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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 10, 2000.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JUDY BIGGERT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill and a concurrent resolution of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested.

S. 2071. An act to benefit electricity consumers by promoting the reliability of the bulk-power system.

S. Con. Res. 129. Concurrent Resolution expressing the sense of Congress regarding the importance and value of education in United States history.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for 5 minutes.

THE MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Madam Speaker, over the last several years many of us have asked a question that we hear back at home time and time again. I represent the South Side of Chicago, the south suburbs, Cook and Will Counties, communities like Joliet, bedroom communities like Morris, Frankfort, a lot of farm towns.

I find whether I am in the city, the suburbs, or the country people often ask a pretty basic, fundamental question. That is, they ask a question: Is it right, is it fair that under our tax code 25 million married working couples pay on average $1,400 more in taxes just because they are married? They ask that fundamental question of fairness: Is it right, is it fair, that under our Tax Code if one chooses to get married, their taxes are going to go up?

We call that the marriage tax penalty, and it occurs where we have a husband and wife who are both in the work force, a two-earner household who, when they choose to join together in holy matrimony, one of our society's most basic institutions, they end up paying higher taxes than if they stayed single or got divorced. The vast majority of folks back home tell me they believe that is wrong.

The marriage tax penalty essentially works this way. Let me introduce a couple here, Shad and Michelle Hallihan, two public school teachers from Joliet, Illinois. They just had a baby this year and are starting a family. But because they are both in the work force, they suffer on average the average marriage tax penalty of almost $1,400.

Back home in Joliet that $1,400, that is 3 months of day care for their child at the local day care center while they both teach. That is a year's tuition at Joliet Junior College. The marriage tax penalty on average is real money to real people.

For some here in this House and some over in the Senate, particularly the folks down at the White House, they want to spend that money here in Washington rather than letting good folks like Shad and Michelle Hallihan keep what they suffer in the marriage tax penalty, money they could spend on their newborn baby.

Madam Speaker, Shad and Michelle's marriage tax penalty occurs because when we are married, we file jointly, we combine our income. So Shad and Michelle with their current income, if they stayed single or just chose to live together, they would each pay in the 15 percent tax bracket. But because they combine their income when they file jointly, they are forced to pay in a higher tax bracket, which causes them to pay $1,400 more in higher taxes.

I am proud to say as a key part of the Republican agenda this year this House passed overwhelmingly the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, H.R. 6. Every Republican and thankfully 48 Democrats broke ranks with their leadership and said they, too, wanted to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. We passed it out of the House with overwhelming bipartisan support.

Unfortunately, I guess I should congratulate the Senate Democrats because they prevented the Marriage Tax Elimination Act from moving through the Senate. Of course, we are now moving it through the budget process to get around their parliamentary procedure that they are using to prevent us from eliminating the marriage tax penalty.

Later this week we are going to be voting on an agreement between the House and Senate which essentially wipes out the marriage tax for 25 million couples. In fact, the legislation we will be voting on later this week is

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identical to what the House passed earlier this year, doubling the standard deduction for joint filers to twice that of singles. That will help those who do not itemize their taxes who suffer the marriage tax penalty, essentially wiping it out for every one of them.

We also widen the 15 percent bracket so joint filers can earn twice as much as single filers in the 15 percent tax bracket. The benefit of that is that means if one is an itemizer, someone who owns a home, and most middle class family do, that is why they itemize their taxes, they, too, will see their marriage tax penalty eliminated.

There are some on the other side and those at the White House who say, well, maybe we will do a little marriage tax relief, and we will just help those who do not itemize. So they are saying if one owns a home and is married and suffers the marriage tax penalty, that is tough. Bill Clinton, AL GORE, want them to continue suffering the marriage tax penalty.

Madam Speaker, I believe there is a need to help everyone who suffers the marriage tax penalty, whether they own a home or not, whether they itemize their taxes or not.

We have a great opportunity this week, Madam Speaker. I invite every Democrat to join with every Republican in voting to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. Think what it means to young couples like Shad and Michelle Hallihan, two hard-working public school teachers from Joliet, Illinois, who, because they chose to live together in holy matrimony and chose to join together in marriage, now suffer the marriage tax penalty. We are going to help them by eliminating the marriage tax penalty.

Madam Speaker, I want to invite everyone in this House to join together in helping good people like Shad and Michelle Hallihan. Let us do it. Let us eliminate the marriage tax penalty. Let us do it in a bipartisan way. I hope this time the President will sign it into law.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 38 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, source of all authority under the heavens, and true Spirit who governs the world, renew us in Your image and make us a holy Nation.

Help young and old alike to comply to the laws of this land and offer respect to all who hold positions of rightful authority.

May Your Spirit stir in each human heart a gracious freedom that chooses to obey. May people everywhere embrace laws which assure good order and protect the life and liberty of all.

Give all lawmakers, this day, prudence and wisdom so that citizens may see Your holy will in true governance, both in good times and in bad times. For You live and govern now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives.

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, June 30, 2000.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted to Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on June 30, 2000 at 1:25 p.m.

S. 148: That the Senate Agreed to House amendment.

H.R. 4425: That the Senate Agreed to conference report.

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

JEFF TRANDAHL,
Clerk of the House.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 4 of rule I, the Speaker signed the following enrolled bill on Friday, June 30, 2000:

H.R. 4425, making appropriations for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closure for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes.

And the Speaker pro tempore signed the following enrolled bill on Tuesday, July 4, 2000:

S. 148, to require the Secretary of the Interior to establish a program to provide assistance in the conservation of neotropical migratory birds.

APPOINTMENT AS MEMBER TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to Section 5(a) of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Act (36 U.S.C. 101 note) and the order of the House of Thursday, June 29, 2000, the Speaker on Friday, June 30, 2000, appointed the following member on the part of the House to the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission to fill the existing vacancy thereon:

Ms. Lura Lynn Ryan, Kankakee, Illinois.

COMMUNICATION FROM CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, which was read and, without objection, referred to the Committee on Appropriations:

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE,
Washington, DC, June 27, 2000.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Enclosed please find copies of resolutions approved by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on June 21, 2000, in accordance with 40 U.S.C. §606.

With warm regards, I remain
Sincerely,

BUD SHUSTER,
Chairman.

There was no objection.

GAS PRICES SKYROCKET BECAUSE OF ADMINISTRATION

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Madam Speaker, every American with a car cannot help but notice how gas prices are skyrocketing out of control. Before summer began, the Clinton-Gore administration released a report showing that Americans could be paying as much as $1.80 a gallon for gas by this summer.

But, lo and behold, the Clinton Administration is no better at predicting gas prices than they are at protecting our Nation's most classified nuclear secrets. In many Midwest and Western States, prices so far are higher than $1.80; how about $2.35 a gallon and rising?

Vice President GORE, now touting his risky scheme to cut gas taxes, seems to forget that in 1993 he cast the tie-