

politically what the American people are thinking they want. They want change, they want reform, and they want reasonableness in our public policy and in our public debate.

Mr. DICKEY. Where are you all going with this?

Mr. TAUZIN. There is another thing we ought to mention before we conclude this special order tonight. That is that we all share some responsibility for the decline of civility in this place, for the decline of civility in politics in general.

A recent study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs, a non-partisan foundation group, did a study of the 1996 Presidential race coverage. They found that it was so negative. They found that it was highly negative coverage, heavy but misleading coverage of the horserace, and much less attention on the meat, the debate that was going on between the candidates.

We are in an election year right now. We see too much of that, I think, in the coverage of this Chamber. C-SPAN now brings this debate to so many people's homes, and I think when we look at television coverage of our campaigns and we see that negativism, we think maybe they ought to see it on C-SPAN, too, and we emulate it here.

I think all of that contributes generally to the decline of civility, not only in our politics, not only in this Chamber, but in the society at large. I think ZACH probably said it best: We should be a better example for America. If we expect our children and our citizens to lead a more civil life, to not run each other on the road, and to insult one another and eventually drive-by shoot one another, we ought to start by being a little more civil in this Chamber, where they watch us every day on C-SPAN.

Mr. DICKEY. Where are you going with this now?

Mr. BLUTE. We are closing out our special order now.

Mr. DICKEY. After this, what is the next thing?

Mr. BLUTE. Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue this. We are going to continue to pursue signatories. We have 70 cosponsors. We think, as the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. TAUZIN] said, every Member should sign it. It is basically fairly basic stuff most people, I think, can agree with. It takes, I think, a commitment to try, and all of us have to do it.

Sometimes we get angry, sometimes we get upset at mischaracterizations on the debate floor, but it means thinking about, you know, let us keep this in check. I think this special order is a step forward, but also the pledge. We are also trying to get more people, so if you could help us with that, that would be very, very helpful.

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, there is nothing like peer pressure. If we all work to get each other to sign this pledge, and having signed it, to feel embarrassed when we violate it, we will have done one

major step towards restoring civility in this Chamber. That is our first goal.

Our second goal is to see some of these recommendations of CRS enacted: The leadership reforms, the role of the Chair in educating the Members, the role of Members to help one another stay within the lines of decorum and, eventually, maybe some of the ideas you expressed tonight; maybe getting us together in a bipartisan way once in a while, just to know one another a little better and to learn to respect each other a little more.

Mr. DICKEY. Thank you for including me.

Mr. BLUTE. We would like to thank all of the Members who came out tonight on both sides of the aisle to participate in this special order. We think it is an important issue, and we believe that the American people think it is an important issue. We are going to move forward on this.

Ms. PRYCE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about civility and decorum in the House of Representatives tonight because I believe it is a very important subject. I want to thank my friends and colleagues, PETER BLUTE and PETE GEREN, for organizing this special order tonight.

The Blue Dogs were originally organized to reach across the aisle and find bipartisan, commonsense solutions to our problems. As a member of the blue dog organization, I am dedicated to seeking new ways of cooperation between members of both parties to develop a solution-oriented approach to Government. A very important part of seeking a new level of cooperation is to create a more civil and cooperative environment for the exchange of ideas.

Since the establishment of this great institution, it has been recognized that courtesy and decency among Members of Congress was necessary in order to enhance the ability of the membership to hear opposing views in the process of reaching a consensus. Further, without the presence of civility and mutual respect, the process of legislating becomes much more difficult. Hostility limits creative thinking and the sharing of views so important to good government.

But all of these logical and worthy reasons for improving decorum pale in comparison to the reasons I would like to touch on this evening. You see, when people talk about civility and decorum in Congress, we commonly hear about past confrontations involving canes, guns, and even duels. Fortunately today we don't face quite such drastic measures, but I would submit that the general lack of comity and decorum on this very floor has a wide reaching impact that I urge my colleagues to consider every time they speak on this floor.

The reason for this is television. Whenever a Member of this body stands in this well to speak, he or she is not speaking only to other Members of this body, but they are also speaking to thousands of Americans throughout our country. All of us were elected to represent the American people. We owe it to the people we represent to conduct ourselves in a respectful and proper manner. If you think about it, we are all ambassadors of our districts.

As public officials and leaders, I believe we have a responsibility to conduct ourselves in a

manner that is respectful to the American people. Every poll shows that the American people hold Congress in low regard. It is no wonder they hold us in such low regard when every time they turn on the television, they see an argument taking place.

Before running for Congress, I was a judge. I had a wonderful career in the law, where respect and dignity are highly valued. When I announced to my family that I was going to run for Congress, my mother was really shocked, and maybe a little disappointed. "Why do you want to go down there and join that sleazy institution?" she asked me. Well, I will tell you the same thing I told my mother. I came here to try and do everything I could to make Congress a place the American people can once again be proud of.

We teach our children to resolve their differences peacefully and civilly. We teach them to listen to others and to air their grievances in a positive, respectful manner. Many schools in our Nation today have conflict resolution programs that are aimed at teaching our children to resolve their differences through civil negotiation and compromise. It is time we start to practice what we preach. I passionately believe that one of the most important responsibilities bestowed upon every Member of Congress as a leader, is to set an example. We have set the wrong example for our children and for the American people. How can we expect our children to heed our appeals for respectful and compassionate conduct if we do not conduct ourselves in the same manner?

Many of the issues that we debate here on this floor have great national import. Members hold firm and passionate views about these issues. And they should. There is plenty of room for vigorous and energetic debate. And we should have that. But no matter how passionately one feels about a particular issue, it is no excuse for name calling or other uncivil conduct. I cannot emphasize enough my belief that we must—must set an example for the American people, especially for our children.

In closing, let me say that the issue of conduct on this floor goes beyond any single legislative fight. It even goes beyond the issues of decorum and comity in debate. This issue is about respect. Respect for ourselves and our views as well as respect for the views of those who may disagree with us. We owe it to ourselves to conduct business in a professional and courteous manner, but most importantly, we owe it to the American people.

