

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

[Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

□ 2230

REVIEW OF CONTRACT WITH AMERICA AND OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 104TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURTON of Indiana). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. WICKER] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, this Friday marks a very significant day for me and many of my colleagues and, most importantly, for millions of Americans. This Friday, September 27, is the 2-year, is the 2-year anniversary of the signing of the Contract With America. When more than 300 Republicans gathered on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in 1994 to sign the Contract With America, it was not some kind of campaign gimmick. It was a commitment that we made, a signed contract with the people of the United States.

At this point the pages are bringing a copy of that contract to the well to place by my colleague, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT].

We promised if we were elected to the majority 10 broad legislative proposals would be debated, discussed and voted on by the full House of Representatives. For years, many of these issues had been bottled up in committee, never making it to the floor, never seeing the light day, the positions of our elected officials never examined by public scrutiny.

We set out to change that by making a solemn promise to the people of America, not an empty promise. The American people deserve much more than that. That is why we put our promise in the form of a signed contract.

All too frequently in today's political arena, promises are made and then not kept. Representative government, our government, Mr. Speaker, is not well served when our elected officials say one thing at home on the campaign trail, but then take office and come up here to Washington and do something other than that which they promised. This dishonest practice undermines the very fabric of our government's integrity and further promotes the negative cynicism with which Americans view Congress.

The Contract With America was the first step in changing that negative perception of Congress. We put forth a positive agenda, an agenda that sought to help make this great country an even better place to live, work and raise our children.

Mr. Speaker, we campaigned on a positive agenda, and we were elected to

a majority on that agenda. We changed the direction of debate in Washington through that agenda. No longer are people talking about a larger Federal role. The discussion and debate now in Washington, DC, is how we can make government more efficient, how we can make the Federal role small, and emphasize individual responsibility and State and local control. And, best of all, we kept our word to the American people.

At this point, I want to quote a story written by columnist David Broder, dated April 9, 1995. True words then and just as true today. David Broder said this: "It is healthy for our politics and politicians, regardless of affiliation, when the public sees elected officials doing what they promised."

Mr. Broder goes on to say, "The greatest threat to our system of government is rampant cynicism. The best cure for cynicism is to demonstrate that campaigns and elections really matter," and Mr. Broder then says, "The House Republicans have provided such a demonstration."

For over 40 years, one party held the majority in this House of Representatives. As a result, we have high taxes. Almost 40 percent of a family's income goes to pay for government. We have mountains of bureaucratic regulations, bigger government, but we also have lower student test scores and a skyrocketing crime rate.

In 1994, Republicans summoned the courage to finally throw down the gauntlet and offer the people what they said they wanted and what they deserved, a balanced budget amendment, tax relief for families, safe neighborhoods for themselves and their children, an end to the lifelong dependency on welfare, a Congress which will be accountable to those people they serve. But in the history of American politics, there have been few occasions where something has been so misrepresented and so maligned as the Contract With America.

Our colleagues from the other side of the aisle have spent literally hundreds of hours on the floor attempting to destroy and to distort what the Contract With America means and what we stand for.

Just to provide you some examples, Mr. Speaker, a colleague of mine from the other side of the aisle took the floor the other day and said the Contract With America would have cut Medicare, a completely false statement. There is nothing whatsoever in the Contract With America about Medicare, much less cutting Medicare. That it would have cut environmental protection, cut education, all to give tax cuts to the wealthy. Four completely erroneous statements in the space of one sentence. It is enough to take your breath away, Mr. Speaker.

Another quote from the Boston Globe: "Republicans' Contract With America failed to capture the hearts and minds of the average American family, especially that new breed, the Reagan Democrats."

And then the would-be Speaker, our current minority leader, said earlier this year, "This was supposed to be the Congress of the Republican contract and somewhere along the line we've got a lost contract there."

I will tell you where the contract is, to my distinguished colleague from Missouri, the contract is 65 percent signed into law right now. Sixty-five percent of the items that we voted on in the Contract With America have not only been passed by this body, but have been passed by the U.S. Senate and signed into law by the Democrat President of the United States.

Under the Contract With America, the 104th Congress took the first steps toward transforming government, not only to provide a smaller, more efficient government but a better government. We passed legislation as part of the contract that moves power, money and authority from inside the Beltway to the States, communities and families.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, I am joined by several of my freshman colleagues from all across the Nation, north, south, east and west, and we are here tonight to set the record straight.

First, contrary to the inflamed rhetoric of my Democratic colleagues and much of the news media, the Contract With America was largely successful. I know that my friend from Minnesota is chomping at the bit to get in his two cents' worth, and I at this point yield to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT]. Certainly I know that he shares my frustration when we have 65 percent of the contract passed, 74 of the separate pieces of legislation were offered, and 48 of these are part of the law of the land.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. I would like to thank my colleague from Mississippi and I am delighted we have a good turnout tonight of some of our fellow freshmen. I would like to talk a little bit first of all about the revisionist history. I think it was Mark Twain who said, "Truth is incontrovertible. Ignorance may deride it, jealousy may attack it, but in the end there it is."

I think if the American people will take just a few minutes to examine what we promised 2 years ago tomorrow, and what this Congress actually delivered for the American people, I think they will come to the conclusion that first of all we meant what we said, we said what we meant, and that in the end I think their will has been done by this Congress. For the first time in 40 years, we have a Congress that not only has listened to the American people but has responded as well.

I don't want to take too much time tonight, but I do want to share a couple of observations and memories of those days, and those days that I remember, the most remarkable days of all, were those glorious days and the first was on September 27, 1994 when we signed the contract. It was a glorious day. In fact, if you recall, it was kind of cloudy early in the morning but as we approached the Capitol steps, and there