

The majority would have us believe that an increased minimum wage would, without a doubt, increase unemployment. According to many studies, however, this is not true. In fact, over 100 leading economists, including three Nobel Prize winners, have urged an increase in the minimum wage.

If Congress truly cares about working Americans, it will raise the minimum wage. Doing so would raise standards of living for many Americans, and would also be a significant step toward closing the income gap that threatens to do great damage to American society. As part of my continuing efforts to understand and combat this income gap, I am hosting a forum on April 12 at the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul, MN. The forum is entitled "Renewing the Social Contract," and will address the questions of why working American families are struggling in today's economy. My special guest at this forum will be AFL-CIO president John Sweeney. Mr. Sweeney has been a tireless advocate on behalf of American workers, pushing for fair wages, good benefits, and honest labor-management cooperation.

The forum will explore what Government and business can do to ease economic anxiety, lessen income inequality, and increase job security. In addition to Mr. Sweeney, I will be welcoming representatives of business and academia, as well as workers who know what it is like to struggle for low wages and who have experienced the difficult search for livable-wage jobs.

I am hopeful that this event will shed additional light on the income gap, and will produce ideas for cooperation between Government, labor, and business that will enable all Americans to share in our growing economy.

A TRIBUTE TO CHAD THOMPSON

HON. WILLIAM M. "MAC" THORNBERRY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Chad Thompson of Amarillo, TX who is the State winner of the Voice of Democracy broadcast script writing contest, administered by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. His essay is a reflection of our American heritage, to do what we can for our neighbors, community, and our Nation:

The great red sun peeked over the blue horizon. Just as dawn broke a young woman was strolling barefoot along the beach. She breathed in the cool morning air and felt the sand between her toes. The uniform stretch of beach was broken only by starfish washed in by the tide. There were thousands of them covering the beach.

Too bad, the young woman thought, that all of them would dry up and die before long. Starfish thrive in shallow water, but once they are beached there is no other option but death. She picked up one of the starfish, took a long look at it, and threw it far back into the ocean, giving it a second chance at life. Then she picked up another and hurled it back into the water too.

She had been doing this for a while when a casual jogger passed by and asked, "Are you

crazy? Do you realize there are millions of starfish here? You can't make a difference." She looked up at him, propelled another starfish to safety and replied, "I made a difference to that one."

Behind this simple story lies the solution to answering America's call. I believe America's call is for its citizens to love their country, to cherish its traditions while making room for new ones, and to work for the betterment of their fellow countrymen. Each person can make a tremendous difference—whether to the nation as a whole, their state, their community, or in their own neighborhood. The time is now for Americans to respond. Every American should realize large problems can be surmounted—that for every Goliath of society, there is a David who, with the courage to act, can solve what seemed to be an impossible task. David was able to conquer the huge giant Goliath with just one stone, in the same way we can eradicate any problem in America with a positive attitude and willingness to work hard.

I believe that cherishing America is to show pride in its symbols. For example, last summer, as I stepped out of my house early on July 4th to jog, something seemed a little strange. It wasn't anything that could hinder me physically, but it wounded by sense of patriotism. The problem was that no one had the American flag displayed.

Before I ran to the end of the street, I turned around, walked back in to my home, found the fabric of our nation, and proudly put it in its place in our yard. Afterwards I continued my jog, but when I returned a smile came across my face, for the neighborhood was now splashed with red, white, and blue.

You see, as everyone around the block saw the flag in our yard, they put theirs out as well. This incident shows how the power of one small act can cause a chain reaction that makes a big difference. Independence day in my neighborhood was a little brighter which in turn made me proud to be an American.

In April of 1995 tragedy ate at America's heart. When the Alfred Murrah Federal building in Oklahoma City was bombed, it created a black hole that pulled everyone to its center. Everyone pulled together in the terrible tragedy that took so many lives. There were no problems to race, religion or politics—just fellow humans who needed help and the people of the community responded. Soon offers of help poured in from all quarters of the country. Americans took off work across the country in hopes of helping the victims. Some were only able to offer teddy bears for the wounded children, while others could offer free intensive care; either way though, the lives of all Americans were altered in some form or fashion from that senseless act.

Captain Scott O'Grady knows what it takes to make a difference. His fighter plane was downed over Bosnian territory, and while the nation feared he was dead or captured, he lay hidden in bushes surviving on ants and rainwater. His life was saved because his fellow soldiers kept listening for him long after common sense told them to give up. The United States military was flawless in his rescue. His willingness to survive as an American played an extremely important role, but the unsung heroes were the men who answered America's call by serving in the Marines. Just by his will to live and to return home, Scott O'Grady made a difference by focusing America's attention on the honor, strength and determination held by our servicemen.

America's call can be answered by young and old, by a small act such as helping a

child learn to read, the heroic deeds of a fireman saving a life or a soldier defending the nation in war. Anything positive counts. It is up to every American to take part in this government. Make a difference, and fill out that ballot. Remember it is your obligation to do something.

It is time now to answer America's call. Like the woman on the beach saving one starfish at a time, decide today to be that person who can make a difference.

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF PERSIAN GULF WAR

HON. W.J. (BILLY) TAUZIN

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, this year marks the fifth anniversary of the Persian Gulf war—a war fought over oil in foreign lands. Although the U.S. troops and our allies displayed remarkable sophistication and prowess in bringing Saddam to his knees, our national security concerns remain and our position has weakened. In 1991, America imported 45 percent of the U.S. demand for oil; 5 years later our dependence has grown. Today we import over half, 52 percent of our annual consumption. The time has come for the Nation to decide to give our young men and women the option to take U.S. jobs on U.S. soil or go to war to protect foreign oil on which we are so dependent.

Our first commitment should be made to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and its mandated 1 billion barrel mark. The mere threat of drawing down these reserves calmed the oil and gas markets and stabilized the price during the Persian Gulf war crisis. Instead of preserving this stockpile we have reduced the minimum fill level, ceased the purchase of new oil, decided to sell 7 million barrels of oil, maybe as many as 100 million barrels, and lost the use of a 75 million barrel facility at Weeks Island which is in my district. It is time to move in the other direction.

We must create incentives to produce domestically and keep jobs at home instead of driving companies and employees abroad. I encourage Congress and the administration to move forward with the technical suggestions that the oil and gas caucus presented to President Clinton, as well as, sign in to law a commonsense regulatory reform bill, the royalty simplification and fairness bill, and the Coast Guard authorization bill which contains important language dealing with OPA '90's financial responsibility section.

In addition, we should reject the EPA's efforts to expand the toxic release inventory to include certain oil and gas wastes, speak out against efforts to increase taxes on oil and gas production and reject mandating an OCS moratorium.

I ask that you join me and many Members in both bodies to enact these legislative and regulatory changes. We must send the message that America's dependence on foreign oil comes at the price of U.S. lives and U.S. jobs.