



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 106th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 145

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1999

No. 23

House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SWEENEY).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 9, 1999.

I hereby designate the Honorable JOHN E. SWEENEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed a concurrent resolution of the following title, in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 7. Concurrent resolution honoring the life and legacy of King Hussein ibn Talal al-Hashem.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

PROMISE NO. 1: NAFTA WOULD CREATE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF NEW JOBS FOR AMERICAN WORKERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, 5 years ago last month the North American Free Trade Agreement, a trade agreement signed by the countries of Canada, Mexico, and the United States, went into effect.

The proponents of NAFTA during the debate earlier that fall, in the fall of 1993, made five central promises: They promised that NAFTA would create hundreds of thousands of new jobs for American workers; they promised that NAFTA would actually improve environmental conditions along the U.S.-Mexican border; they promised that imported foods under NAFTA would benefit American consumers; they promised that NAFTA would not only not hamper our effort, but help our effort to detect and keep out illegal drugs from across the border; and they promised that NAFTA would not reduce the safety of our highways.

Mr. Speaker, on all five counts NAFTA has been an abysmal failure. First of all, on NAFTA's promise to create hundreds of thousands of jobs since NAFTA became effective, became law in 1994, January of 1994, what was a \$1.7 billion U.S. trade surplus with Mexico fell into a \$14.7 billion trade deficit. At the same time, our trade deficit with Canada increased to \$18 billion, which, according to economists' estimates, a \$1 billion trade surplus or deficit translates into about 20,000 jobs.

So the \$14 billion trade deficit we now have with Mexico, which was a trade surplus prior to the North American Free Trade Agreement going into effect, has meant a loss of at least

300,000 generally good-paying industrial jobs for America's workers. So we have seen, instead of job increases as promised under NAFTA, we have seen hundreds of thousands of job losses.

Secondly, they promised that NAFTA would improve environmental conditions along the U.S.-Mexico border. Since NAFTA's implementation, the maquiladora zone, the region along the Mexican-U.S. border on the Mexican side, has attracted hundreds and hundreds of new businesses, mostly investments by American companies, often by Asian companies and other foreigners going into Mexico. We have seen no progress. In fact, we have seen significantly worse environmental conditions along the American-Mexican border.

Hazardous waste transports and dumping are increasing under NAFTA. We have seen an increase in hazardous waste imports into the United States from Mexico of 50 percent since 1996 alone.

We have also seen corporations, for the first time in what I can find in world trade history, we have actually seen corporations in one country sue a government of another country. American corporations have sued Canada, the Canadian government, to get Canada, successfully, unfortunately, to repeal one of its major clean air environmental laws.

We have seen case after case of corporations in one country suing governments in other countries to weaken food safety, environmental laws, and other laws that protect consumers and protect workers and protect all of us.

On the third promise, that imported foods under NAFTA would benefit American consumers, inspections along the border which used to be pretty regular and pretty frequent have now dropped to 2 percent. We inspect less than 2 percent of all foods coming into the United States from Mexico.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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We have seen problems of Michigan schoolchildren coming down with hepatitis A as a result of importing of strawberries from Mexico. We have seen a variety of problems with pesticides. Pesticides that are banned for use in this country still are manufactured here, sold to Central American and Latin American countries, including Mexico. Then they are applied on crops and sold back into the United States, pesticides that we have made illegal because we know they are unhealthy for consumers.

Promise number four was that NAFTA would help us deal with the illegal drug problem. One former drug enforcement official called NAFTA a deal made in narco heaven. In fact, that Customs report where he said that has not been released to the American public. In spite of repeated attempts by me and others to get that report public, they will not release it, in large part because it contains so much bad news about drugs coming across the Mexican-U.S. border. The DEA estimates that the drug trade is bringing in, coming across the border, what amounts to over \$10 billion a year.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, promise five, that NAFTA would not reduce the safety of our highways, again has been an abysmal failure. Fewer than 1 percent of the 3.3 million Mexican trucks coming into the United States each year are inspected. For 5,000 trucks per day across the Texas-Mexican border, only two to five inspectors are on duty during weekdays, fewer on weekends. Governor Bush has not done his job, the U.S. Government has not done its job. Then in the year 2000 those Mexican trucks will be allowed to come into all 48 States.

Mr. Speaker, NAFTA has been a failure. We should consider repealing or markedly revising that agreement.

TRUTH IN BUDGETING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleagues this morning: How can the budget be in surplus if the debt went up last year by \$109 billion? Indeed, how can the budget be in surplus if the debt is projected to go up another \$101 billion this year, and another \$90 billion the year after that?