So I would urge my colleagues to think, every time they step onto this floor to speak, to think about the example they want to set for the people of our country, especially the children.

#### A DEBATE ON INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MICA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. FIELDS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I want to also thank the gentleman to my right for their special order tonight, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank

them for their colloquy, and I want to thank them for such a great expression of the issues in terms of bringing this body to a level that this body should be at.

I am very encouraged by the gentleman's pledge, and want to pledge to the gentleman that I will be one gentleman who will sign his pledge, and I thank the gentleman for bringing it to the floor tonight to talk about it in a special order.

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana.

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman, my fellow colleague from Louisiana [Mr. FIELDS] and I go back a long way to his first days in politics. I want to say something publicly, CLEO, that needs to get said, I think.

You have made an incredible and enormous contribution to politics in Louisiana, and to government, and to this body, and I want to thank you for joining and signing this pledge. You and all of us, I think, signing it and being a part of it can help make it real and help make this place a better governmental institution. I know that was one of your goals when you came here. Thank you for that, CLEO.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his words of encouragement. I want the gentleman to know that I want to continue to work hard to remain in this body and to remain a force to change not only the conditions of this country, but the way we do business as Members of Congress.

I also want to expressly thank the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. DICKEY] who has agreed to be a part of this colloquy tonight on an issue that is very important to me and an issue that is very important to people all across this Nation, and also the gentlewoman from Georgia [Ms. MCKINNEY] who is going to be joining in this colloquy tonight on the issue of minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight to talk about the minimum wage, and why I feel that we should raise the minimum wage. There are people, Americans in this country who work hard every day. They wake up early in the morning, they go to work, they work a 40-hour work shift every week, and they go home. At the end of the day they are still poor. It is not because they are lazy, but it is because we must raise the minimum wage.

I am here tonight to offer a plea to this Congress and to you, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the millions of Americans who cannot afford to buy the food at the restaurant that they work at on a day-to-day basis, they cannot afford to sit at the tables that they clean, they cannot afford to sleep in the beds that they make up in hotels, because they cannot afford to check in that very hotel.

They cannot even afford to go to colleges and universities and send their

kids to colleges and universities that they work at as custodians and janitors. I am here tonight to offer a plea for those millions of Americans, who come in all shapes and all sizes and all colors.

Let us take this Congress. We as Members of Congress, we make about \$550 a day. To have the audacity to come on the floor of this House and say that people who make \$680 a month do not deserve an increase to me is wrong. Tonight I offer a plea for those millions of Americans, because I do think that they deserve a minimum wage increase.

I call upon Members from both sides of the aisle to look at this issue and give it some serious consideration, because in all frankness, Mr. Speaker, these people have not had an increase for 5 years. If we look at the history of the minimum wage when it was passed, the act when it was passed in 1938, when this Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, the wage was set at 25 cents. Then this Congress came back and changed the minimum wage 17 times. Seventeen separate times this Congress voted to raise the minimum wage. Now it has been since 1991. The last time the minimum wage was raised in this country was in 1991, so this country has gone 5 years without a minimum wage increase. I think it is long overdue.

If we look at the history of the minimum wage, we will find that the minimum wage was increased on an average of about every 3½ years. We are now at 5 years, which means we are a year and a half late on raising the minimum wage. Why do we raise the minimum wage in the first place? Why did this Congress raise the minimum wage, or even start a minimum wage in 1938? It is because it is no more than fair to give people the opportunity to earn a decent wage.

No one would sit or stand before this podium or any podium tonight on this floor and suggest that inflation has not gone up in the past 5 years. It would be a bit crazy, for lack of a better word, for us to think that a person can buy a loaf of bread in 1996 at a 1991 price. It would not be fair for us to even assume that a person can buy a gallon of milk in 1996 for a 1991 price. If inflation is moving up on an average of 3 percent a year, then it just makes basic sense to give those working people the opportunity to earn a decent wage.

The other thing I want to talk about is welfare reform. People talk about it, that we need to put people on payrolls in this country and get them off of welfare rolls. I think they are right. There is not a Member of this Congress who does not want to get people off of welfare more quickly and sooner, in a compassionate way, than I do. But we are saying, "Get off the welfare rolls and go on the payrolls," but we do not want to pay people for the work they do. The best way to decrease the welfare rolls, in my estimation, is to pay people for the work they do.

People need to make a decent wage in this country. Think about it; 34 cents a day. We have decent Americans, good Americans, who wake up. They want to provide health care for their children. They want to send their kids to school. They work in restaurants. They bus tables, they make beds, they mop floors, they work at gas stations, and at 40-hour work shifts a week, because they want to be productive. They do not want to be on the welfare rolls. We criticize these people because we do not want to even give them an opportunity to be paid for the work they do.

I am happy that the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. DICKEY] is here, who will talk about some of the reasons why we should not raise the minimum wage, and I am going to yield to the gentleman in a minute, but before we do, I am going to yield to the gentlewoman from Georgia [Ms. MCKINNEY] who has joined us to talk about the minimum wage increase as well.

I notice that the gentlewoman earlier tonight was on the floor talking about the need to raise the minimum wage. I want to thank her for her tenacity, and I want to thank her for her commitment to try to give people a decent wage in America, because in my opinion, that is just no more than fair. If we want people to get off of the welfare rolls and go to payrolls, then the very least we can do as a Congress is to make sure that they get paid for the work they do.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia [Ms. MCKINNEY].

Ms. MCKINNEY. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for securing this time so we could have this discussion about raising the minimum wage. I have a quote here: "A living wage for a fair day's work is a hallmark of the American economic philosophy." I do not know if the gentleman knows who said that. It was not some left-wing person, it was not a person who is out of left field. These words were spoken by BOB DOLE in 1974: "A living wage for a fair day's work is a hallmark of the American economic philosophy."

Yet, Mr. Speaker, in 1996, we have the House majority leader saying, "I will resist an increase in the minimum wage with every fiber in my being." We have the House Republican whip saying, "Working families trying to get by on \$4.25 an hour don't really exist."

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And then more recently we had the Republican Conference chairman say, "I will commit suicide before I vote on a clean minimum wage bill."

