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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 [Mr. CAMP].

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 23, 1995.

I hereby designate the Honorable DAVE CAMP to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING BUSINESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 1995, 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 and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON] for 5 minutes.

TAX REVENUE BELONGS TO THE TAXPAYER, NOT TO GOVERNMENT

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Washington Post carried a story bemoaning all the benefits and grants that States receive from the Federal Government which will supposedly be taken away under a balanced budget amendment. Members ought to read this article. Included in these grants, according to this writer, are the Federal tax exemptions of State and municipal bonds, and the deductibility of State and local taxes.

The fact that we do not tax people on their property taxes is a grant to the States? Under this way of thinking, anything somebody is able to keep of their hard-earned paychecks would be grants or gifts from the Government.

Did Members ever hear anything so outrageous in their lives? When, oh when, will the inside the beltway, anti-family, tax-increasing, and bureaucratic-spending intellectuals in this city finally realize that tax breaks and lower taxes for the people back home are not grants and subsidies from the Government that we give them from the graciousness of our hearts?

It is preposterous to call a tax exemption for an individual or a family a grant or subsidy from the State. Taxed revenues belong to the taxpayers, not to this or any other part of the government. It is about time we realize that.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SOLOMON. I am glad to yield to my good friend, the gentlewoman from Colorado.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to ask the gentleman about the other point they made in that article that I read with interest, too. That was about the fact that one of the Governors that is beating up on us the most also has not paid that State's 10 percent toward disaster relief, and is back here with his tin cup asking for the next round of disaster relief.

I think it pointed out that Governor Wilson of California took all the disaster relief last year without putting up the State's 10 percent that it was supposed to, it is a deadbeat on that, and that they also were giving back taxes at the State level.

I just thought maybe, since the gentleman is on this side of the aisle, maybe that is one thing he and I could agree on, that the State of California certainly should pay its old debts before it comes back here with its tin cup for the next time around.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, California certainly has their problems. I come from the Adirondack Mountains in the Northeast and, you know, we have our own disasters up there with bad weather. We have never come asking for help.

However, that is beside the point. The point I was making is just because we do not tax people does not mean it is a grant or that it is a gift that we are giving to the American people. That in no way is any kind of a grant.

They say in this article that we give $230 billion in grants to the States, and they include about $80 billion in this. The gentlewoman I think agrees with me that is not a grant from this Congress.

INTRODUCING THE WOMEN'S RIGHT TO KNOW ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentlewoman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, today what I wanted to talk about was the fact that the gentleman from Connecticut, CHRIS SHAYS, and I and any number of bipartisan Members will be introducing today the Women's Right To Know Act.

We feel that this is a very, very critical bill that unequivocally asserts that women are adults and that they have the right to receive information about the full range of their reproductive health choices, and the Federal Government should do nothing to either gag their medical professionals that are dealing with them or put cotton in the ears of the women and say that they are not able to hear it.

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As Members know, this goes right to the gag rule which right now is very shaky. President Clinton lifted the gag rule when he came into office, but this Congress has never lifted it through legislation, so what this is saying is that no government, be they Federal, State, or local, can dictate to doctors or to any medical professional what women can hear nor tell women that they cannot hear it.

We introduced this bill on this very historic 23d anniversary of Roe versus Wade, which the Supreme Court upheld and has continued to uphold. We also know that in the Republican contract for a while the gag rule repeal was being overridden. They were putting the gag rule back on. I am very pleased that the Republican contract decided that was not where they were supposed to be, and that came away, but it makes us all feel a little uncertain.

We think the time has come for Members to rally around in a bipartisan manner, stand up very firmly, and say that if women are going to have responsibility for their lives, we have to treat them like responsible adults. I am very pleased that many members of the medical profession obviously agree with us: no more gag rules for women and no more gag rules for doctors.

We have the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists agreeing with us, we have the American Medical Association agreeing with us, and I could go on and on with people saying women should be treated equally at all levels in their doctor-patient relationship.

This is important to move forward on, and I think it is also an interesting time to pose it, because we saw yesterday the death of Rose Kennedy. Here is a woman who, when she was born, could not vote, and just a few days before she died, saw her granddaughter sworn into office. What a change that woman saw in her life.

I think we have seen women becoming more and more empowered under this Government, but I think the gag rule goes right at that empowerment of women and says we are not mature enough to hear what is out there, or hear what different choices are. If we are going to hold women accountable, we have to treat them as adults.

