achieved its goal, and all reports are that for a man in his early 70s, he is much healthier (and better fed) than his average countryman.

That is not the point, though, insists Carmen Trimino as she makes her rounds of congressional offices, trying to enlist more representatives to her heartfelt cause. (Not one member of the Arizona delegation has been receptive.)

''It is my people who are facing starvation,'' she says indignantly.

Perhaps she will win the day. Embargoes are a favored tool of U.S. diplomacy, often in collusion with the United Nations, for use against recalcitrant regimes. Witness the fact that sanctions are being applied not only to Cuba but also in Iraq (where Saddam Hussein is allowed to sell oil to purchase foods and medicines), Libya and Myanmar (Burma). Limited sanctions still are applied to what is left of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

But sanctions are rarely effective. Notice that the strongmen running the governments of the aforementioned countries are all still in power, even if their people are at the point of emotional and physical breakdown. Nor are sanctions even relevant; America's official fascination in maintaining a dialogue with the butchers of Tiananmen Square, who defiantly continue to keep more than 1 billion Chinese under Communist oppression, has made a mockery of U.S. efforts to use economic measures as a whip against lesser regimes.

Carmen Trimino only wishes that more members of Congress would see in their hearts the futility of denying foods and medicines,; the bill she wants the House to consider takes no stand on other parts of the economic embargo. (Perhaps it should; Castro might last, but the communist system would likely collapse upon the rush of American goods). She will keep trying. Her Cuban-American heart is in it.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 2378, TREASURY, POSTAL SERVICE, AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT 1998

SPEECH OF

HON. MAX SANDLIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 1997

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a founding member of the Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus. I rise as a father of four. I rise as a little league coach and a former county court at law judge. I rise today to say that I support every effort to protect our Nation's children and I support the motion to instruct by the Member from Maryland. As much as any Member on this floor, I support full funding for programs to safeguard, protect, and rescue our missing and exploited children. I cannot vote for the previous question because we should not vote on this motion to instruct conferees in its current form.

I will vote against the previous question because these instructions are incomplete. This motion to instruct should include instructions to adopt the Senate position on the Member of Congress cost of living increase. The Republican leadership has precluded an up or down vote on the Member pay raise, and forced me to vote against the previous question to voice my opposition to the pay increase. I support the motion. I will vote against the previous question not for what is included in the motion, but for what is not included in the motion.

The Member pay raise should be put to a straight vote with an honest, open debate. This Treasury/Postal appropriations bill was rushed through the floor with a rule that denied a vote on the pay raise. Members were denied the opportunity to cast a vote on the pay raise and denied a true forum to voice their opposition to the pay raise. The leadership of this House owe the people of America, the people we are here to serve, an honest debate and an honest vote on the pay raise.

I did not come to Congress to cut spending only when I am not affected by the cut. The American people deserve as much as we can give them. The American people deserve a balanced budget. The American people deserve tax relief. The American people deserve the assurance that Social Security and Medicare will be there to serve them when they retire. The American people deserve the best education this country can offer them.

If we are going to ask all American to sacrifice to balance the budget, we should expect

the same of ourselves. I wish I did not have to vote against the previous question simply to voice my opposition to the pay raise, but I do. The protection of our children is an issue that is near to my heart, but so is my commitment to the people of east Texas to balance the Federal budget. I oppose this motion to instruct in its current form only because it is incomplete.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 1997

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, it appears that after a long battle this House may be close to considering campaign finance reform. It is my hope that when we do that we will have a fair, bipartisan bill that contains no poison pills and offers real reform of the system.

I have been working with fellow freshman Members to create such a bill. We agreed at the very beginning to put aside any poison pills, items that would automatically put one party at a competitive disadvantage. The result was a bill that bans soft money, increases candidate disclosure, and requires organizations making independent expenditures to reveal who they are and how much money they are spending. It was not an easy process, but we learned to work together and trust each other and in the end drafted a fair bill that will make a real difference in the system.

There may be a great temptation to kill a reform bill with partisan amendments. I hope that we can avoid that fate. The only way a campaign finance bill can become law is through bipartisan cooperation. If we can reject poison pills, reject partisan attacks and reject the temptation to pass a bill without teeth, then we can see true campaign finance reform for the first time since the 1970's.

Today we are at a crucial time in this debate, I hope we don't blow it.

EXTEND SECTION 245(i) OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT

HON. ROBERT A. WEYGAND

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 1997

Mr. WEYGAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the importance of extending section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Section 245(i) allows immigrants who are out of status, but legally eligible for visas, to pay a $1,000 fee to adjust their status while remaining within the borders of the United States.

These immigrants are eligible to obtain legal status in the form of permanent residence in this country based on a family relationship or an offer of employment.