Now, we have had some folks who have come to us with an economic argument and they have said that this is bad for the economy. Well, we have 101 economists who have signed on to the call for a higher minimum wage. Among those 101 economists are 3 Nobel prize winners. Those economists range from Henry Aaron at the Brookings Institution to Kenneth Arrow at

Stanford University to David Blanchflower at Dartmouth College; Lawrence Klein, University of Pennsylvania; James Tobin of Yale, John Kenneth Galbraith of Harvard. We have got people who have received the world's highest honor and they have said that the minimum wage increase is the right thing to do. At the same time that we were talking about not raising the minimum wage, not even allowing the vote to come on the floor, at one time there were even proposals to cut the earned income tax credit.

So I believe that this is the right thing to do and I am pleased to join with my colleague from Louisiana, and I am anxious to hear my colleague from Arkansas who is my good friend, and maybe I should not say that out loud, but this is the hour of civility, so I ask my colleague from Arkansas to join us.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. I thank the gentlewoman for her presentation.

Before I recognize the gentleman from Arkansas, who is a distinguished gentleman for whom I have the utmost respect, as a matter of fact he and I have shared planes on a number of occasions. As a matter of fact, as recently as this last week, we took the same route here to Washington. I want to thank the gentleman because it is very honorable of the gentleman to stay as late as he is staying to talk about an issue that certainly I feel very strongly about and, of course, the gentleman feels very strongly about, as well.

I want to talk a little bit about, and then I want to yield to the gentleman from Arkansas, because I think he may be able to shed some light on this. Because I have heard those who are against raising the minimum wage assert the argument that it would in fact decrease jobs particularly among young people. That it would also have an adverse effect on the economy because people will in fact lose jobs.

My assertion and my belief is people did not lose jobs when we raised the minimum wage the 17 times that we did raise the minimum wage in the past, and young people were not thrown out of the work market, which, and I will be quite honest here, as one of the youngest members of Congress, I fight for and advocate for every time I walk on this floor. They did not lose their jobs then, and I suggest that they would not lose their jobs now.

If we look at the economy, and I am no economist. The gentleman has been around a lot longer than I have been around, and he has read many more books than I have read because he has been around a lot longer. But I can tell you, it just makes practical sense to me that if you give a person more buying power, then that person will probably buy more.

So to say that people will lose jobs as a result of raising the minimum wage to me does not make much sense because if you raise the minimum wage and give a person more buying power

and give those producers the opportunity to come in and then take advantage of the products that we have to offer, the goods and services that we have to offer instead of at \$4.25, at \$5.15, then it just makes sense that that will in fact generate more money in the economy.

I have heard the argument, also, that you will also cause prices to go up. Well, I believe in the free enterprise system, and I think that our consumers are smart enough and wise enough to know where to shop and where not to shop. At hamburger stand X, if we have enough insight to raise the minimum wage, if this Congress raises the minimum wage, if hamburger shop X decides to send the price of a hamburger from 90 cents to a dollar, I just fail to understand the logic of hamburger X raising that price of a hamburger without assuming or making the assumption that every hamburger stand in that location or locality will raise the price of hamburgers as well.

As a former businessman it would just make sense to me to keep my hamburger at the same price provided that I can and if I have as good a burger as hamburger stand X, then I would suggest that people would come and buy my burger and if enough people buy my burger then hamburger stand X will reduce its burger to a reasonable price. We talk about how we let the free enterprise system grow and work and give consumers the opportunity to make decisions. I just cannot see how people are going to lose jobs if we raise the minimum wage.

Let us take it another step. Let us say the hamburgers go up, the price of goods and services go up. You are still going to have to have people who are going to produce these products, who are going to be in these service jobs, to cook the hamburgers, so forth and so on. So people are not going to lose jobs. And if you give a person \$5.15 versus \$4.25, and you raise the burger by a penny, then that money goes into the economy.

I am going to yield to the gentleman because I know the gentleman would like to shed some light on why this will cause an adverse effect on the economy. At this time I yield to my distinguished friend from the State of Arkansas.

Mr. DICKEY. Thank you, Mr. FIELDS.

On the question of congeniality, as you started your statement, I would like to go back to that a second.

The race you ran for Governor and the respectful way that you did not trash your opponent, you did not bring issues out that would demean the voting populace was a credit to our Nation and I want to thank you. I am your neighbor on the north. I heard about how you handled yourself in that race and I think it was just absolutely wonderful and it is an example of congeniality. You lived it, you did it in a race. And I think what the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. TAUZIN] was talking about, you really contributed. I

want to thank you for that. I also want to thank you both for letting me get in this discussion with you. I think you just kind of want to pick on me, though, particularly CYNTHIA, the gentlewoman from Georgia, Ms. MCKINNEY.

But let me try to bring a perspective, if I can, to this, and when I run out of time, you just tell me that, if you will.

This is really an issue, and let me tell you this. I am an employer. I have two restaurants, and most of the people I hire are first-time employees when they come to work for me. I have been in that business since 1962 really. I had an ice cream shop and I now own two Taco Bells. I do not sign the payrolls now, my son does, but I do know the issues. If you all could do this, please do not completely draw conclusions until you think about what it is like to sign a payroll, what it is like to sign the front part of a check. It is a difficult thing to do in this world today, in America, with all the regulations, with all the forces and everything else, and it does come down to where you have to make some decisions, and it is not a decision that is based on greed or trying to make so much money most of the time, even though we do have excesses.

What I am saying to you is what is happening is that we are not taking the view of that person who is the payroll signer, that person who is battling all the issues. The insurance can go up, taxes can go up, real estate taxes, regulations, and I know regulations about just taking grease out requires an enormous amount of paperwork. If you look at the perspective there, you are going to see what the problem is when the Federal Government comes in and says, "Though productivity is not an issue, we want you to give a raise. We want you, because we decide, we want you to give a raise to these people who are working for you now but we're not going to give you the money to do it. In fact, we're going to charge you more taxes than you had before because you're going to have to pay the payroll taxes on a higher amount for those people who are just coming into the work force."

