belief that government can and should play an active role in solving people's problems, and he worked mightily to better his home State of West Virginia.

Senator Randolph was a champion of the interstate highway system, the Appalachian Regional Commission, local airports, and countless infrastructure projects that brought the basics to our people. That is how he thought of himself, once saying, ''I essentially am a West Virginia senator. I'm not what you'd call a national Senator or international Senator.''

It is true that Jennings Randolph was an effective, tireless advocate of West Virginia. But if my colleagues think that he did not have an influence on this Nation, they would be badly mistaken. After all, it was Jennings Randolph who authored the constitutional amendment that gave 18-year-olds the right to vote. And in so many other areas, his work and support was crucial to policies that advantaged citizens from coast to coast. Throughout his service in the House and then in the Senate, he was a model of courtesy, of grace and professionalism.

As the Senate historian said so well, ''Very few senatorial careers were as full as his. He always struck me,'' the historian, ''as the image of a Senator's Senator, a teacher within the institution who would take young Senators beneath his wing and lecture them, sometimes gently and sometimes not so gently, about the importance of etiquette.''

□ 1100

Mr. Speaker, with Jennings Randolph passing, the people of West Virginia have lost a great friend and representative. We salute his lasting record of achievement and honor his memory as a passionate, dedicated public servant.

WELLER-MCINTOSH II MARRIAGE TAX COMPROMISE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, questions are often asked in this body, and I think one of the most important questions asked is: Why is enactment of the Marriage Tax Elimination Act so important for working families in America? I think this series of questions best illustrates why.

Do Americans feel that it is fair that our tax code imposes a higher tax penalty on marriage? Do Americans feel that it is fair that 21 million married working couples on average pay $1,400 more a year just because they are married, $1,400 more than an identical coupleS that lives together outside of marriage?

Do Americans feel that it is right that our Tax Code actually provides an incentive to get divorced because the only way today to avoid the marriage tax penalty is to get divorced and to live together outside of marriage?

Clearly, Americans feel that the marriage tax penalty is not only unfair, it is wrong. It is immoral that our Tax Code punishes society's most basic institution. The Congressional Budget Office tells us that 21 million married working couples pay an average of $1,400 more just because they are married.

Let me give you an example of a couple in the south suburbs. I represent the south side of Chicago and the south suburbs of Chicago and Illinois. I have an example here of a south suburban couple, working man and working woman, who pay the marriage tax penalty.

The gentleman is a machinist at Caterpillar where they make the big equipment, the heavy earth-moving equipment. This machinist makes $30,500 a year. Under the current Tax Code, if you add in the standard deduction and exemption, he is taxed at the 15 percent rate.

Say this machinist meets a schoolteacher a tenured schoolteacher in the Joliet public schools. The schoolteacher has an identical income. She would be in the 15 percent tax rate if she stays single. But if they choose to get married, if they choose to live in holy matrimony, under our Tax Code, this married working couple, a machinist at Caterpillar and a schoolteacher in the Joliet public schools who choose to get married, will pay the average marriage tax penalty of almost $1,400.

In Washington, D.C., $1,400 is just a drop in the bucket. But in Joliet, Illinois, in the south suburb of Chicago, $1,400 for this machinist and schoolteacher is real money, real money for real people: one year's tuition at Joliet Junior College, 3 months of day care at the local day care center in Joliet; and it is also several months' worth of car payments. That is real money that Uncle Sam is taking away from this machinist and this schoolteacher just because they are married.

We have a solution. We believe that elimination of the marriage tax penalty should be our number one priority as we address the tax provisions in this year's balanced budget which will be, hopefully, the second balanced budget in over a generation.

The Marriage Tax Elimination Act, which is now called the compromise as well as Weller-McIntosh II, it is pretty simple. What it does is it doubles the standard deduction for those who do not itemize from $4,150 for a single person, $8,300 for a married couple, simply doubling it, helping eliminate the marriage penalty.

