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RUSSIA'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, the cover of this week's Economist magazine covers it very well. Rebuilding America's economy is its point. We all want to do everything we can to create good, American jobs. Well, unfortunately, we're on the verge of losing a potential market of 140 million consumers. And the reason I say that is that just last week and today, debate is taking place in the Duma, the Russian parliament. The Duma is the lower house, and the Federation Council is the upper house. The Duma has passed it, and the Federation Council today is debating. They may have already voted on it. They are going to be joining the World Trade Organization.

This Economist publication talks about the fact that the way we rebuild our market is through expanded exports. Well, we know that forcing Russia to live with a rules-based trading system is something that could inure to the benefit of U.S. workers. And that's what accession to the WTO is.

Guess what? Russia is going to be a member of the World Trade Organization within 30 days. The question is whether or not the United States of America will be able to have access to that market. We all know that Putin engages in crony capitalism. They have a massive bureaucracy and a corrupt court system. Forcing them to live with a rules-based trading system is the right thing for us to do.

Now, I'm happy to say that there has been an effort led by my colleagues, Mr. LONG and Mr. REED, within the freshman class that has brought 73 Republican Members to send a letter to the President of the United States urging support of permanent normal trade relations with Russia and urging this institution to support that. I'm happy it's a bipartisan effort. My friend, Mr. MEEKS, has joined in this effort, as well.

I would like to, at this point, yield to my good friend from Missouri (Mr. LONG) and thank him for the effort that he has made to tackle this important issue. I'm happy to yield to my friend.

Mr. LONG. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, we agree that we need to get our Nation's economy growing again in order to create jobs for American families. Increasing our Nation's exports is one area that would help grow the economy and create jobs without costing one thin dime. I support free trade because more exports equal more jobs.

I recently led an effort, as Mr. DREIER mentioned there, to rally my

freshman class to support permanent normal trade relations with Russia. After nearly two decades of negotiations, Russia is poised to join the World Trade Organization this summer, and without repealing a Cold War-era trade restriction, American businesses will be at a severe disadvantage to international competitors. While the U.S. already trades with Russia, the repeal of the Jackson-Vanik provision would level the playing field for U.S. exports after Russia joins the WTO.

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The media and some in this country like to portray my freshman class as a group that's not willing to work for the benefit of the American people or work in a bipartisan spirit. We can put those portrayals to rest. The President has shown an interest in increasing American exports, and the purpose of my letter was to show the President that 73 Members of the Republican freshman class are willing to work on this issue to help support American jobs.

I will continue to support efforts that will boost trade opportunities for American manufacturers and businesses. This is about doing what is right for our country and supporting efforts to create jobs for American families.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, let me thank my friend for his very thoughtful contribution and, in fact, disabusing people of this notion that somehow this group of 87 new Republicans who have come to Congress are not willing to tackle important issues. They led the effort to bring about passage of the Panama, Colombia, and Korea Free Trade Agreements. And once again, they're providing tremendous leadership on our goal of creating good American jobs by prying open that market and ensuring that the United States worker will have access to it.

If you think about not only creating jobs here, but dealing with the problems of crony capitalism, dealing with the problems of a massive bureaucracy, and dealing with a corrupt court system—which is what exists under Vladimir Putin today—this is the right thing for us to do. We should not lose access to the market.

I also want to note that my very good friend, Mr. HERGER, who has been a great leader on the issue of trade, is here. Mr. BERG is here as well, who's been very involved in this.

I would be happy to yield, if I might, to my friend from New York (Mr. REED), who has played such an important role on the trade issue.

Mr. REED. I thank the gentleman, and I rise today in strong support to join my friend from California. As he knows, we've been supportive of free trade from the moment we got here, and I was so pleased to see Colombia, Panama, and South Korea be passed.

WHAT WOULD RONALD REAGAN DO?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, this month, as American families and businesses anxiously await Congress' action on the expiration of any number of tax cuts, I thought it would be a good idea to ask ourselves again that question: What would Ronald Reagan do? Let's query the Gipper. After all, for the past 3 years all we've heard from Republicans is the claim that President Obama taxes too much.

When the Tea Party started its lobbying efforts in 2009, their name "tea" actually was an acronym standing for "taxed enough already." So just like the Republican Party, the Tea Party expressed an apoplectic furor about what they thought was happening to taxes.

But while blind conjecture and pithy slogans are useful in getting attention, they ultimately fail unless they're backed by facts. Thankfully, the non-partisan Congress Budget Office recently came out with its comparison of the average Federal tax rates paid by American families over the past 31 years. I'm sure Republicans and the Tea Party were all as surprised as many of us to learn that since 1979 Americans paid the lowest average Federal rate in 2009 under President Obama. That's right. Thanks in large part to the Recovery Act's \$243 billion in middle class tax cuts—which my friends on the other side of the aisle opposed to a person—the average Federal tax rate fell to a 31-year low.

The average Federal rate since 1979 is 21 percent—meaning that, on average over the past 31 years, Americans paid 21 percent of their yearly income to the Federal Government each April. The previous low for the past 31 years was 18 percent. But in 2009, President Obama's first year in office, the average Federal tax rate actually fell to 17.4 percent, the lowest since 1979 when Jimmy Carter was in the White House. That means a lower percentage of taxes paid than under Bill Clinton, lower taxes than under both of the two George Bushes, and, yes, a lower average Federal tax rate than under the Gipper, Ronald Reagan.

Throughout President Reagan's 8 years in office, the average Federal tax rate was 20.9 percent, never dropping below 20.2. In contrast, in his first year, the average rate under President Obama was 17.4. In other words, after taking into account all the tax breaks and tax loopholes—especially the Recovery Act's Making Work Pay tax cut—Americans, in 2009, paid 2.8 percent less of their income to the Federal Government than they paid during Ronald Reagan's best year. Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Bill Clinton, the other George Bush, and President Obama. By far, President Obama has the lowest tax rates.

Perhaps if the average Federal tax rate under President Obama was as