Now, this may be a statement that you do not agree with, but there is not a person who I hire who has ever had a job at \$4.25 who is worth \$4.25, not one person. Either they have worked somewhere else and you have to untrain them from what they are doing and train them for your way or you have to start them on a pattern of training and you have to put somebody with them, you have to attach somebody with them. So they are not worth \$4.25. Where they reach the point that they are worth \$4.25 is up to them.

So what we are saying is if in fact they are entitled to a raise, it will happen, not by what the employer says, not by what the government says, not by what some politician says but what the consumer says.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Will the gentleman yield on that point?

Mr. DICKEY. Sure. It is your show.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. If the gentleman would just answer a few questions for me so I can understand exactly what mode of operation the gentleman is in in terms of his philosophy on the minimum wage.

Does the gentleman believe that there should be in fact a minimum wage irrespective, and let us not get into whether or not we should raise it now or in the future. Does the gentleman believe that this country should have a standard in terms of what is the minimum wage for an individual when they enter the work force?

Mr. DICKEY. Are you asking me as an employer or as a politician?

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. I am asking you as a human being. As either. As a human being, do you think that this Congress should have a standard in terms of a wage when a person enters the work force?

Mr. DICKEY. If you want an answer from the politician's standpoint, we are past the point of debating that. It is behind us. We must have a minimum wage.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. If the gentleman would agree to that, then let me just go to first base. The gentleman knows that this country, the American workers, have not received a minimum wage increase since 1991, and I am sure that the gentleman would agree with me that the cost of living between 1991 and 1996 did not go down but it went up. As a matter of fact, inflation is on the average 3 percent a year. So if that is the case, then the gentleman would have to agree with me, or it appears to me that the gentleman would have to agree with me that that is just makes basic sense that those low-paid workers, those minimum wage workers deserve the opportunity to have their increase, not commensurate with inflation but in 5 years they are overdue for an increase. Would the gentleman not agree to that?

Mr. DICKEY. What I need to do is I need to keep going. Let me go through this whole thing if I can from the perspective. Let me say this. As a politician, the minimum wage exists and we have to have a minimum wage.

Now what I am saying to you as far as the economy is concerned, it is destructive of the economy's best interests. As an employer, I would say that I could take the case that employees are worse off with a minimum wage, whatever it is, than they would be if we did not have it at all.

Let me see if I can explain the whole thing before you gang up on me, okay? Can we do that? What I am saying to you is from the perspective of the employee, the problem with the minimum wage is that we are giving them an idea that that is the maximum wage. If an employee stays in the employ of an employer to a certain point and does not reach higher productivity than the minimum wage, they probably should be terminated.

Because what is going to happen is the consumer, and you all are not look-

ing at it probably from the standpoint of the consumer, the consumer does not want somebody who is not trying to improve, who does not want to try to reach a higher level of achievement and does not want to please them. If someone is working for a minimum wage and waiting for politicians to come in and give them their raise, if they do, then you are going to have poorer service and you are going to have a lackluster type of performance.

What we are not doing is discussing the productivity of the employee. That is where the problem is. The minimum wage gives that employee some problems because it says, "You don't have any more incentive than that." On this segment of this, there should not be one employee who says, "That's all I'm going to get." They should think about it as being, "This is the way I'm going to learn, I'm going to get a reputation, I'm going to move on to something else or I'm going to move up in this particular operation."

Let me go further. Let me tell you about the employer. The employer is the one who is taking the risk and he or she is the one who is paying the tab. After the consumer decides to buy from them, then the employer is paying the tab.

□ 2145

The employer for too long has been put aside in the wings and the employee is put at center stage. We have got to start considering the plight of the employer in this particular exercise or discussion, because they are looking at taxes, taxes, taxes; regulations and regulations and regulations. They are thinking about retiring sooner. They are thinking about getting out of this business about helping to meet a payroll.

What is going to happen is if we do not start paying attention to the employer, we are not going to have any employers, and the employer is looking at their taxes and what they are going to right now. The money is being taken from them, they are having troubles with trying to improve or to expand, the money is being taken and given to politicians and then given to people who will not work.

But the problem is that we are now putting the employer in competition with the Government. We have to go and say to somebody to come to work, will you come to work for us at whatever wage it is, and they say I can get paid more by staying at home.

I will be glad to step down and leave, but what I am saying to you is we need to bring the attention to the employer, he is competing against the Government, the Government is taking taxes from him to give to people, not to work, so that he cannot get them to compete with other employees. So what we have here, if we have a minimum wage increase and if you will agree it is going to cost jobs, we are going to have the workers who are working at that job with less fellow

workers, their stress level is going to be higher, their fatigue is going to be higher, they are going to have the demands of the consumer and the employer at the same time, and we lose in the process. The employees lose.

So what I am hoping that you all will see is that the plight of the employer has to be taken into consideration because that middle class employer has been neglected for years and years and years, and he or she has been given promises of tax relief, of regulation relief, and been given promises for years and years and years, and all that really has happened from Government is you are making a profit and you should give that profit to somebody else. We are going to have people getting out of that business, not paying into the Government, but getting money from the Government if we continue to negate that person and not have compassion for that person.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. I thank the gentleman. I certainly do not want the gentleman to leave. I just wanted a colloquy among all of us. But let me just make a couple of comments before I yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

The gentleman stated that he did not believe or feel that we should have a minimum wage at all. That being the case, you take some of these countries across the world that this Congress has passed legislation to even try to censure. You have countries that make Nike tennis shoes at the cost of paying employees 50 cents and shipping them to the United States of America and selling them for \$80 to \$110 a pair. Certainly the gentleman would not suggest we ought to have that type of slave labor right here in the United States of America.

First the gentleman said he was in favor of a minimum wage. Then the gentleman said we should not have a minimum wage at all. I would only suggest to the gentleman that I think a minimum wage is the right thing.

Now, lastly, finally, the gentleman stated that it gives employees some sense of knowing that the Government will reward you for an increase versus the increase being dealt with on merits. Let us be realistic. I do not think if we increase the minimum wage that employees for some reason or another are going to sit back and wait for the Government to pass another minimum wage in 6 months or 1 year after that in order to get an increase in salary. We know that all these jobs are on a competitive basis and merit. That is not going to take away the merit system from the private sector. Employers will give increases based on the productivity of that worker.