Also, for the five tax brackets, we double the income threshold for couples. Currently, you are in the 15 percent tax bracket if you make $24,650. We double that to $49,300, eliminating the marriage penalty. Because, currently, even if you are making $24,650, our current Tax Code, you can only make $42,000. So there is about an $8,000 marriage tax penalty in the 15 percent tax bracket.

We want to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. The Marriage Tax Elimination Act of 1998 accomplishes that goal. We believe it should be the centerpiece of this year's balanced budget plan.

There are always competing ideas, and President Clinton has a good idea. He says our priority should be expanding the current child care tax credit. Under the President's child care tax credit, the average family that will qualify would see about an extra $368 in total take-home pay a year.

If we eliminate the marriage tax penalty for that machinist and schoolteacher, they would see an extra $1,400 in take-home pay. So let us think about that which is better. If we eliminate the marriage tax penalty, $1,400 will pay for almost 3 months of child care at a local day care center in Joliet. If we forget about eliminating the marriage tax penalty and just do the expanding the current child tax credit, the President's $358 will pay for 3 weeks worth of day care in Joliet, Illinois. So which is better, 3 weeks or 3 months?

Clearly, elimination of the marriage tax penalty is a better deal for working couples and working married couples throughout America.

What is the bottom line? We want to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. It is wrong that our Tax Code punishes society's most basic institution. It is time that we stop punishing marriage.

We think about it. This Congress in the last 3 years has made helping families by raising take-home pay a real priority. We strengthened families by providing the adoption tax credit in 1996 so that families who hope to provide a loving home for a child in need of adoption can better afford it.

In 1997, we provided the $500 per child tax credit which will benefit 3 million children in Illinois, an extra $1½ billion in higher take-home pay that will stay in Illinois rather than coming to Washington.

Let us eliminate the marriage tax penalty. $1,400 is real money for real people. Let us make elimination of the marriage tax penalty the centerpiece of this year's budget agreement.

OLDER AMERICANS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ) is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, May is Older Americans Month, which gives us the special opportunity to honor our Nation's seniors. The theme of this month is living longer and growing stronger in America; and we are saluting the growing numbers of Americans who enjoy increased longevity and continue to contribute to their families, their communities and to this country.

However, we cannot adequately honor them unless we have first ensured them a safe and a healthy life-style.

Americans age 65 and older are the fastest-growing segment of our population. In just 2 years, there will be over 35 million of them in this country. Unfortunately, some of the most critical programs that provide seniors with food, health care, and living assistance are now being threatened.

The Older Americans Act has not been reauthorized since 1995. The programs are running out of funding. As a result, seniors throughout this country are suffering.

I have heard from many back home about how these cuts are affecting their lives. I have received many letters from seniors telling me their stories of having to be on a waiting list for 3 years just to get something like Meals on Wheels.

The majority party in this House must promise, and there is no better time than this month of May to get working on the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. We must complete this work before the 105th Congress adjourns. If not, then essential programs like Meals on Wheels, nutritional services, and elder abuse prevention programs are not going to reach some of our neediest seniors.

Throughout the decades of its existence, the Older Americans Act has served our Nation's aging population well. These programs are important not only because they help seniors maintain a healthy life-style, but they also bolster seniors' independence and their sense of dignity. If we are to truly honor our Nation's seniors this month, then we must reauthorize the Older Americans Act.

COSPONSOR HOUSE RESOLUTION 37, MASS TRANSIT PASSES FOR HOUSE EMPLOYEES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today, tens of thousands of Americans are celebrating Bike to Work Day by using bicycles to get to their place of employment. They are reinforcing the notion that using a bicycle can be fun; it can provide a healthy and convenient alternative to the private automobile. It will illustrate the impact that small steps can take to improve our quality of life.

At a time when we in Congress are worried about the health of the District of Columbia, when we are concerned about the funding of the Washington Area Mass Transit Authority, when we are looking at almost a billion dollars just to replace the Wilson Bridge here in the metropolitan area, and when, in Washington, D.C., consistently, the congestion is ranked in the top five in the country, bicycles make sense.

