I support a proposal to increase the minimum wage 90 cents over two years, from its current level of $4.25 per hour to $5.15 per hour. The first 45 cents of the new increase would not even restore the buying power the minimum wage has lost since the last increase five years ago. Inflation has already eaten away 81% of that increase. If we do not act to increase the minimum wage this year, it will fall to a 40 year low in terms of purchasing power.

WHO EARNS MINIMUM WAGE

The typical minimum wage worker is a white woman over age 20 working in the service sector or the retail industry. About 60% of the minimum wage earners are women, and about 70% of the 12 million workers who would benefit from a minimum wage increase—since their wages are less than $5.15 per hour—are 20 years of age or older. The average minimum wage worker brings home half of the family's earnings, so an increase in the minimum wage can make a real difference.

An increase in the minimum wage would benefit over 315,000 Hoosiers, or 12.4% of the Indiana workforce, and would mean an additional $1800 in earnings each year.

EFFECT ON JOBS

Opponents of a minimum wage increase claim that it will wipe out jobs. But the weight of the evidence today supports the conclusion that a moderate minimum wage increase would not have a significant impact on job levels, because it would help boost productivity and lower employee turnover. Over 100 economists, including several Nobel laureates, have urged the President and Congress to approve a minimum wage increase and have affirmed that it would not have a significant effect on employment.

Opponents of a minimum wage increase also criticize it as being an inefficient way to alleviate poverty. In a sense they are right. A minimum wage increase is not as well targeted as the earned income tax credit, which directly benefits low-paid workers either by cutting their taxes or, if they owe no tax, giving them a check from the Treasury. The credit is structured to encourage the poor to go to work without hitting their employers. My view is that the best antipoverty strategy is probably to mix minimum wages with tax credits.

There are limits, however, to how much higher Congress can push the tax credit. The problem, of course, with increases in the earned income tax credit is that it costs the government billions of dollars that it does not have, and won't for many years. I do not, however, support efforts by Speaker Gingrich to reduce the earned income tax credit.

A MATTER OF FAIRNESS

Surely we want to help ensure that people who work hard can get ahead. Raising the income of America's lowest paid workers is part of meeting that challenge. If we value work, we ought to raise the value of the minimum wage. Most people believe that somebody who works a 40-hour week ought to make a wage they can live on. It is hard to believe that people can oppose that notion.

I have been particularly troubled by growing income inequality in this country, an the declining value of the minimum wage only contributes to that problem. For most of the past four decades the minimum wage averaged between 45% and 50% of the average hourly wage in the economy. After a small gain in 1990 and 1991, the minimum wage has now dropped to 38% of the average hourly wage.

My view is that the minimum wage should be increased as a simple matter of fairness to unskilled workers. These workers are not protected by unions. They cannot and do not lobby Congress. The minimum wage offers a margin of security to those who want a job rather than a handout. For a rich country like America, that's not too much to provide.

I have been frustrated in Congress in recent weeks when we were even denied an opportunity to vote on a raise in the minimum wage. It is unfair to refuse to allow a vote on the increase in the minimum wage, which is supported by 75% of the American people.

CONCLUSION

I don't for a moment think that an increase in the minimum wage is ultimately the cure for low working wages in this country, but until we find an answer to that broader question fundamental decency requires us to increase the income of the lowest-income working Americans.

I talked to a person earning minimum wage the other day. When pay day comes, she is several days late on the rent, the fuel tank on her automobile has to be filled, she is unable to buy enough food, her family is not healthy and needs medical help, and the utility companies are about ready to shut the power off. She is faced with miserable choices. But she said she was proud to be a working person, and only wished she could make a living for her family.

An increase in the minimum wage would help families get by. It would reward work, giving 12 million workers a direct increase, and it would be good for the American economy.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 159, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT RELATING TO TAXES

SPEECH OF

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 15, 1996

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to House Joint Resolution 159. This constitutional change is unnecessary and misguided, and I urge my colleagues to oppose it.

This initiative strikes at the very heart of our constitutional democracy, eroding the principle of majority rule. The Constitution requires a supermajority only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a veto override or impeachment of a President. This resolution would give a small minority of this House the power to block critical bills—even responsible legislation designed to balance the Federal budget—if you contain a tax increase. If Congress can declare war by a simple majority vote, surely we can pass a tax bill by the same margin.