You are a businessman. You own several restaurants. You have had to operate under the minimum wage. It was the law when you had your business. You had to pay employees, you could not pay them below that minimum wage. You gave employees, I am sure, an increase, and it was not based on the Government saying you had to do

it. You gave the employees an increase based on their self-worth, their ability to do the job. The Government had nothing to do with that. To suggest that is going to take away that now, it did not take it away then, to me is not a fair assumption.

Mr. DICKEY. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, how much minimum wage do you think we ought to have? \$5? \$10? Why would you stop? If there is a profit in the business under your theory, why stop at \$25 an hour? I am serious about this. Where do you say, OK, I am not going to take any more from the employer, even though I have compassion for the man working 40 hours a week, where, say between \$5 and \$25? Why would you stop going up to \$25 if you really had compassion for the employee?

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Realistically speaking, you have to do it based on inflation. You have to take inflation into account. I would never say that the minimum wage of this country should be \$25 an hour now, henceforth and forevermore. That would not even make basic sense. The reason why is because a loaf of bread 20 years from now may cost \$50. So that would not make economic sense nor would it make basic sense.

I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois who has been waiting so patiently. I want to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the distinguished gentleman from Louisiana for being kind enough to allow me the opportunity to participate in this special order. I also want to thank and indeed indicate it is a privilege to have the opportunity to serve with the distinguished gentleman from Arkansas in this body. I can assure him as we engage in this colloquy on the minimum wage that we are not going to gang up on him.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the debate taking place from my office and I wanted to come down and try and put, at least as I see it, the minimum wage in a particular context, a context that all too often we do not discuss in this Congress.

Let me say the very first thing, I think it is important for the purposes of our colloquy that we need to be aware that half of all of the financial assets of our Nation are owned and held by the top 10 percent, and the richest 1 percent of that 10 percent owns almost 40 percent of the Nation's wealth.

Are we aware that nearly 80 percent of the assets of the top 1 percent are owned furthermore by the richest one-half of 1 percent, about 500,000 families? The distinguished gentleman from Michigan, Representative OBEY, not long ago indicated, and he certainly has the documentation, that the holdings of those 500,000 families was worth \$2.5 trillion in 1983. By 1989, it had risen to \$5 trillion. To put that into perspective, the holdings of those families grew by almost three times as much as

the national debt grew during that same period.

You want to talk about reducing the deficit and the debt? Those 50,000 families could have paid off the entire national debt, not just its growth, and still have owned 10 percent more wealth than they did in 1983. Remember, that does not include the increase in their wealth due to a doubling of the stock market since that time. Now we are talking about cutting even more from the poor so they can provide more tax breaks for the wealthy and do not want to give poor working people a raise in the minimum wage.

Let us put the minimum wage, Mr. DICKEY, in this particular context: The Federal minimum wage was signed into law by President Roosevelt in 1938. The Democrats' current proposal would increase the minimum wage from \$4.25 to \$5.15 over 2 years through two 45 cent increases. The last increase passed overwhelmingly by bipartisan vote in 1989 and was implemented in 1990 was also a 90-cent increase in two 45-cent stages.

Full-time, minimum wage workers earn \$8,500 a year, and a 90 cent increase would raise their yearly income by only \$1,800, as much as the average family spends on groceries in over 7 months, to \$10,712.

Currently the purchasing power of those earning the minimum wage is at a 40-year low. In discussing the minimum wage, we are not talking primarily about high school and teenage workers. We are talking about 12 million people who will benefit from a 90-cent increase in the minimum wage, two-thirds of whom are adults over 20 who bring home half of their family's earnings, and the majority of the minimum wage workers are women.

For example, in the State of Michigan, 324,000 workers, representing 11.9 percent of all hourly workers in the State, will benefit from an increase in the minimum wage. Even Henry Ford understood that his workers had to earn a livable wage that would allow them to buy the cars that they built so they could even build more so that he could even make more money. Certainly the Henry Ford example is certainly indicative of how employers should certainly see an increase in the minimum wage.

Let me put this in one last context and then engage in the colloquy along with the gentleman from Arkansas and the gentleman from Louisiana. A 90-cent per hour raise to 12 million people will add \$10.8 million an hour to the purchasing power of workers. It will add \$432 million a week in consumer power to the economy. It will add \$22.5 billion a year to the spending growth of our Nation's economy. And even though we contemplate this whole notion of raising the minimum wage so that more Americans can provide for their families, indeed take care of the kind of basic necessities that families indeed need, I am just taken aback when I think about the debate in this

Congress, about raising the minimum wage to provide more security for American families.

And then I think about the auction last week. Imagine this, according to Time magazine, pearls, not even real pearls, estimated at \$500 to \$700, they sold for \$211,500. A rocking horse, a little horse, estimated at \$2,000 to \$3,000, sold for \$85,000. Even the Terminator purchased five McGregor golf clubs, just five of them, \$772,500. Three pillows worth about \$50 to \$100, \$25,300. Pearls estimated at \$75,000 sold for \$250,000.

So I think when we talk about the minimum wage, we also have to recognize that there is a group and a facet in our society that is enjoying tremendous luxury and tremendous wealth, and they are, quite frankly, not paying enough taxes. Any time we can pay golf clubs for \$772,000 and there will only be five golf clubs, you cannot even get a good game out of 5 golf clubs, that certainly suggests the kind of inadequacies that this body must address by allowing working people who work in stores, who drive taxicabs, to be able to work their way out of their conditions.

Not all of us can afford a big movie. Not all of us can afford the opportunities that have been afforded Members of this body. The only way we can change that is to have some legislation that is sponsored in this body to change the conditions of working people. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for his comments. As the gentleman pointed out, many of these minimum wage workers are women. I mean, almost 60 percent, about 57 percent of the people who earn minimum wage, are female. These are the people who wake up every morning and go to work.

