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IT IS A CLEAR CHOICE

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, Congress has a little less than 1 month to conduct the people's business. I think Congress should focus on the issue of tax cuts.

Republicans believe that Americans are overtaxed. Democrats believe that Americans are not overtaxed, and some of them actually believe that Americans are not taxed enough. Republicans talk about tax cuts for all Americans, and Democrats speak in terms of targeted tax cuts, which is a great way of saying that the middle class, the backbone of America, will not be getting a tax cut.

Now, let us make a distinction between Democrats and so-called new Democrats. Democrats will raise your taxes. New Democrats will talk about cutting your taxes, but they will end up raising them once they get into office.

Mr. Speaker, the choice is clear. If you believe taxes are fundamentally a freedom issue, then Republicans are on your side. If you think the government knows best, then the Democrats are your friend. It is a clear choice.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each:

DEFUNDING AN ELECTED BODY IS A BLOW TO DEMOCRACY ITSELF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, a serious step was taken last week when the House defunded an elected body that had only a token amount in the D.C. appropriation, a 100th of 1 percent amount in a \$6.8 billion consensus budget that had been approved by the control board and the elected officials.

This may be because the group involved, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, are perhaps not routinely found in other jurisdictions, and there is little understanding of the vital role they play in our urban environment.

Many members seem to think that ANC's, as we call our Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, are like civic organizations in their own home towns.

In one important way, they are. The ANC commissioners are volunteers and are never paid. But, unlike traditional civic organizations, ANC's perform official government duties.

For example, they must be notified 30 days before any neighborhood action is taken. They must hold hearings and receive comments. Then they must transmit their comments to the agency involved, and then the mayor and the city council must give great weight to the comments of the ANC's. These are unusual officials. Aside from their official duties, they perform tasks that have become indispensable to maintaining the quality of life in the District of Columbia.

Let me give just a few examples. ANC commissioners cleaned streets and alleys when the city was unable to deliver services during the fiscal crisis. Commissioners notified the city of declining properties when city inspectors were unable to inspect deteriorating housing. An ANC used the notification process to require developers to include infrastructure improvements, like sidewalks, when building new housing.

Upon receiving notification for liquor license renewal, an ANC was able to force a store owner to stem public intoxication. An ANC uses its funds to operate a youth center, placing teens in jobs with neighborhood vendors.

Our ANC's have taken a 50 percent cut since the fiscal crisis began in 1994. Thus, giving them just a small amount of that back helps our neighborhoods in indescribable ways.

Ironically, these neighborhood institutions were placed in the home rule charter by the House of Representatives itself. Now, they are being defunded by the House. The Senate has not defunded them.

The House chose not to leave to chance grass roots participation in local government when it approved the charter of the District of Columbia, believing that a cadre of front-line elected officials could be the veins and arteries leading out into the neighborhoods to other parts of the government and to the mayor and the city council.

The truth is that the 37 commissions, consisting of 299 commissioners, have the most thankless job in the District. This volunteer job has so few rewards that many single-member districts are without candidates. It is a real labor of love. It is difficult enough without eviscerating ANC by depriving commissioners of the basics, such as phones and faxes.

Defunding an elected body is a blow to democracy itself. The ANC contribution to the city is an important example of the link between democratic grass roots participation and the quality of life. This contribution deserves to be applauded, not defunded.

In the District, we get much more out of the ANC's than we put in. I ask that their funding be returned.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3616

Mr. SPENCE submitted the following conference report and statement on the

bill (H.R. 3616) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1999 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes:

CONFERENCE REPORT (H. REPT. 105-736)

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 3616) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1999 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses as follows:

That the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted by the Senate amendment, insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; FINDINGS.

(a) *SHORT TITLE.*—This Act may be cited as the "Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999".

(b) *FINDINGS.*—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina first became a member of the Committee on Armed Services of the United States Senate on January 19, 1959. Senator Thurmond's continuous service on that committee covers more than 75 percent of the period of the existence of the committee, which was established immediately after World War II, and more than 20 percent of the period of the existence of military and naval affairs committees of Congress, the original bodies of which were formed in 1816.

(2) Senator Thurmond came to Congress and the committee as a distinguished veteran of service, including combat service, in the Armed Forces of the United States.

(3) Senator Thurmond was commissioned as a reserve second lieutenant of infantry in 1924. He served with great distinction with the First Army in the European Theater of Operations during World War II, landing in Normandy in a glider with the 82nd Airborne Division on D-Day. He was transferred to the Pacific Theater of Operations at the end of the war in Europe and was serving in the Philippines when Japan surrendered.

(4) Having reverted to Reserve status at the end of World War II, Senator Thurmond was promoted to brigadier general in the United States Army Reserve in 1954. He served as President of the Reserve Officers Association beginning that same year and ending in 1955. Senator Thurmond was promoted to major general in the United States Army Reserve in 1959. He transferred to the Retired Reserve on January 1, 1965, after 36 years of commissioned service.

(5) The distinguished character of Senator Thurmond's military service has been recognized by awards of numerous decorations that include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star medal with "V" device, the Army Commendation Medal, the Belgian Cross of the Order of the Crown, and the French Croix de Guerre.

(6) Senator Thurmond has served as chairman of the Committee on Armed Services of the United States Senate since 1995 and served as the ranking minority member of the committee from 1993 to 1995. Senator Thurmond concludes his service as chairman at the end of the One Hundred Fifth Congress, but is to continue to serve the committee as a member in successive Congresses.