

do great damage to our Bill of Rights and to the cause of religious liberty. The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) has introduced a constitutional amendment that, if passed into law, would for the first time in our Nation's history amend our cherished Bill of Rights, that Bill of Rights which has for over 200 years protected American's religious, political and individual rights. On Wednesday the Committee on the Judiciary is expected to vote on this ill-conceived legislation.

The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) has mislabeled his work the Religious Freedom Amendment. More appropriately, it should be called the Religious Freedom Destruction Amendment, because that is what it will do.

In my opinion, the Istook amendment is the worst and most dangerous piece of legislation I have seen in my 15 years in public office. It is dangerous because it threatens our core religious rights and would literally tear down the 200-year-old wall that our Founding Fathers built to protect religion from the intrusion of government. That is why I will be working with a bipartisan coalition of House Members and religious leaders from across the Nation to defeat this measure.

The Istook amendment would allow satanic prayers and animal sacrifices in the name of prayers to be performed in our public school rooms. It would step on the rights of religious minorities and allow government facilities, including county courthouses and elementary public schools, to become billboards for religious cults.

Mr. Speaker, America already has a religious freedom amendment. It is called the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is the first pillar of our Bill of Rights. It is the sacred foundation of all of our rights.

The First Amendment begins with these cherished words: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." For over two centuries that simple but profound statement has been the guardian of religious liberty, which is perhaps the greatest single contribution of the American experiment in democracy. To tamper with the First Amendment of our Bill of Rights has profound implications.

In the name of furthering religion, the Istook amendment would harm religion. In the name of protecting religious freedom, it would damage religious freedom. With no disrespect intended to my colleague, if I must choose between Madison, Jefferson and our Founding Fathers versus the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) on the issue of protecting religious liberty, I shall stand with Madison, Jefferson and our Founding Fathers.

If history has taught us nothing else, it has taught us that the best way to ruin religion is to politicize it. Our Founding Fathers deleted the mentioning of God in our Constitution, not out of disrespect but out of total reverence for their faith in God and the impor-

ance of religion in our lives. It is that same sense of reverence that should move us in this Congress to protect the First Amendment of our Constitution, not dismantle it.

Some have suggested that the Istook amendment is necessary because they allege God has been taken out of public places. I would suggest those people must not share my belief that no human has the power to remove an all-powerful, ever-present God from any place on this earth.

The fact is there is no law in America that prohibits prayers in school. Teachers have said as long as there are math tests, there will be prayers in school. I agree. Under present law, school children may pray silently in school or even out loud, so long as they do not disturb the class work of others and try to impose their religious views upon their fellow students. Today in our schools children can say grace over school lunches and, if they wish, pray around the flagpole before and after school.

Under the Bill of Rights, government resources, though, cannot be used to force religion upon our school children against the wishes of their parents or the children themselves. What the Bill of Rights does prohibit is government-sponsored prayer, as it should.

Our Founding Fathers were wise to separate church and State in the very First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. Religious freedom flourishes in America today. Why? Precisely because of our Constitution's wall of separation between church and State. Islamic fundamentalism seen in the Middle East today is a clear example of how religious rights are trampled upon when government gets involved in religion.

In the months ahead, I urge Americans to look beyond the sound bite rhetoric of the Istook amendment and ask themselves this question: Should prayer be an individual right or a government program?

U.S. SHOULD SUPPORT INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, few weeks ago, several Members of this body had sent a letter to the Honorable Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of the Indian State of Punjab. The letter alleges that India's security forces and the Punjab state police have been involved in a number of acts of murder, rape, and torture of the Sikh community. The letter also called for the establishment of a state human rights commission to investigate these alleged crimes.

Mr. Speaker, there is no need to resurrect these allegations or propose a new way to deal with them.

Last year, under the direction of Chief Minister Badal, the Punjab gov-

ernment established a human rights commission whose primary purpose is to investigate claims of human rights abuses committed by government officials, Indian security forces, and members of the Punjab state police. This commission is headed by a former Chief Justice of the Indian High Court. The former Chief Justice is accompanied by retired judges and private citizens from the State of Punjab. The commission was purposely filled with individuals who are of different and unique backgrounds to ensure that all interests are represented.

