

But today it is under fire, and I am proud to come to the defense of an excellent piece of Republican legislation—the Davis-Bacon Act.

To be sure, the time has come to update and reform this venerable act. But in no way has the time come for us to abandon an act which has so admirably fulfilled its mission of benefiting America.

What, exactly, does Davis-Bacon do? The reality is often obscured by the rhetoric of those who wish to abolish the act. The act does nothing more than say that for Federal contracts, contractors must pay workers the prevailing wages for their local area.

Contrary to what some on the other side say, this law does not require all workers to be paid prevailing wage. Those who are enrolled in a recognized apprentice program, receive a training wage that can be as low as 40 percent of the prevailing wage.

Davis-Bacon ensures that when the Federal Government comes into our districts, that cut-rate, low-wage, low-skill contractors do not take the jobs that should rightfully go to our constituents. Outrage over such occurrences is what impelled the Republican legislators who created this bill to draft their legislation.

In fact, Davis-Bacon recognized we had fly-by-night contractors coming into New England from other parts of the country stealing jobs away from the local economy. We are talking about making sure that when the Government contracts for a building, taxpayers get a quality product, and that will only happen if we hire quality labor.

Some argue that Davis-Bacon drives up the cost of Federal projects. Those who make such an argument are not looking closely at the crucial question of productivity. A well-trained worker simply produces more each hour than does an ill-trained, poorly paid worker.

This act simply guarantees taxpayers that their tax dollars will go to the best workers, not to the cheapest. That their tax dollars will go to open opportunity, not to shut people out of opportunity. That workers of all ages and races will have an avenue into the middle class, and not have the road to progress blocked.

Remember, we are talking about workers and working families in our districts. We are talking about middle-class families trying to stay independent. We are not talking about extravagant paychecks here. We are simply talking about paying people a living wage.

For a bricklayer or stonemason from Woonsocket, RI the prevailing wage for building construction is \$19.90 an hour. Considering the state of our economy and the weather in Rhode Island, a bricklayer from Woonsocket would be lucky to work 30 weeks a year, or about 1,200 hours a year, for a total of \$23,880 a year. That's it. Nothing more.

For a bricklayer or stonemason from Bristol working on highway construction the prevailing hourly wage is

\$18.35. Once again, at 30 weeks a year this comes out to just over \$22,000 a year.

For a bridge construction project in East Providence, the operator of a forklift would be paid \$17.34 or \$20,808 a year.

For a welding machine operator from Providence working on a sewer line project, Davis-Bacon means being paid \$14.62 an hour or \$17,544.

What does the Republican Party have against paying a worker \$17,544 a year? Mr. Speaker, how can a Congress that is talking about valuing work, that is talking about helping the middle class, propose the elimination of Davis-Bacon?

I urge my colleagues to look closely at this issue, to listen carefully to their constituents who are worried about economic insecurity, and ask themselves if pulling away this support for people makes families more secure? A careful look will show that repealing Davis-Bacon will put people in danger of slipping back, of losing ground, of losing hope.

I urge my colleagues to join me in saving Davis-Bacon.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY RESTORATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. BRYANT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRYANT of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, this week, the House will take up the National Security Restoration Act.

The goal of the Contract With America is to make sure that if aggressors threaten us, our Armed Forces will be strong enough to fight and win. The bill would keep our defenses prepared for a worst-case scenario of two major regional conflicts occurring at about the same time. It would keep us prepared for a variety of possible circumstances around the world. We saw how effective defensive systems such as the Patriot missile were in Desert Storm. This bill would provide for the development of systems to protect our country and our allies from attacks with weapons of mass destruction. We are committed to implementing this type of system at the earliest practical date.

Despite reduction and shortfalls in defense funding, the President has deployed U.S. forces on more peacetime and humanitarian missions per year than ever before. At the end of last year, over 70,000 United States personnel were serving in places like Iraq, Bosnia, Macedonia, the Adriatic Sea, Rwanda, Haiti, and Cuba. And yet, the President has requested cutting defense spending to \$10.6 billion below 1995 levels.

Even though we still have the best armed forces in the world, we keep seeing readiness decline, because all the peacekeeping efforts are being funded with military readiness funds. As Sen-

ator JOHN WARNER noted, "That's been the cookie jar into which the hand dips to get the needed dollars when we elect to send our troops here, there, everywhere in the cause of freedom or otherwise."

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We are not going to allow a return to the hollow forces of the Carter administration. One of the most egregious things that needs correction right now is military pay is nearly 13 percent lower than pay for comparable civilian jobs. Close to 17,000 junior enlisted men and women have to rely on food stamps.

A real commitment to quality of life for military personnel is necessary for morale and is the right thing to do.

The National Security Restoration Act has the following: It establishes an advisory commission to assess our military needs. It commits the United States to speed up the development and deployment of missile defense systems to protect U.S. territory and U.S. troops in battle. It restricts deployment of U.S. troops to missions in our national interest. It demands U.S. troops be commanded by U.S. commanders and not placed under foreign commanders. It reduces the cost to the United States of U.N. peacekeeping missions and demands the U.S. Mission to the U.N. press for reforms in the notorious U.N. management practices. It tightens controls and reporting requirements for the sharing of U.S. intelligence information with the United Nations. It expresses the sense of Congress that firewalls be restored between the defense and discretionary domestic spending for the upcoming budget years, and it reemphasizes the commitment of the United States to strong and viable NATO alliances, urging the emerging Eastern European democracies be assisted in the transition to full NATO membership.

Mr. Speaker, we have been working hard to keep our Contract With America. In the contract we promised we would make sure no U.S. troops are forced to serve under foreign command, and that we restore the necessary part of our Armed Forces to keep our defenses strong and maintain our credibility around the world. We are keeping our promises.

ANOTHER ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOODLATTE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. STUPAK] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STUPAK. Happy St. Valentine's Day, America, and happy St. Valentine's Day to my wife, Laurie, in Michigan.

On this St. Valentine's Day we debated a crime bill, but justice was not done on the crime bill we debated today. In fact, what happened today is