I think we also, whenever we talk about the minimum wage debate, if you are for getting people off of welfare, then I just cannot understand how one cannot be in the same breath for raising the minimum wage. One of the best ways to get people off of welfare is to pay the people for the work they do.

We have been joined by the distinguished gentleman from New York, the gentleman who has advocated the raising of the minimum wage long before I was elected to this Congress, a gentleman who is a strong advocate of not only the working people of this country, but of educators, who was an educator himself. I would like to yield to the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS] for as much time as he may consume.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for taking this special order. I serve on the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities as the ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee on Workplace Protections, which is directly responsible for the minimum wage, so I have quite a file on the minimum wage and have been living with it for some time.

The bill that is presently out, sponsored by Minority Leader GEPHARDT and the ranking Democrat on the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities, Mr. CLAY. That bill calls for an increase of 90 cents over a 2-year period, and I must say that I am awfully sorry that at its last count we only had about 125 people who are cosponsors of the bill. I hope we will have more cosponsors, not only from the Democratic side, a complete cosponsorship, but also some of the Republicans who have decided that this is the humane and sensible thing to do will also join us and will get on with the business of giving the lowest paid workers in America a 90-cent increase over the next two years.

It is a very conservative approach. We have an economy right now that is booming. From Brownsville and Brooklyn in my district, to Mapleton, GA, from California to New York, we have an economy that is booming. Most of the workers in this economy are not paid minimum wage. They are paid above minimum wage. Yet the businesses that these workers work for are thriving. Everybody wants to get into the American business climate.

□ 2200

We appreciate that our entrepreneurs and small businesses make up a tremendously large segment of the economy. Small businesses employ more workers than anybody else, but they are doing quite well from coast to coast.

And restaurant businesses in the parts of the country where the labor supply is less, it is a matter of supply and demand. Where you have more labor, they can afford, the businesses can afford to get away, or they can get away with paying lower wages. That is what happens. They have a lot of people who want jobs, so they pay the lowest wages.

Yet the restaurant businesses in the areas where they are paying the lowest wages, they are able to survive. And they cry, if we talk about increasing the minimum wage, that they will have problems, they may go out of business. And yet the same kind of restaurant business in another part of the country, where they are paying higher wages, is thriving also.

When the wages go up in another part of the country because the supply of labor is not plentiful and they have to pay more, they continue to profit. Businesses do not stay around if they do not profit. Nobody stays in business if they are not making a profit.

The size of the profit and whether or not a business stays viable or not is not dependent on just the wages paid. McDonald's and Burger King and a number of fast food restaurants are able to supply fast foods at tremendously low prices. In fact, there is a lady in my district that says she finds it cheaper to feed her kids at McDonald's. She cannot buy beef at the prices they pay for their beef, and she cannot feed her kid hamburgers at that price.

Mr. DICKEY. Will the gentleman yield, just for a question?

Mr. OWENS. No, I will not yield now.

There are some other factors that are involved that drive the prices down so low, as there is in many businesses. There are many other factors involved than the wages paid. We have a thriving economy, and we owe it to our workers to try to get a fair wage for them in those areas where the supply of labor is so great until the entrepreneurs, the business owners, are able to exploit that. They can get labor cheap, so they get it cheap.

Most people in the country are in areas where the labor supply is not so cheap and they have to work for a minimum wage. There are about 13 million people who still work for minimum wage, unfortunately, because they are in situations where they have to compete in a labor supply pool where they cannot get higher wages; or, in some cases, they may have a situation where if they were organized, they might be able to demand high wages because the supply of labor is not so much greater than the demand.

But the organization of workers has been thwarted in this country by our poor labor laws. Of all the industrialized nations, we have the worst labor laws. We make it more difficult for people to organize and for people to bargain than any other industrialized nation in the world. So we keep down the wages. And by having a minimum wage, a floor, we are only protecting ourselves as a Nation.

The Constitution talks about promoting the general welfare. Well, promoting the general welfare means the welfare for everybody, not just the entrepreneurs or businesses, or people who make a lot of money, who keep crying crocodile tears about taxes and about regulations. They are quite well off. And there are whole cadres of business people from all over the world who want to get into this economy and into this business environment, who think they can make a lot of money. I do not know why we have so many crocodile tears being cried by entrepreneurs in this business environment which is so favorable toward entrepreneurs. It is not favorable toward workers.

And one way you help workers on the very bottom is by having this much needed increase in the minimum wage which, when you look at inflation, we are still at an all time low in terms of the wage level of people on the bottom.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Since each of the gentlemen and the gentlewoman have made their opening statements, at this time I am going to allow Members to enter into a colloquy, and I notice the gentleman from Arkansas had a question of the gentleman from New York.

Mr. OWENS. I have been listening to the gentleman bemoan the fact, as a businessman, he is persecuted in America by taxes, by paperwork; he has to make out paychecks, and that is a painful experience. You should live the

experience of the people that do not have any money to make out checks for. There are large numbers of people who would love to have your pain and your grief in terms of the difficulty of making out checks for payroll.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas.

Mr. DICKEY. Let me ask the question now. Let me ask the question, if in fact we are going to accuse people who have been successful, of what you just accused.

Mr. OWENS. I am not accusing anybody of anything. We need entrepreneurs and people to be successful.

Mr. DICKEY. I am just trying to ask a question, that is all.

Mr. OWENS. You are a good lawyer. You said I accused. Who did I accuse?

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas.

Mr. DICKEY. I am asking a question, and any of you all can ask it. I won't ask the gentleman from New York; I will ask any of you: If we are to set up a role model for people to work toward in a capitalistic society, and if we are trying to get that message down to the lowest of the people in the economy and say, if you will work hard, this is what will happen, how can we encourage those people to get to where they can get in America? If they work hard, and that is the promise, you can do whatever you want to do in America and you can make it. How can we do that if we take the people at the top rung and say we are going to regulate you to death, and we want these people down here to know that you are the reason why no prosperity gets to you?

You see what we are doing? We are doing just exactly the opposite. We should be saying to people at the lower rungs, you can get there at the top. Look at what got them there. Use that as a role model and let the government stay out of the process of drawing attention.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from Arkansas for that question, and at any point in time, my distinguished colleagues are more than welcome to try to answer that question.

