

Here are three quick myths: 8(a) wastes money through reliance on sole source contracting. This is not true; 8(a) is riddled with fraud and abuse even after 3 congressional attempts to reform it. That is not true; and 8(a) has failed to help fledgling minority businesses and is primarily a rich-get-richer program for Beltway bandits. That is not altogether true.

Here are the facts. Total 8(a) contracts in 1994 represented only 3.2 percent of all Federal contracts. We are talking about only 3.2 percent of all Federal contracts.

And in this institution we have a budget of \$1.7 trillion every year and we are talking about 3.2 percent of Federal contracts. That does not include the entire \$1.7 trillion. It is even smaller than that, 3.2 percent of Federal contracts. Just 3.2 percent. The total 8(a) program received less than half of the actual contract dollars than were awarded to either of the top two defense contractors. The total program received less than half.

Reforms to further bring 8(a) into compliance with the strict Adarand standard are included in proposed regulatory changes that have been published in the Federal Register. The Department of Justice believes that these changes will, one, allow agencies to use race conscious tools to assist disadvantaged businesses, enable agencies to assess what level of minority procurement would be probable in the absence of discrimination, require agencies to implement measures that do not rely on race to broaden opportunities for small minority firms, tighten certification and eligibility requirements.

Mr. Speaker, I hope today that with our brief colloquy between the gentleman from Louisiana and myself on the issue of affirmative action, 8(a) programs, and the need to offset years of historical discrimination against African-Americans, minorities, women, and people of color in this country will not go unheeded and unheard by the membership in this august and esteemed body.

The challenges before us are great as a nation, and I am more convinced than ever if we can move beyond racial battle ground to economic common ground and on, as my father would say, to moral higher ground, we can make sense and make sense for all of America.

Many Americans still long for the day when they can say, "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty." That day has not yet arrived, and many African-Americans and disadvantaged businesses in our Nation need a helping hand. Not a handout, a helping hand. It would serve this institution well, it would serve all of us as Democrats and Republicans if we could move beyond the politics of divisiveness and expand programs that make sense for the most people.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the special order today by the gentleman from Alabama [Mr. CALLAHAN].

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE SETS OUT TO DISCOVER SOURCE OF PESSIMISM REGARDING ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I have had the pleasure for the last 2 years of serving as the vice chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, and I found it to be quite an interesting task because I am not an economist and, in fact, I do not think any of the members of the Joint Economic Committee are true economists, although some studied history and some courses in economics, but none of us are truly economists.

Our job is, however, to try to understand as best we can, as Members of the House who are former schoolteachers or real estate salespeople or car salespeople or doctors or housewives or lawyers or whatever we may be, we need to understand the process of our Nation's economy so that when we enact laws here we will know, hopefully before we enact those laws, what effect those laws have on the performance of our country's economy.

And of course in order to do that we do talk with economists and we do read things that they have written and we try to understand ourselves and explain to our colleagues what it is that we have done or are about to do or may do in the future that will help our economy grow, help to provide jobs, help to provide a larger set of opportunities for people who are involved in the economic sector, as we all are as we make our daily livings.

And to the extent that we can be successful in doing that, and to the extent that we can be successful in imparting what we think we have learned to our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, then we are successful as Members of the Joint Economic Committee in carrying out our function.

Now, as I have gone about the business of this task over the last couple of years, I have also talked with lots of American people who are involved every day in the economic system; people that work, people looking for jobs, people looking to advance, people looking to get wage increases and people just looking to go to work every day so they can earn a wage to bring home to their families.

And I have noticed in the last several years that there has been a marked upturn in people who know that I do this job here and who have come to me and have said, well, this year I am not making as much as I made last year. What is wrong? And people who have said, well, when I go to look for a job, like my son or daughter did when they graduated from college, all they could find was a temporary job because employers did not want to pay benefits. When other people go looking for a job or go into the workplace they say, well, gee, I have not been able to advance as I thought I would.

All of these kinds of things have made people nervous about the economy and nervous about opportunities, and for the first time public opinion polls show that it is the opinion of the younger generation that they probably will not do as well as the former generations.

This is unique in our country's history, because always before the new generation aspired to do better than the older generation and thought they would and were optimistic about it. But today that is not the case.

And so the Joint Economic Committee set about trying to find out what it was that was causing this aura of pessimism about our economy. We had a lot of research, read a lot of books, listened to a lot of economists and we began to see that there was, in fact, a trend that is occurring, and that trend was not necessarily good news for Americans.

I brought some charts with me today to try to demonstrate what it is that we have found about our economy. This chart has two lines on it. I hope those who are further away can see it has a solid line and kind of a dotted line. The dotted line shows what economic growth has been in our country and how well the economy has done since World War II.

It is a rather steady increase. That increase is actually about 3.5 percent, on average, each year. In other words, the economy grows. There are more jobs by a substantial margin each year since World War II than there were the year before. As the economy grew, wages went up and people prospered and everybody was happy.

The black line shows what actually happened in the economy at any given point along that trend, and we can see that at some point the black line, in terms of what was really happening, was above the dotted line and that other points, when there was a recession, it fell back to or below the dotted line. But by and large, until this point, the lines tracked along pretty well together.

Where the dark line begins to fall below the dotted line, that happens to be in 1993. And the Congressional Budget Office here, which does all kinds of economic projections and forecasts and estimates about money and what is going to happen and economic growth, has forecasted here that the outlook