I also foresee difficulties defining a tax increase. Earlier this year, the Republican House majority passed a bill reducing the earned income tax credit, a tax credit for our Nation's working poor. That measure effectively increased low-income Americans' taxes by reducing their credit. However, the GOP did not consider that bill a tax increase. It is likely we will see similar controversies. If Congress eliminates an unjustified tax deduction, thereby resulting in a tax bracket change for an individual or a corporation, does that constitute a tax increase? Would it require a supermajority to right this hypothetical wrong? The answer is uncertain as this legislation is currently written.

The resolution's provision waiving the two-thirds requirement for de minimis tax increases is also troublesome. By failing to define a de minimis increase, the resolution abdicates responsibility for developing this guideline and turns if over to the Federal courts. The courts will undoubtedly spend many years and thousands of taxpayers dollars delineating precisely what is meant by this term.

There are other technical difficulties with the measure. It does not define the time period over which a tax increase must be estimated in order to trigger the two-thirds requirement. Similarly, this amendment does not address situations where bills projected to decrease tax revenues actually increase taxes. Closing loopholes in the Tax Code could also be almost impossible if these efforts were subject to a two-thirds vote on the House.

Mr. Speaker, I would also note that the Republican-controlled House has not even been able to live under its own rule that income tax increases must be passed by a three-fifths vote. This rule has been waived three times in this Congress, allowing income tax bills to pass by a simple majority. If the GOP violates the spirit of its own rules, what will prohibit it from circumventing a constitutional amendment in a similar way?

House Joint Resolution 159 is the fourth attempt by this Republican Congress to amend the ''Constitution—the most ever since the post-civil war period. I urge my colleagues to vote against this resolution.

A PROCLAMATION REMEMBERING SHELLY McPECK KELLY

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 1996

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I commend the following article to my colleagues:

Whereas, Shelly McPeck Kelly, a United States Air Force Technical Sergeant that died in the plane crash along with Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, and

Whereas, Shelly McPeck Kelly, was a loyal and devoted wife, and loving mother of two; and,

Whereas, Shelly McPeck Kelly, served faithfully as an airplane stewardess in the United States Air Force achieving the rank of Technical Sergeant, and

Whereas, Shelly McPeck Kelly, should be commended for her service to the United States of America during the Bosnian Peacekeeping Operation; and,

Whereas, the residents of Eastern Ohio join me in honoring Shell McPeck Kelly for her brave and loyal citizenship to the United States.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 1996

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I inadvertently voted ''no'' on H.R. 842 the truth-in-budgeting bill, thinking that I was voting on an amendment. Had I known that I was voting on final passage, I would have voted ''yes.''

TRIBUTE TO JOHN O. HEMPERLEY

HON. RON PACKARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 1996

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to John O. Hemperley, the budget officer of the Library of Congress, who passed away last Saturday. As former chairman and now as ranking member on the Legislative Branch Subcommittee of Appropriations, Congressman VIC FAZIO, worked with John for many years and joins me in honoring his memory.

Appropriations Committee members and staff rely heavily on the expertise, efficiency, and responsiveness of agency budget officers. John embodied the highest standards of dedicated public service. Both VIC and I counted on his unsurpassed knowledge and understanding of the Library's budget. John fervently supported the Library's mission and the budget funding that mission. However, he always presented the facts honestly and faithfully executed the budget enacted by the Congress.

For 196 years, the Congress of the United States supported and nurtured the Library's development. Today, it stands as a unique and treasured institution—the greatest repository of knowledge in the history of the world. The Library continues to explore new frontiers, expanding its mission to provide electronic services to all its constituent groups while maintaining its traditional services to the Congress and the Nation.

John O. Hemperley was a unique and treasured individual. For the past 23 years, he developed and cultivated the relationship between the Library of Congress and the Committee on Appropriations. He will be sorely missed, not only by those who knew and loved him here in the Congress and in the Library, but by all those who may never have known him but who benefit daily from the enormous resources the Library provides. The challenges the Library faces will be more daunting without him.

Mr. Speaker, as chairman of our Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee, and for all other members of the Appropriations Committee, and our staff, I would like to express our great sorrow and extend our sincere condolences to John's wife, Bess Hemperley, their children, and grandchildren.

CHILDREN ARE OUR MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION

HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 1996

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, our children are our most precious possessions. Both Republicans and Democrats theoretically and philosophically agree on this self-evident, but nevertheless profound truth. In practice and policymaking with respect to programs that benefit children; however, there is a deep chasm of disagreement between the two parties. Since it gained control of the House of Representatives the Republican majority has waged a cruel and unrelenting war on children.