There is another simple step that we can take to improve the quality of life, and that is using more effectively the $10 billion investment that we have made in the Washington Area Metro System. It, too, is a way to save money, protect the environment, and improve the quality of life. It has been part of the Federal policy for years to promote the use of transit as an alternative to the single occupant vehicle.

In my community of Portland, Oregon, we promote that alternative by using transit passes as a way to make it easier for employees while we save money. There are over 60 individual companies that provide transit passes to over 45,000 people in the community.

Just this last month, the largest private sector employer in Oregon, Intel, developed a program that is providing free passes for all 11,000 of its employees because it makes sense for the company and for the community.

Here in Washington, D.C., we have over 1,000 employers in the private sector, over 100 Federal agencies that together provide transit checks for over 50,000 commuters in the metropolitan area. Even the United States Senate for the last 6 years has provided transit passes for its employees who do not get free parking.

I would suggest that it is time for us in the House of Representatives to take a step back and look at our policies to get in step with what we suggest the rest of America could do. If only 5 percent of our employees used the transit program, one-half the percentage in the United States Senate, we could eliminate this parking on the parking lot immediately adjacent to the Washington Capitol South Metro Station. We could obviously save the upkeep, the 24-hour-a-day staffing that is there to protect the cars, and we could convert that block into a higher and better use. Certainly there are a number of opportunities for one of the most valuable pieces of real estate in Washington, D.C.

I have introduced House Resolution 37; and, currently, there are over 180 of my colleagues that have cosponsored it. I would suggest that it is time for the remaining people in the House to take a step back, think about what is good for the environment, think about what is fair for our employees, to not simply provide up to $2,000 a year of free parking but provide an alternative for our employees who decide to do the right thing, protecting the environment by using mass transit.

It is good for the environment. It is good for our employees. It is a simple step to use our land more thoughtfully. Most important, it gets the House of Representatives in step with the Senate, with the rest of the Federal bureaucracy, and with what we are telling the private sector to do.

I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in sponsoring House Resolution 37.

OPPOSE ANY EFFORT TO REPEAL THE PRESSLER AMENDMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, as you know, last week, the Republic of India conducted five underground nuclear tests. The Clinton administration imposed sanctions after the second set of tests and I believe was correct in doing so. These sanctions are extremely severe and may affect as much as $20 billion in funds to India.

Mr. Speaker, I am also concerned now that U.S. policy proceed toward an increased dialogue with India. We have made tremendous strides in improving relations between our two countries in recent years, and we must not go back to a Cold War strategy.

Unfortunately, there are Members of this body who feel that there is a need to impose further trade and economic sanctions. There may be an attempt to attach an amendment to the House defense authorization bill that would remove Most Favored Nation's status to India on textile and apparel products.

□ 1115

Mr. Speaker, imposing further economic sanctions on India is meritless and counterproductive to current relations. It would only hurt the workers in India who make the textiles. This amendment to the defense authorization bill would derail U.S.-India relations at times when dialogue between the two democracies is paramount.

I was pleased to read that, at the G–8 summit in England, President Clinton stated that, although sanctions were necessary, he did not want to isolate India.

Mr. Speaker, India cited the threat from China and Pakistan as major reasons for conducting the nuclear tests. For years, Pakistan and China have cooperated in nuclear and missile development. A recent Congressional Research Service Center study showed that the Chinese government had transferred missile technology and nuclear equipment and materials to Iran and Pakistan numerous times. All of these transfers were clearly in violation of international and U.S. law, but they were not met with economic sanctions by the administration.

Mr. Speaker, China is a nuclear-armed dictatorship that had a border war in 1964 against India. Much to India's concern, China continues to maintain a nuclear presence in occupied Tibet and a large military force in Burma. It is unfortunate that the administration and Members of this body continue to overlook these facts.

India's nuclear tests must be understood in the context of the huge threat posed by China. The United States should be taking the military and nuclear threat from China's dictatorship more seriously.