

side of the aisle, passed one of the largest tax increases in the history of this country. Earlier this year we passed a small tax reduction, which has been characterized as a tax for the wealthy. I would like to go over a few of those provisions for you.

If you are an American family and you have children today we are going to give you \$500 per child tax credit. We are going to restore \$145 to remove the tax penalty for married couples in this country. We are going to restore IRA's to help savings in this country. We are going to allow small businessmen and women around this country to deduct up to \$35,000 of their investments each year to provide more jobs and a stronger economy. We are going to provide a refundable tax credit of up to \$5,000 for people who adopt children.

Is this a tax break for wealthy Americans? No, it is for the working men and women of this country.

SPIRIT AND LETTER OF LAW SHOULD BE OBSERVED

(Mr. JOHNSTON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. JOHNSTON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, in an article in the Hartford Current dated September 27 of this year, the chair of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct reflected on the committee's inquiry into the complaint against Speaker NEWT GINGRICH. I quote, "The letter of the law is not compelling to me," she said, "I will work with our rules. Our rules have a certain degree of flexibility. My goal is to have a process that the committee members feel good about."

Mr. Speaker, the work of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct is not about Members feeling good about themselves. If both the spirit and the letter of the law are not compelling and relevant to each and every inquiry undertaken by this important committee, then we have lost sight of the purposes of its function.

□ 1030

Mr. EHLERS. Point of order.

Mr. JOHNSTON of Florida. The inquiry into the Speaker's actions and the issue of whether to hire outside counsel are critically important to this institution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HEFLEY). Will the gentleman suspend.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a point of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Michigan [Mr. EHLERS] will state his point of order.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is addressing a matter currently under consideration by the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, and under House rules that is not permitted.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, I wish to be heard on the point of order.

Mr. Speaker, on March 8 of this year, Speaker GINGRICH himself announced a new policy concerning speech on the House floor. Let me quote directly, for your consideration in making this ruling, his comments on March 8.

He said, and I quote, "The fact is, Members of the House are allowed to say virtually anything on the House floor. It is protected and has been for 200 years. It is written into the Constitution."

Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me, in view of the Speaker's own words, that comments about the Speaker and about ethics on the floor of this House are certainly within the rules of the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman from Michigan wish to be heard?

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, that point that was just made has been made a number of times. The point is simply the rules of the House prevent us from speaking about matters which are under consideration in the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, and the speaker was out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] wish to be heard?

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, yes, I wish to comment. As I understood the remarks of the gentleman from Florida [Mr. JOHNSTON], they were directed at the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct and the process it is undertaking. Those remarks also went to a general process and, as I think he specifically referred to, proceedings affecting any Member.

Mr. Speaker, certainly I would hope that the general conduct of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct would be a proper subject for discussion here on the House floor.

Mr. JOHNSTON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if I may further address the inquiry, I agree with the last speaker. I was inquiring and investigating the process of the committee itself, and not into the specific inquiry of the Speaker. I think if the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. EHLERS] listened closely, the gentleman would see the distinction of his complaints last week and the freedom of speech.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, if I might be heard further on the point of order. In consideration of the rules, particularly as it relates to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, I believe that the rules do refer to certain proceedings in front of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct being secret.

But, Mr. Speaker, when the chairwoman of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct comments publicly and repeatedly in the newspapers on this subject, surely there is an exception within our rules to permit our Members to comment on the proceedings in front of that committee when she is, herself, speaking about the Committee on Standards and Official Conduct and how it is disregarding its own rules.

Mr. EHLERS. Regular order, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair is prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. EHLERS]. The Member is reminded not to refer to matters currently pending before the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, and Members should refrain from references in debate to the official conduct of other Members where such conduct is not under consideration in the House by way of a report of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct or a question of the privilege of the House.

Mr. JOHNSTON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, their fair adjudication depends on a serious and faithful reading of the rules and the laws that govern our conduct. Anything less is totally unacceptable.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, my parliamentary inquiry is this. Your ruling to the speaker in the well, was your ruling that we cannot speak or address on this floor matters pending before the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, or are we allowed to speak about the ethics process, which is published in the ethics rules that we all receive and is a public document?

Mr. Speaker, are you ruling that we cannot even speak about the process, if we disagree that the process is not being properly followed out? We are now gagged and cannot talk even about the process?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair's ruling speaks for itself. Let me repeat that ruling. Members are reminded not to refer to matters currently pending before the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, further parliamentary inquiry. So we can speak about the process? Is that your ruling? It is OK to speak about the process of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members can speak about the process, but should refrain from speaking about matters that are pending before the committee.

ADVOCATING THE WITHHOLDING OF A MEMBER'S SALARY FOR DAYS MISSED

(Mr. METCALF asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, today a Member of Congress will appear in court for sentencing due to his August conviction on charges of criminal sexual assault, child pornography, aggravated criminal sexual abuse, and obstruction of justice.

Mr. Speaker, he has not cast a single vote since June. Through the end of