Did anyone question these numbers, numbers which were released on January 29 by the Congressional Budget Office? Mr. Speaker, is there a single Member in this body who can deny that the national debt will continue to rise until the year 2005? It is interesting that we have become too careless with our language, or perhaps crafty, that the next few years of budget surplus will result in billions and billions of dollars more in debt over the next 6 years.

The reason for this situation, of course, is the social security trust fund. The temporary surpluses in the social security trust fund are masking the true size of the deficit.

That is why I am introducing "The Honest Balanced Budget Act of 1999." The intent of this legislation is simple: to guarantee honesty in budgeting. The social security trust fund surplus should not be used to fund other programs. It should not be used to mask our Nation's deficit.

Added to that is the irony that this very same fund is scheduled to go bankrupt soon after the baby boomers start to retire, so this trust fund, which will soon go bankrupt, is now in surplus, hiding the true state of the Federal budget.

Rarely has a government program caused so much confusion, misled so many people, and bedeviled so many policymakers. What is the lesson we should draw from this situation? Number one, our budget problems, despite all the talks about surplus, are far from over. Entitlement spending is still on auto pilot, and still growing by leaps and bounds.

Medicare is still projected to go bankrupt not long after that. Social Security is still projected to go bankrupt not long after that, also. The national debt, which is the sum total of all the earlier budget deficits we have been running for so many years, the national debt is still at \$5.6 trillion and climbing.

This may be disappointing news to some, politically unwise to bring up to others, but it is the truth, the reality, the actual state of the situation. That is why we should pass legislation to require truth in budgeting, to require Members of Congress to acknowledge these facts and to require the media to point them out.

We have been very zealous in cutting welfare spending and reducing the size of our government's bureaucracy. We should keep up our efforts and continue to cut unnecessary spending. Whatever surplus we may have is the result of lower taxes, controlled government spending and our balanced budget.

What would happen, Mr. Speaker, if the economy should start to falter? How would that affect the budget process if the surplus were to shrink, keeping in mind that the true state of our budget surplus is dubious at best?

That is why I hope my colleagues will join with me by cosponsoring The Honest Balanced Budget Act, so we can bring truth in budgeting finally into the process.

THE DEBT AND AMERICA'S CURRENT BUDGET SITUATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk also about

debt and how we can get rid of it, and about our current budget situation.

We are getting better, which is the good news. In 1992 it seemed like we would never have anything but rising yearly deficits contributing to a larger and larger national debt for the rest of our lives and beyond. But we have turned that around.

We have seen the earlier deficits go down steadily since then and we have now even heard talk of actually running a surplus. The gentleman who preceded me is absolutely correct, we are not there yet, because we are still borrowing money from the social security trust fund and counting that as income, but we are getting closer. Even without counting social security, the debt this year was \$30 billion, which is a lot less than it was 5 or 6 years ago. If we maintain the path of fiscal discipline we can get to the point where we begin to run surpluses.

What I would like to talk about today is taking that one step further, not just begin to run surpluses, but actually begin to pay down the debt. That debt is pushing towards \$6 trillion, and has a devastating effect on our economy. We should get to the point where we can start paying down that debt to do a lot of positive things: to reduce interest rates and also stop the amount of interest we have to pay.

I have a couple of charts to illustrate this point. The first chart talks about how much money we spent on the debt. There are a lot of crushing needs that we have in government: defense, education, infrastructure, Medicare, social security. But this shows that one of the biggest items that every year out of the budget is paid is interest. Two hundred forty-three billion dollars, or 14 percent of our budget, is paid on interest, which does nothing for us. All it does is it meets our obligations on the debt.

To the extent we can reduce that debt, we can reduce the amount of money that we have to spend on interest and free up more money for tax cuts or for spending on other programs that are necessary, like national defense or Medicare. That is a huge blow to our budget. Every \$100 million we can spend down on this debt will reduce this crushing figure we have to face and pay every year.

This goes beyond the effect it has on government. Paying down the national debt will have a profound effect on the lives of individual citizens, as the second chart will show. We have achieved a record level of home ownership in this country, and that is great, but it is still only about 60 or 65 percent.

We need to go even higher, and those of us who are homeowners would also like to see the monthly payment reduced. If we can pay down the debt, the government will not be the single largest borrower in this country. We will not be out there gobbling up all the money and driving up interest rates. We can actually reduce interest rates. What this basically means is that we will save in our mortgages.