Let us take a case study. Let us say a college student, who is working at McDonald's or Burger King, or at any particular minimum wage paying job, earning \$8,500 a year, assuming they are working full time, from 9 to 5. And, obviously, they are not because they are a college student. \$8,500 a year is not enough money to even pay off one's student loan to go to a 4-year, 1 year on a full academic scholarship costs more than \$8,500 at a State-run institution.

So no matter how hard that student is working, and that we are promoting them because of their education, and that they have a serious work ethic, the reality is no matter how serious their work ethic is or their educational advancements or the opportunity that we provide for them, they are not able to work their way even to meet their

current obligations, which include their loans.

Let me say to the gentleman from Arkansas, I think that it probably makes sense, and I would like the gentleman from New York to possibly respond to this, why not look at the minimum wage and index it to inflation so that we do not have to engage in this debate every year and a half.

Mr. OWENS. We would have to go up to \$6.25 an hour. If we put it on an index inflation now it should be at \$6.25 instead of \$4.25.

Mr. DICKEY. It is \$7.18, I believe, is that it is.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. I would make the argument that we can avoid this debate and we can avoid rehashing this every 3, 4, or 5 years, since we are 1½ years past due on increasing the minimum wage, by attaching the minimum wage and indexing it to inflation so that the cost-of-living for working people, and we are not talking about people who are lazy and not working, we are talking about people who are working but at the end of a hard day's work they cannot change their economic situation.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, I will yield to the gentlewoman from Georgia.

Ms. MCKINNEY. I just want to make a few points in closing, and I will yield to the gentleman here who want to dominate the debate.

The gentleman from Arkansas made some reference to productivity gains, and there have, indeed, been productivity gains experienced by our economy, except that in the past those productivity gains accrued to the community at large. Now those productivity gains are not accruing to the community, perhaps to stockholders and CEO's, but certainly not to the low-wage workers. And that is one argument in favor of protecting the interests of our low-wage workers.

I think we have also seen that the gentleman from Arkansas shares the opinion of his colleagues in the Republican leadership that he also fights the increase in the minimum wage or the concept of the minimum wage with every fiber in his being as well.

Mr. DICKEY. I did not say that.

Ms. MCKINNEY. The gentleman has said that we need to take care of the employers. I would posit that Congress is doing just that. When McDonald's can get \$200,000 to advertise chicken nuggets, then I think we are taking care of employers. When AT&T can get \$34 million, we are taking care of employers.

We have not begun to talk about corporate welfare yet. This Congress wants to repeal the alternative minimum tax, build more stealth bombers, defend Americans who renounce their citizenship in order to avoid paying taxes, and yet they want to deny poor folks, working folks a 90 cent increase in the minimum wage. Now, you know, you have to be a little bit less heartless than that.

Mr. DICKEY. Is that a question?

Ms. MCKINNEY. Well, it is a statement.

Mr. DICKEY. I understand you are saying I am heartless, and you know better than that. What I am trying to say, what I want the question to be answered is, why not encourage these people to improve rather than to say this minimum is the maximum? Why not do that? Why not give them a role model that means achievement and improvement?

Mr. OWENS. We are encouraging them to improve by saying we are going to pay you what you should be paid in this economy. In this economy you cannot live on \$8,400 a year. You need more than that. You cannot live off \$4.25 an hour.

So we are going to pay you for your work. We are not going to have you work at the level of a peasant or just above slavery just because the supply and demand is such that your employer can pay you that because he can always get more people. We want to have enlightened employers.

Mr. DICKEY. But where is the role model?

Mr. OWENS. We need employers who understand that it is better for them, like Henry Ford understood at a certain point that he had to pay his workers a decent hourly wage so they could buy the cars.

Mr. DICKEY. Would you please yield a second, the gentleman from New York, for a question?

Mr. OWENS. No, I will not yield. I will yield in a minute.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MICA). The gentleman from Louisiana has the time.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. I yield to the gentleman from New York and I will then yield to the gentleman from Arkansas for a response.

Mr. OWENS. An enlightened employer would know that paying the minimum wage helps the economy as a whole. These are very poor people and every dollar they make they are going to spend in this economy. They are not like the CEO's, who make millions of dollars and travel around the world spending their money somewhere else.

An enlightened employer would know that the effort we made in the last Congress to pass health care legislation would greatly help them in their woes. They would not have to moan so much if we had a health care plan which took care of everybody's health care.

We did not ask for a minimum wage 2 years ago because we were concentrating on a universal health care plan, which meant that the poorest person would also be able to have a health care plan and maybe he would not need an increase in the minimum wage.

Here is an opportunity where you might have helped yourself and helped the Government and helped the people who work for you if you had supported a health care plan. But most employees are not enlightened. they can only see

tunnel vision, and we need to give them some help in understanding how the economy really works in the rest of the world. The economy works for everybody. The workers at the lowest level—

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Reclaiming my time.

Mr. DICKEY. Teacher, can I ask a question?

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire how much time I have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Louisiana has 8 minutes remaining.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. If the distinguished gentlemen from Arkansas, New York, and Illinois, and the distinguished gentlewoman from Georgia would allow me to now operate on a controlled time basis, at this time I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Arkansas.

Mr. DICKEY. All right, this is the question I want to say in 1 minute, and thank you, teacher, for letting me.

If this plan that you have for raising the minimum wage, if, just give me that, if it, because of the increased costs of the wages and on the payroll and the taxes that comes, if this causes a taco to go from 89 to 90 cents, 1 penny, proportionately who suffers the most?

What I am saying to you all is that we have increased costs and inflation because of this, because all of the elements come into an operation, the delivery costs, the costs of the goods that come in are increased, everything is increased. It is an incremental thing. It comes up.

The harshest thing you all are doing when you do this is penalizing disproportionately the lower people on the rung of the economic scale because they have to go. If that is the case, how do you answer the question that inflation is going to hurt those people? When you say you are going to help them and you use them, in my opinion, to try to increase taxes and try to balloon the size of Government, you use that argument, they, in fact, will be suffering the most by inflation. What do you say about that?

