they are more understandable to investors. Why not force stock quotes to be made in plain dollars and cents, so that investors don't have to convert from fractions every time they read the stock tables in the newspaper?

Four years ago, when I chaired the Finance Subcommittee, we held a series of hearings on the future of the stock markets. During those hearings, we heard many market participants raise concerns about certain trading practices, such as payment for order flow or preferencing, which they argued had the potential to compromise the fiduciary duty of brokers and other financial professionals to achieve best execution of their customer's orders. Many proposals were put forward to address abuses in these areas, ranging from banning such practices entirely, enhancing disclosures to customers, or stepping up regulatory oversight. While many of these proposals had merit, they merely address the symptoms while ignoring the underlying problem—the fact that the artificial requirement for stocks to trade in eighths establishes a fixed minimum spread between the prices quoted by buyers and sellers of stocks. This requirement prevents market forces from working to narrow the spread to 10 cents, 5 cents, or even 1 penny. As a result, market makers have resorted to practices such as paying for order flow.

I think that our markets would function better if we moved to a more transparent form of quote-based competition. Let stocks trade in dollars and cents, and then the market can more accurately determine what the prices and the spreads should be. Investors will get more opportunities for price improvement in the most actively traded and liquid stocks, and the spreads in such stocks should narrow. Investors will also be able to more readily comprehend how much the value of a stock is increasing or decreasing, as they will not have to constantly convert fractions to dollars.

At the time we held our hearings the stock exchanges resisted such an innovation. I believed then, as I believe now, that many of the objections raised to this proposal are ill-founded, while those which warrant consideration can be readily accommodated through the regulatory process.

Some might ask, why are we bothering about a few pennies? The answer is the golden crumbs that Wall Street extracts for each trade adds up to billions of dollars in costs to consumers each year. Estimates of the resulting savings for investors range widely—from $4 to $9 billion a year, depending on what stocks are covered and where the minimum price increments are set. But even if investors only saved 1 penny per share, that would still mean over $1 billion in savings annually.

The bill we are introducing today is very simple. It directs the Securities and Exchange Commission to use its existing rulemaking authority to adopt a rule, within 1 year after the date of enactment, that would transition the stock and options markets away from trading in factions to trading in dollars and cents. We give the SEC the flexibility to determine what the appropriate minimum price increment or increments should be, and how to implement it in a fashion that does not impose undue burdens on trading and information systems.

The time for delay has ended. American investors want Wall Street to show us the money by moving away from trading in fractions to a more understandable stock pricing system. They also want more opportunities to get better prices and lower their transaction costs when they buy or sell stocks.

I congratulate Chairman OXLEY and Chairman BLILEY for their leadership in undertaking this initiative, and SEC Commissioner Steve Wallman for his outspoken advocacy on the merits of adopting this reform. I look forward to working with them, as well as with SEC Chairman Arthur Levitt, the leaders of our Nation's stock exchanges, individual and institutional investors, and the securities industry as we move to early hearings and a markup of this bill, which I believe may be the most important proconsumer legislation the Congress considers this year.

KEEP THE GLORY FOR OLD GLORY

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 1997

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with all a poem written by a constituent of mine, Harry E. Dearen, who is a member of the American Legion, Chaplain Post 594 and the American Legion Citizens Flag Alliance in Houston, TX. I believe his poem captures the sentiments we all feel about our flag.

KEEP THE GLORY FOR OLD GLORY

No matter who we are, or what we think
About our nation in which we live.
We are free and have a common link
And a duty to our colors and should give

Our very heart and soul to an alliance
To our fellow man and old glory.
The flag that we fought for in defiance
Of offenses aginst liberty. The history

Of our country lived by men at arms
And through our victories of the past
To protect our flag from ones that harm
It in any way, or try to burn, or trash

Our flag is stepping right on me.
I will not put up with that being done.
We must see that it is stopped you see.
It mocks the freedom that we have won.

—*H. Dearen.*

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 1997

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to indicate that on Thursday, March 6, I accompanied the President of the United States to my home State of Michigan where he discussed education and the challenge of moving people from welfare to work.

As a result, I missed rollcall votes 32 through 35. Had I been present, I would have voted ''nay'' on rollcall votes 32 and 35, and ''yea'' on rollcall votes 33 and 34.

CONDEMNING THE BOMBING OUTSIDE THE MERCER ISLAND JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

HON. JENNIFER DUNN

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 1997

Ms. DUNN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, last week a bombing occurred outside the Jewish Community Center on Mercer Island, a city located in the congressional district I represent. It was a rare and threatening display of criminal behavior on Mercer Island and a crime that will not go unpunished.

There is an extremely dangerous individual at large who is responsible for this bombing, a coward of the highest magnitude, and who remains a threat to the Jewish community. Whether a dangerously immature prank or a deliberately anti-Semitic effort to terrorize this peaceful community, I condemn this act in the strongest possible sense. Local community leaders and I are relieved that no one was hurt and the center went undamaged. Bringing those responsible to justice is my highest priority, and I publicly declare my intention to fully support law enforcement officials toward that end.

It is particularly ironic, having recently witnessed on Israeli soil the finalizing of the Hebron agreement, that despite the historic and committed peace underway in one of the most traditionally volatile regions of the world, the community of Mercer Island is living with violence. I am proud of my neighbors on Mercer Island who refuse to allow this violence to terrorize them into retreat. They have reacted with calm, and their composure is noble and to be greatly admired.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress, indeed all of us, should note that what could have been a disastrous situation characterized by loss of precious life and honored property is instead a reminder of the work that lies before us. The good, peaceful, and law-abiding citizens of our communities and our country are ready to take this country back from terrorists and vandals. They will apprehend the lawless, prosecute them, and protect their communities. That's what the people of Mercer Island and the Jewish community are doing. I stand ready to help.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL SERVICES ELIGIBILITY ACT

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 1997

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to ensure that no woman who is a victim of domestic violence will be denied legal services because of the economic status of her abuser.

The Domestic Violence Legal Services Eligibility Act states that in cases of domestic violence only, the Legal Services Corporation, in determining eligibility for services, will consider only the income of the client seeking services.

Legal services clinics report that women fleeing the home of a spouse or a partner comprise the majority of their domestic violence cases. Yet the Legal Services Corporation guidelines currently state that eligibility for