The Indian government several years ago, I should point out, also established the National Indian Human Rights Commission to investigate claims of human rights abuses. That commission has found members of the Indian security force, border patrol, and military to have used excessive force, especially in Punjab. This commission has swiftly disciplined these individuals for the crimes they had committed.

I am surprised that there was no mention in this letter that representatives of the International Commission of the Red Cross and Amnesty International have visited India. Many distinguished leaders from the U.S., including Members of this body, have traveled to India to meet with government officials, separatist leaders, and the general population.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, the predominantly Sikh Akali Dal party won the majority of seats in the legislature, and the party's leader, Prakash Singh Badal, was named Chief Minister. To show that they are committed to the peace and prosperity of Punjab, the Akali Dal party ran in coalition with the predominantly Hindu BJP party.

What concerns me, Mr. Speaker, is that these claims and accusations about the situation in Punjab really are almost 10 years old now. The developments over the last 2 years, three elections with over 60 percent voter turnout and the establishment of the state human rights commission, are in sharp contrast to the claims that are being made in this letter that was sent to the Punjab government. The people of Punjab have demonstrated their preference and commitment to peace and the democratic process.

I think it is time that Members of this body look past the problems that formerly plagued Punjab. It is time for us to focus on different issues, such as the major economic reforms initiated by the Punjab government.

Punjab is currently trying to attract numerous American companies to invest in the state's infrastructure, information technology, and agriculture projects. We should support those American companies, such as Pepsi, Heinz, and Kellogg, who have already made tremendous investments and have helped bring stability back to the state of Punjab.

Mr. Speaker, I am simply asking that we show our support and work with the

Indian government, as well as the Punjab government, in keeping peace within Punjab. We should encourage American companies to take advantage of the opportunities that exist in Punjab.

Over the last 2 years, the citizens of Punjab have demonstrated their commitment to peace and democracy. I think it is time we put these problems in the past that existed in Punjab behind us. They are being addressed by the human rights commissions that are in place.

It is much more valuable for us to talk about what we can do as Americans to bring Punjab and India closer together with the United States, as I know so many of the people in this body, including our Members of the India Caucus, have strived to do.

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SAVING SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, our Congressional Budget Office today made an announcement that they now predict that we will have a \$8 billion surplus this fiscal year ending October 1. It gives me a great deal of concern that we are hoodwinking the American people on what a surplus really is.

If one looks at this chart, it shows what has happened between 1960 and 2000. You notice even in spite of the Washington claims that there will be a surplus, the national debt keeps going up and up and up. That is because the way Washington defines a surplus is all money in, and all money out. The Trust Fund surpluses are spent in Social Security. In fact all our Trust Fund surpluses are spent on other items, and they are used, in effect, to pretend that we have a balanced budget, when we really do not.

So while we are professing great accomplishments, that we are having a surplus of \$8 billion this year, this is how much we are borrowing from Social Security.

The Social Security Trust Fund in 1998, total revenues in, \$480 billion; total expenses, \$382 billion. We are borrowing from the Social Security Trust Fund, the bottom line, \$98 billion. So when they say we have a surplus of \$8 billion, it says maybe we are only borrowing \$90 billion from the Social Security Trust Fund.

This is the historical tables that the President sent over last month with his 5-year budget. If you would turn to page 111 on these historical tables, you would see that the President's budget, every year for the next 5 years, the national debt increases between \$130 billion and \$175 billion. That is because we are borrowing from the Social Security Trust Fund.

So on the one hand, we say that the money borrowed from the Social Secu-

rity Trust Fund is part of the national debt. In fact, it is part of the debt subject to the debt limit that is set by Congress. But creatively, on the other hand, we say, well, this is a unified budget. Therefore, we are going to call what we borrow from the Social Security Trust Fund revenues, and, therefore, the budget is balanced.