What naysayers must understand is that the 245(i) program does not alter U.S. immigration policy, or make entering our country any easier. What it does is assist a pediatrician who comes to this country to help care for our kids. It helps foreign students who have been educated at American universities and have chosen to utilize their new talents right here in the United States. It assists a wife who comes to America to join her husband who has built a solid career here. It allows all of these people to renew their status with a fee, rather than requiring them to take a return trip to their native country. In some cases they may not be able to return for 3 to 5 years.

But the dream of staying in the United States for many of these people may soon be just that—a dream. Next Tuesday, these people who have come here hoping to be reunited with a family member or hoping to provide their talents to the greatest nation on earth, may be forced back to their native land without a blink of an eye. On September 30, 1997, 245(i) is scheduled to sunset. If we do not extend this section, a mass deportation will occur—wives will be taken from their husbands' arms and valued workers will lose their jobs. Families will be ripped apart and businesses will be disrupted. We should not and cannot allow this to happen.

An extension of 245(i) would not only benefit immigrants currently living in the United States, their family members and their employers, but would benefit our country as a whole. For example, that fee these immigrants pay to renew their status goes straight into the U.S. State Department coffers, at a sum of $200 million each year. 245(i) provides the Immigration and Naturalization Service with the funds necessary to carry out important enforcement and detention functions.

By allowing immigrants to change their status within the our Nation, the United States has also been able to reduce the applications at the consulate by 3 percent. This allows them to focus on their primary functions of enhancing foreign diplomacy and assisting United States citizens living or traveling abroad.

I ask you, as Members of Congress and representatives of the people, what is the benefit to our country of breaking up families and breaking down businesses? I urge my colleagues to support the extension of this necessary and beneficial provision.

THE NEED TO ELIMINATE THE MARRIAGE TAX

HON. ANNE M. NORTHUP

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 1997

Mrs. NORTHUP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of eliminating the marriage tax. Although this Congress has made significant steps in reducing the tax burden on Americans we still have a long road ahead of us in restructuring our Tax Code and instill fairness to all taxpayers. As we travel down this road one of our first stops must be to eliminate the tax that penalizes the sacred institution of marriage.

My opposition to the tax on marriage is simply a question of fairness. Why should a man and woman who are married and living together be taxed more than a man and woman living together who are not married? CBO has estimated that 21 million couples have paid on average $1,400 and some exceeding $20,000 in surplus taxes as a result of having to change their filing status to married. This is a substantial amount of money that could be used toward a child's education, retirement savings, a new home or a car. Furthermore, a couple should not have to consider the IRS when deciding whether to enter into marriage. The marriage penalty blatantly contradicts what this Congress has attempted to achieve in strengthening American families and providing significant tax relief.

Married couples are faced with numerous challenges and burdens. Let us not forget that married couples frequently are in the process of raising children—a wonderful and very expensive experience—and should therefore be afforded as much financial relief as possible. Let's not punish these couples for their love and commitment for one another, let's reward them for their willingness to strengthen our society through the sacred bond of marriage.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOHN EDWARD PORTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 1997

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I regret that I was unavoidably absent from the Chamber on Rollcall votes Nos. 410 through 415.

Had I been present, I would have voted no on Roll No. 410, no on Roll No. 411, aye on Roll No. 412, aye on Roll No. 413, no on Roll No. 414, and aye on Roll No. 415.

THE OCEANS ACT OF 1997

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 1997

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Oceans Act of 1997. I am pleased to be able to offer this bill with the support of the chairman of Resources' Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans, Representative JIM SAXTON; the ranking Democrat of that subcommittee, Representative NEIL ABERCROMBIE; and the ranking Democrat on the Resources Committee, Representative GEORGE MILLER, as well as Representatives GILCHREST, PALLONE, GEORGE BROWN, PORTER GOSS, PATRICK KENNEDY, and SOLOMON ORTIZ.

This is an exciting time in the history of man's relationship with the oceans. With this year as the International Year of the Reef, and next year as the International Year of the Ocean, more focus is being directed on the state of the world's coasts and oceans than ever before. And rightly so.

We are critically dependent on the oceans, and the resources we derive from them. Commercial and recreational fishing provides 1.5 million jobs and an estimated $111 billion annually to the Nation's economy, and more than 30 percent of the United States GNP is produced in coastal counties. Americans love the ocean and beaches: they are our leading tourist destination, with 85 percent of tourist revenues being spent in coastal States. In 1993 more than 180 million Americans visited coastal waters nationwide, and in California alone the revenue generated by tourism is approximately $38 billion annually. The beautiful coasts and ocean in my district are key to the areas's $1.5 billion travel and tourism industry.