SUPPORT WELFARE REFORM TO MAKE THE PROGRAM EVEN BETTER

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, over the past 5 years we have all witnessed how well our Nation's welfare system can work. Taking a look at this chart, we can see that in 1996 we had over 14 million welfare cases on the books, and in the year 2002 we now have 5 million. Nine million Americans have moved from welfare to work, a success story. We have heard the success stories from thousands of Americans who have moved from the welfare-to-work process. Now these former welfare recipients have the ability to support their families, hold down jobs and pay their bills. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, they have recovered their dignity and self-esteem that was once lost to the bureaucracy of welfare.

We promised America 6 years ago that welfare reform would get people back to work. Despite the doubts and naysaying of our critics, we have kept that promise. And while the latest welfare reduction statistics are very impressive, there is always room for improvement. This is our chance to reach out and do the right thing again to the people in need. We owe it to the millions of people that we have already gotten off the welfare rolls, and we owe it to the next million eager to join them.

I urge Members to support H.R. 4700, and I urge them to stand up today and do the right thing.

SUPPORT COMMONSENSE WELFARE REFORM

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

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, our President speaks often about changing the tone in Washington. To help him do that, we, with commonsense control of the Congress, were able to change some policies in Washington. For the better part of a half century, the Federal Government evaluated success by the number of people who were added to the welfare rolls. We said, that has fundamentally got to change, that true compassion is making sure people find jobs, that at the end of the day when all is said and done, the best social program for any American is a job. Welfare reform, enacted over a half decade ago, has put us on the road to that commonsense measure, where the real measure of compassion is the number of people who leave the welfare rolls and find work, where honest compassion is providing educational opportunity and child care opportunities to enable people to leave welfare and go to work.

And despite some of the mean-spirited catcalls of over a half decade ago about children being thrown into the streets and all sorts of other things that I will not repeat because they are so beneath the dignity of this House, we have restored the basic dignity to millions of Americans who now derive satisfaction from a day's work and a day's pay. We need to continue this battle and continue welfare reform.

I ask my colleagues to join with me on a bipartisan basis with that type of vote today in this House in favor of continuing commonsense welfare reform.

VOTE ''YES'' FOR WELFARE REFORM

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have good news to report. The good news is that today we are going to vote on the welfare reform bill which will constructively change the lives of millions of people. In 1996, Congress passed legislation that opened the door of independence, and today it is critical that we vote to keep that door open. We must continue the successes that started with Republican leadership 6 years ago.

Welfare reform's new goal will be to spur States and welfare recipients to even greater levels of success. Through employment, work-related services, child support reform and counseling for healthy family relationships, America can continue down the path of independence. We made a historic and positive change in our society 6 years ago when we passed welfare reform legislation, but we have just turned the corner. Our work is far from done. Let us make sure we keep the door of independence open for those in need. Let us get willing people back to work. There is nothing more satisfying than the smiling faces of success.

Vote ''yes'' for welfare reform reauthorization.

SUPPORT DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE TO WELFARE REFORM

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I note some degree of irony here. Just a few days ago on the floor of this Chamber, the House approved a massive repudiation of one of the Contract with America, the Gingrich Revolution, in terms of the Freedom to Farm Act. It was a massive welfare program for a few of the Nation's farmers in a few States. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we are coming forward here today considering additions and changes to the welfare program that ironically are opposed by the majority of the Nation's Governors, Republican and Democrat alike. I am hopeful that there will be strong support for the efforts that have been offered by the Democrats, my colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), to be able to maintain flexibility, maintain approaches that work on the State level; and hopefully we will not continue the hypocrisy where we provide welfare for those who need it the least and have mean-spirited Federal intervention from the Federal level for those who actually need our help.

SUPPORT WELFARE REFORM

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I am cursed with a memory full of useless information, some of which were the comments made by Democrats in 1996 when we passed welfare reform.

Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, said the bill was an outrage that would hurt and impoverish millions. The Urban Institute predicted welfare reform would push 2.6 million more people into poverty. And the National Organization for Women said 12.8 million people on welfare would risk sinking deeper into poverty.

We have heard this morning on this floor, Mr. Speaker, the same. There they go again. The truth is that the vicious cycle of poverty has been broken. There are 2.3 million fewer children living in poverty today than before the 1996 welfare reform bill and 4.2 million fewer living in poverty across the board. The reality is the 1996 welfare reform bill worked. Let us be sure in Congress today to deal and to assist the neediest among us by continuing this important reform with the welfare bill before the Congress this week.

SUPPORT WELFARE REFORM

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

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, nearly 9 million people have gone from welfare checks to paychecks, thanks to Republicans.

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Let me give an example of a constituent in my district, and I will call her Janice. She is a single mother of a 5-year-old, and last spring Janice lost her job in a soft economy. With a tight labor market and no college degree, Janice could not find a job to support her family. But thanks to welfare reform and the good people at a Texas Workforce Center, Janice applied for welfare the very next day. She did not want to stay on welfare; she wanted to find a job. The center helped her organize her options and find a job at a manufacturing plant. They also helped her find child care. Mr. Speaker, eventually, they helped her find a job in the Garland Independent School District.

She now has self-sufficient pay, a regular schedule, full benefits, and