I would suggest that the true test of a balanced budget is when the national debt stops going up.

Look at this next chart. Here is the problem that we are having now in Social Security. The little blue area on the top that goes from 1997 until the year 2011 is the surplus that is coming into the Social Security Trust Fund. That blue is the positive side that means that there is more Social Security taxes coming in than is required at the moment to pay out benefits, because Social Security is a pay-as-you-go program. That temporary surplus is what we are using to currently balance the budget.

But that goes away in 2011. It goes away because the cash revenues coming in to fund Social Security benefits are going to be run out, and the benefits are going to be greater than the dollars coming in from the Social Security taxes.

So you see what happens in the other year, and this really gets to the heart of the serious problem of Social Security. If you go way to the bottom right-hand side of the chart, you see we are going to have to borrow \$400 billion or come up with \$400 billion additional dollars every year to satisfy what we have now made promises to the retirees that are going to be getting Social Security benefits.

A huge problem on Social Security. I think we have to face up to it. The number one thing that the American people have got to start looking at, though, is the fact that Social Security has serious problems. Part of the reason, part of the reason they are having the problems for the future is that we are borrowing the surpluses today to spend for other programs, and we are borrowing those surpluses to pretend that we have a balanced budget, in fact a potential surplus this year and next year. The surplus projected by CBO next year is \$9 billion. Next year we are going to be borrowing \$100 billion from the Social Security Trust Fund. The following year, in the year 2000, I think the estimate is that the surplus is going down to \$1 billion.

The fact is we need to acknowledge the fact that we are borrowing from the Social Security Trust Fund to balance the budget, to so-called balance the budget.

This next chart I think is interesting, because it starts looking at what the problems of Social Security are in this country. This chart shows the numbers. It is the demographics of what is going to be happening to us over the next several years. The number of seniors, the number of retirees is increasing dramatically, a 73 percent

increase; 64 million seniors in this country, a 73 percent increase between now and the year 2025, where the working population is only going to be increasing 14 percent between now and that time. So you have an increasing number of seniors and a decreasing number of taxpayers that are paying into Social Security.

Let me just retrace into history a little bit on how Social Security was started. Social Security was started in 1935. It was started as a pay-as-you-go program where existing workers pay in their taxes to cover the benefits of existing retirees. So no savings, no investment.

It worked very well in those early years, because in those early years, the average life span of an individual was 61 years. So most people never even lived long enough to collect any Social Security. So a system, a Ponzi game, a pay-as-you-go chain-letter-type structure like this, worked very well if people did not collect that Social Security.

But today, let me tell you what the average life span is today. Today the average life span, at birth, for a male, is 74 years old; for a female is 76 years old. But if you live long enough to start collecting Social Security, if you live to be 65, then on the average, you are going to live another 20 years. That is part of the problem. That is why the increase in seniors is going up so dramatically, and the increase in the people working and paying their taxes is going up modestly.

After World War II we had a high birth rate, those individuals called the baby-boomers, who are going to be retiring just about starting in about 2010, 2011, 2012. So these high-income people go out of the pay-in category and start collecting from Social Security and Medicare and other benefits. So they stop paying their taxes in. That is part of the reason that we really fall off in the year 2011, not having enough tax revenues as the senior population starts increasing.

By 1942, there were 40 people working, paying in their Social Security tax, for every single one retiree. Now, this chart shows that by 1950, that got down to 17 people working, paying in their taxes, for every retiree. Today it is three people working, paying in their taxes. The estimate is by 2027, there is just going to be two people working, paying in their taxes for each retiree. That is why it is so important, so critical, that we start facing up to this problem today, that we do not bury our heads in the sand, but we start acknowledging Social Security.

I compliment the President for at least saying, look, Social Security is a problem. We need to give it a priority. Let us make Social Security first. I say, yes, let us do it. Let us move ahead.

I talked to Ned Gramlich, who is from the University of Michigan. I am from Michigan. He headed the President's Task Force on Social Security. He spent 2 years. They could not agree