While trumpeting its support for the ''right-to-life'' for unborn children, the Republican majority has made survival much more difficult for living children. Aid to Families with Dependent Children has been eliminated as a Federal entitlement in House legislation. Within the next few weeks it is expected that the White House will surrender and agree to remove this Federal protection for poor children that has existed since the New Deal. The entitlement for MedicAid which protects the health of our poorest children is also under attack with all of the State's Governors voting to eliminate it. The new Government-health care industrial complex has already begun to endanger the lives of newborn infants and their mothers by forcing them out of hospitals within 24 to 48 hours after birth.

Immigrant children will now be searched out in schools and denied school lunches if Republican legislation prevails. And, of course, immigrant children will be denied access to Medicaid. Cuts in funding for education threaten the provision of opportunity for all poor children. Republicans have proposed to cut even the very successful HeadStart Program. Teenagers who have benefited from the Summer Youth Employment Program for more than 20 years may be the victims of the zero funding passed by the Republican majority and find there are no jobs in this summer of 1996. Children in poor working families will continue to suffer despite the fact that their parents go to work every day but are still unable to adequately provide for their families on the present hourly minimum wage.

The ''right-to-life'' is just an empty slogan unless it is accompanied by programs and policies which provide an even playing field of opportunity for all children. On June 1 the Children's Defense Fund is sponsoring a great summit in Washington called ''Stand For Children.'' This is a gathering which deserves the support of all Members of Congress. We should all join the ''Stand For Children'' on that specific day. And for all the days before and after June 1 Congress should refocus on the business of protecting our most precious resource—children outside of their mothers' wombs as well as children inside the wombs.

MESSAGE FROM THE NEWBORN TO THE FETUS

Man stay in there
The womb is where its at
Until tots slide out and breathe
The right-to-life is guaranteed
You never had it so good
Out here in America
They don't treat us
Like they promised they would
Right away at the hospital
They put us out
Cause my welfare Mom
Didn't have no clout
Stay where you are man
The womb is where its at
A smart fetus can live
Like a rich lady's cat
No food stamps for immigrants
But long picket lines protect
Our pre-birth rights
The womb they glorify
Outside they watch us die
The womb is where its at
Curled up in that nice nest
You always get the very best
But out here only fear
They'll take my entitlement
Man stay in there
Cash in on this fetus fetish
Be a hero embryo
Pro-life politicians
Offer nine months of love
But at birth's border
Immigrants from heaven
Receive a hellish shove
Until tots slide out and breathe
The right to life is guaranteed
Long protest lines protected
Our pre-birth rights
We crave the medals they gave
When we were hidden
Intimately way out of sight
The womb is where its at
Safely grow soft and fat
Immigrant school lunches are now gone
Budget cuts down to the bone
Newborns sound the trumpet
This land is littered
With ugly infant tombs
Babies must unite in battle
Make war to regain
Out wonderful respected wombs
The womb is where its at
Until tots slide out and breathe
The right-to-life is guaranteed
We appeal to the United Nations
We cry out to the Almighty Pope
The holy right of return
Is now our only hope
Man stay in there
The womb is where its at.

TRIBUTE TO MS. MARGARET SIMMS

HON. WILLIAM (BILL) CLAY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 1996

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a magnificent lady, Ms. Margaret Simms, who retired from 23 years of service to the National Democratic Club [NDC] at the end of March. She played an important role in the daily lives of Members of Congress, political party representatives, lobbyists, and friends of the NDC. She will be sorely missed.

Margaret labored faithfully on behalf of the NDC. She performed her job with grace and perfection. She greeted all patrons with respect and courtesy. My constituents, family, friends, and I were beneficiaries of her geniality on numerous occasions. She was cherished by all of us.

On April 2, Members of Congress and friends of the National Democratic Club gathered to pay tribute to Margaret and to thank her for making their lives in Washington more pleasant. I was among those Members who took time during the recent congressional recess to personally express my appreciation to Margaret. In addition, I presented her with a proclamation, designating Tuesday, April 2, 1996 as ''Margaret Simms Day'' in the First Congressional District of Missouri, in recognition of her dedication, excellence, and hospitality to citizens of the First District. It was an honor much deserved.

I wish Margaret Simms great health and wonderful fellowship in her retirement.