

to insure as many of those 10 million children as possible.

Finally, I also want it to be known to the Republican leadership that we need to make sure that environmental protection is a priority in this budget. It is very important to give the EPA the tools to ensure safe drinking water, clean air, and clean oceans, and I personally will fight to keep the commitment to American families for a healthy environment.

Again, Madam Speaker, although I think the problem that I see right now, there are already rumblings by the Republican right to increase the amount of the tax cuts with further cuts in many of these important family first agenda programs, and if the Republican extremists succeed, then American families will be the ones who suffer in the end.

Hopefully, this budget agreement, which I expect to be adopted today, will be the beginning of a process that makes sure that the tax cuts in the budget are mainly targeted to the average working American, and the same is true with the spending priorities, that they help the average American family and not just the wealthy.

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE AMTRAK PRIVATIZATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. HEFLEY] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. HEFLEY. Madam Speaker, what do the Americans think of when they hear the statement "free of Federal subsidy"? What about "self-sufficiency"? I think these terms refer to programs that receive no Federal funding. It means that the program runs like a business and its survival is dependent upon its business practices and its customers.

Madam Speaker, someone needs to tell this to Amtrak. Tom Downs, Chairman and CEO of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, or Amtrak, has been frequently quoted as saying Amtrak could become a self-sufficient operation if Congress would give it a permanent source of funding.

Amtrak was created in 1970 as an independent and self-sufficient corporation and was given a one-time grant of \$40 million. Twenty-seven years and \$19 billion later, I would think Amtrak and Congress would realize that a dedicated funding source is not going to help passenger railroads make money or become self-sufficient. But Amtrak continues to cry "Show me the money."

Madam Speaker, let us face it. Amtrak is in crisis. The question is not whether Amtrak can reach sufficiency by 2002, as mandated by Congress. The question has become will Amtrak still be in business next spring?

As long as the Federal Government is involved in Amtrak it will not survive, and it is not as if we have not seen the

light at the end of the tunnel. In 1995, with Congress pushing for a balanced budget and making cutbacks, Amtrak realized that they could no longer depend on the Federal Government for nearly a billion dollars every year. To their credit they did what a number of large corporations have done in the 1990's. They undertook a major corporate restructuring and began to look at themselves as a business. They reduced services on 16 routes across the country and saved about \$54 million. They cut staffing and tried to improve service and make rail travel more attractive to the average consumer.

Amtrak has shown that if the tough decisions are made money can be saved. Much of the problem, however, is not Amtrak's fault; we are to blame. See, Federal law is prohibiting Amtrak from making the most out of their staffing reductions or forcing Amtrak to provide ridiculously generous severance packages and preventing them from making the truly tough business decisions, and as long as the Federal dollar keeps flowing to Amtrak, we will always attach a fistful of strings.

Today I am reintroducing the Amtrak Privatization Act. Some people will call this the Amtrak killer. I call these reforms Amtrak's only chance for survival. My bill will do three very important things that I think will help Amtrak survive. First of all, we need to let Amtrak operate like a business. Congress should not mandate what routes the trains take or where they should stop. Congress should no more force Amtrak to run an unprofitable route than mandate what items a local mom and pop shop stocks.

The Amtrak Privatization Act will free Amtrak from those Federal controls and allow them to make the necessary cuts to survive. Some routes may be eliminated. But remember, Amtrak has said it will be out of business by next spring if nothing is done. That means all routes would then be eliminated.

So let us say Amtrak eliminates some routes and must lay off some rail workers as a result. Congress has mandated that a laid off Amtrak employee receive up to 6 years full pay, 6 years. Show me another employee who gets full pay for 6 years after being laid off. My bill will allow them to receive a more reasonable 6 months pay after being laid off. Amtrak's labor agreements have got to go.

Finally, this bill creates a glidepath toward self-sufficiency in 2002. Until Amtrak gets off the Government till, including stealing gas tax dollars to support rail, Congress will be trying to mandate how it should operate. I contend if we take all Federal control over Amtrak away, including Federal dollars, Amtrak will find a way to survive. If we do not, Amtrak will stop rolling perhaps even next spring.

#### IT IS TIME TO ENFORCE HELMS- BURTON AGAINST THE CASTRO REGIME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss an important issue: How do we rid Castro, or Cuba I guess, of the despot Castro, is what I should say? Today is May 20. This is known as Cuban Independence Day, when Cuba was granted independence from Spain as a result of the Spanish-American War. However, the Cuba of today is looking for a new independence, one that grants them freedom from the hideous dictatorship of Fidel Castro.

Cuba has been under a dictatorship for about 38 years now. It is no secret that Fidel Castro is still exercising his power in a manner contradictory to the most basic human rights held by all people. This is an absolute disgrace that such a regime exists only 90 miles from my home State of Florida. We, as a Nation, must work to correct this. We should have a long time ago.

Sometimes the only way to undermine a dictatorship short of some direct military force is through the pocketbook. In the past, Cuba could rely heavily on Soviet assistance for proping up its economy. Now that the Soviet Union no longer exists, Cuba must find benefit from a great deal of foreign investment and trading. It has done just that. According to the Cuban Government, 260 joint ventures were concluded by the end of 1996, with more than \$2.1 billion in foreign capital.

Madam Speaker, we obviously cannot block all trade with Cuba without a little blockade of the island. However, we can work for a free Cuba that respects human rights in another manner. To that end Congress did its job in 1996 and passed the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, otherwise known as Libertad or Helms-Burton. This legislation tightened the screws on Castro and had a solid chance for significant impact in bringing down the Castro dictatorship. It would have done so through three significant provisions. It codified all existing Cuban embargo Executive orders and regulations, it denied admission to the United States to aliens involved in the confiscation of United States property in Cuba or the trafficking of confiscated property in Cuba, and it allowed U.S. nationals to sue for money damages in U.S. Federal court those persons that traffic in United States property confiscated in Cuba when Castro took over.

The first of these provisions may not be waived by the President, but the President was granted authority to waive title III in Helms-Burton, in part allowing U.S. nationals to sue in Federal court, if he determines that such a delay would be in the national interest