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Reclaiming the time, I yield to the gentlewoman from Georgia for 1 minute.

Ms. MCKINNEY. The bottom line on what I say about that, we all know that crime doesn't pay, but if you happen to work for Congressman DICKEY your work doesn't pay either.

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Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Reclaiming my time, let me try to respond to the gentleman's question.

Ms. MCKINNEY. I am just playing.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. The gentleman has a very legitimate question and my response is very simple. I know that the gentleman would agree with me that most countries across the world try to pattern themselves, all of them, most of them, admire the work

that we do in the area of business. Would the gentleman not agree with that?

The gentleman does agree. He is shaking his head.

Mr. DICKEY. That is correct.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. That is a yes. They in fact look at us as role models for the most part. Is that not correct?

Mr. DICKEY. That is correct.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. The gentleman would agree. We do not have companies and workers across the world looking at America saying we do not do our business correctly. For the most part, think we do a pretty good job at it.

Let me take the gentleman through the history of minimum wage for a second. It did not hurt then, and I would suggest to the gentleman it is not going to hurt now because, first of all, it is not going to take away the competitive angle of the work force. Individuals must still be competitive. They will be rewarded based upon their merits.

Public Law 75-718 was the first minimum wage law, 25 cents. Then in 1939 it moved from 25 to 30 cents. In 1945 it moved from 30 to 40, 40 cents. Then in 1950 it moved to 75 cents. It was still competitive then. Employees were still working and getting their just due in the merit system, and it did not have a devastating effect on the economy and certainly did not have a devastating effect on the American workers.

Let me ask the Speaker, inquire in terms of how much time the gentleman has remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MICA). The gentleman from Louisiana has 4 minutes remaining.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Because I would like to yield 1 minute to each of the gentlemen and gentlewoman before I leave, before we close.

It moved from, I will put it in the RECORD, up to 1991, it moved from 25 cents in 1938 to \$4.25 in 1991. And certainly the gentleman is not suggesting that employees are coming to work waiting for the Government to raise their wage and not working hard, not trying to be promoted on jobs and waiting for this Congress to raise their wage. The gentleman is not suggesting that.

Mr. DICKEY. I am.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. If the gentleman is suggesting that, I would suggest that the gentleman is wrong.

I am going to yield 30 seconds to each of the gentleman and the gentlewoman for closing. I first yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. OWENS. It is an insult to workers who make the minimum wage to say that they are there because they are no good, they cannot improve themselves. My father is one of the smartest men I ever knew. He worked in the Memphis furniture factory all his life, never paid more than the minimum wage. He went to school to the sixth grade. He was the smartest man.

When the machines broke down, he made them operate. He understood the mechanics. They had to come get him when they laid him off because of the fact the machines could no be run by anybody else, yet they still never paid him more than the minimum wage because the supply and demand was such that they could get people who would work for the minimum wage.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas.

Mr. DICKEY. Mr. Speaker, I would yield my time.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Let me thank the gentleman from Louisiana for this opportunity. I want to make sure that we are focusing and keep the minimum wage debate in a particular context. The context is, once again, the top 500,000 families, their net worth in 1983 in this Nation was \$2.5 trillion. By 1989 it had risen to \$5 trillion.

Those families, those business people, they witnessed an increase in their standard of living. They have witnessed an increase in their earnings and in their wage earnings. That is a crowd that paid \$700,000 for golf clubs, \$300,000 for fake pearls. They need to pay more taxes, which is good. It is American because they are benefiting from America.

At the same time, we need to raise the minimum wage of people who do not have the same opportunity that those 500,000 families do.

Before I yield back the balance of my time, I just want to show this.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. The gentleman has no time.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. The distinguished majority leader has indicated he will resist a minimum wage increase with every fiber of his body. In light of the fact there are working people in our country that we upset about this, we ought to change that.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman from Illinois, and I yield to the gentlewoman from Georgia.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I say we need to increase the minimum wage to a livable wage. We need to protect workers' rights and jobs. We need to decrease taxes on middle and low income families, and we need to encourage not just personal responsibility but corporate responsibility, too.

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Georgia. I thank all the gentlemen and the gentlewoman for being here, and I want to especially thank the gentleman from Arkansas for being here tonight to participate in this colloquy. The gentleman certainly showed a lot of statesmanship and character in being part of this debate tonight, and I thank the gentleman.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I simply say that Members of this Congress, all who

I serve with and all who I have a great deal of respect for, when we go home each day we take in \$550. Each day we work we get \$550. A person on minimum wage only makes \$680 a month. I just cannot see why we cannot give them a small 40-cent increase 1 year and another 40 cents the next year, so that they can buy bread and milk for the same price that we buy bread and milk.

I want to thank the Speaker and I want to thank the gentleman and the gentlewoman.

#### THE REPUBLICAN VISION FOR AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. RADANOVICH] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to come speak to the American people regarding the important issues of the day, and I would like to start off by commenting on how important words are, I think in conveying messages. In my short term here in Congress, I am a freshman, I have been here a little over a year, I have learned a couple of vital things, and that is that we have to be very, very careful about the words that we say to make sure that they are communicating exactly what we mean to the American people, because words are very important.

It is in that spirit that I offer the following vision, in an attempt to determine a way to communicate to the American people the role and the mission of the Republicans here in Congress. If we can say things and put them down into easily understandable terms, using very symbolic figures, it can go a long way to explaining to the American people how we would like to go and where we would like to take this country. It is in that spirit that I offer this following vision.

Let me use the simple symbol of a chair to illustrate where we are in America and I think where the Republican Congress would like to take this country. In starting with something such as this, I think it kind of illustrates where America is right now. I believe that before we can entrust or get the American people's trust in following us, we have to accurately describe where America is right now, and this portrait of this chair is a good illustration of American society. So welcome to America.

Basically we have an unstable chair, something that does not provide very much freedom, something that does not provide very much security. This is really the condition of our country right now, I believe. You will notice the chair has four legs, but the problem is that none of the legs are the same size as the other legs on the chair.

Look at the government leg, way too long. Look at the family leg. It would be very easy to sell the argument to