Mr. Speaker, I hope many Members of this body will join with the gentleman from Connecticut and I and the other bipartisan cosponsors and get on with this, because it is time once and for all that we legislatively join with the President in saying that the gag rule should not be there, the Federal Government should not deny the right to hear information on health to any American citizen, nor should the Federal Government or any U.S. section of government dictate to the medical profession what they can say to different people within our society.

That is wrong, and that is un-American. That certainly is turning back the clock, not moving the clock forward, as many people have cheered in seeing it moving forward, whether it was Rose Kennedy or many of the rest of the women.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Mrs. SCHROEDER. I yield to the gentleman from Connecticut.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the gentlewoman from Colorado for moving forward on this important legislation. It is just absolutely essential that a woman know of her rights, and never be denied because of a government law from knowing of her rights.

I just want to thank the gentlewoman for introducing this bill. We will be working on a bipartisan basis to have the will of the Chamber be recognized.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. I thank the gentleman from Connecticut, and I thank the gentleman from Connecticut for his courage in standing up on this issue. There are strong supporters on both sides of the aisle. This should not be a partisan issue.

This is an American issue. It is about free speech, it is about responsibility, and it is about the right to know different health options that are out there. Therefore, I thank the gentleman for carrying the banner on this. We will aggressively do it on this side, and let us have a race to see who can get the most cosponsors.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, today Representative CHRIS SHAYS and I are introducing legislation with bipartisan support for the Women's Right To Know Act, a bill that unequivocally asserts American women's right to receive information about the full range of their reproductive health options.

The Women's Right To Know Act amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and simply says that government, Federal or State, cannot restrict a doctor's right to give or a woman's right to receive information about her reproduction health options, including family planning, prenatal care, adoption, and abortion services.

We introduce this bill on the 23d anniversary of Roe versus Wade, the case in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the right to choose abortion is protected by the Federal Constitution.

It's also a time when the gag rule stands on shaky ground. The original Republican contract included a gag rule on information welfare recipients could receive about abortion. We then heard that was a mistake. It wasn't supposed to be in there.

I don't want to leave anything to chance. It's time for this Congress to stand firm and say no more gag rules for women and no more gag rules for doctors.

That's what this bill says. We say it's a doctor's right to give information about reproductive health and a woman's right to receive that information. Very simple.

I would like also to remind my colleagues that the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists strongly condemn Government interference with the freedom of communication between physicians and patients. That is what this legislation outlaws: Government interference with the doctor-patient relationship.

In 1991, the Supreme Court in Rust versus Sullivan maintained that the Government can censor health information in Federally funded family planning clinics. That has made it more imperative than ever for Congress to enact the Women's Right To Know Act. Passage of this act would make it clear that censoring information about women's reproductive health options violates a women's right to know accurate information about her health.

IN SUPPORT OF THE UNFUNDED MANDATE REFORM ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. NORWOOD] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Unfunded Mandate Reform Act. I rise today to argue that the time has come for us to reign in the unfunded mandates and the misguided notion under which they operate. By voting for this bill, we can show the American people that we mean business by reducing the dictatorial power that Congress has exercised over the States through unfunded mandates.

I think we should take a moment to consider the idea of the unfunded mandate. In essence, with an unfunded mandate, the Federal Government goes to State and local governments and says you must do this, and you must pay for it yourself. How incredibly arrogant. How did this Government grow so arrogant as to pass such dictates onto the States? We can not wisely set the priorities for spending the limited funds a county has to operate with. We should not try to micromanage 159 Georgia counties.

If we are going to dictate to the States, we must also have the guts to raise the taxes that pay for the dictates or mandates—not pass that responsibility onto State and county officials. If the Federal Government cannot afford these programs, the programs should be passed onto the States as strong suggestions—not unfunded mandates.

But we all know that there is more to the arguments against this bill than fear of cutting certain Federal programs. Underneath all that they say is a simple refrain—a tired, failed, liberal refrain—that says to the people we are the Federal Government, we know what is best for you, we are the Federal Government, we must take care of you. Why? Because you can't take care of yourself.

What made us so smart? Do we really believe we want clean air and clean water more than the folks at home? How did we become so endowed with the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong for America? We are simply 435 men and women who won elections on November 8. We have the power to pass laws that force State action, but we should use that power in moderation. Remember the words of