



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 106th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 145

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, JULY 19, 1999

No. 102

House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 19, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CLIFF STEARNS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

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.

THE REPUBLICAN AGENDA

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

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of representing a very, very diverse district. I represent the south side of Chicago, the south suburbs in Cook and Will Counties, industrial communities like Joliet, LaSalle, a lot of cornfields and farm towns. When one represents such a diverse district, city, suburbs and country, one listens for those comments and concerns, issues and problems and

questions that link the city and the suburbs and the country.

I have often heard, over the course of the last 4½ years that I have had the privilege of being in this House, a very common message, and that is the common message of working together and solving the challenges that we face; that they want us here in the Congress to work together, solve the challenges that we face, and I am pretty proud in the last 4 years how we have met that challenge that the folks back home have given me: balancing the budget for the first time in 28 years, cutting taxes for the middle class for the first time in 16 years, and, of course, reforming our failed welfare system for the first time in over a generation. Those are all big accomplishments, big accomplishments that came from a committed effort in this Congress over the last 4 years to change how Washington works to make Washington more responsive to the folks back home.

As a result now, that success, particularly in balancing the budget and cutting taxes, we have an economy that is doing better than we anticipated. Nine years, since 1991, we have been enjoying economic growth. Tying that in with a balanced budget, we now have projected \$3 trillion surplus of extra money over the next 10 years. That is a lot of money when we think about it, because our Federal budget is only \$1.7 billion.

Well, as we work on the Republican agenda this year of good schools and low taxes and a secure retirement, we have the challenge before us of what to do with the extra money, what to do with the surplus; and of course, historically in Washington they always want to spend it on new government.

But if we look at the markup of that money, most of it is Social Security. I am really proud that the Republican budget does something that the folks back home have told me that we should do for a long time, and that is the Re-

publican budget stops the raid on Social Security that has gone on for 30 years. Republicans put a stop to it this year. In fact, in doing so, we set aside two-thirds of the surplus of extra tax revenue for retirement security, meaning we use those funds to shrink Social Security and Medicare so that they are there for 3 generations from now, and that is the centerpiece and the purpose of the Social Security and Medicare lock box.

But under our budget by doing that, we take the so-called surplus and we set aside two-thirds of the surplus for Medicare and Social Security, one-third for tax cuts, because we believe that if we look at the tax burden today on families, and I often hear whether I am at the union hall or the VFW or the local chamber or the coffee shop on Main Street or the grain elevator out in the country, folks are frustrated by the tax burden being so high.

In fact, since 1985, the tax burden on individuals has gone up. In fact, it has doubled since 1985, and a portion of our economy, the gross domestic product that now goes to the Federal Government in taxes is the highest level ever in peacetime history. Mr. Speaker, 21 percent of our economy is now consumed by the Federal Government in the burden of taxes.

Not only do people back home tell me that they feel taxes are too high, but they are frustrated with how complex and complicated and also how unfair our tax code is. They bring up real concerns about issues such as the marriage tax penalty.

And I have Shad and Michelle Hallihan here, a young couple, two schoolteachers in Joliet, Illinois, who just got married. In fact, they are expecting a baby any day now. Well, because they are married and both work, their combined incomes when they file jointly as a married couple pushes them into a higher tax bracket. That is called the marriage tax penalty.

□ 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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For couples such as Shad and Michelle Hallihan, the marriage tax penalty, on average, is about \$1,400 a year in higher taxes just because they are married. Had Shad and Michelle chose not to get married, they would have saved about \$1,400 a year in taxes. That is wrong. Just one of the complications in our tax code.

This is why I am so pleased as a member of the Committee on Ways and Means that we succeeded this past week in passing legislation which lowers the tax burden for families, addresses the need to simplify the tax code and the unfairness in the tax code, and also addresses the need through simplification and fairness, and particularly in treatment of small business, to help keep our economy growing, keeping this 9-year period of economic growth continuing into the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, 42 million married working people will enjoy the marriage tax relief that is provided in the Committee on Ways and Means-produced tax cut, the Financial Freedom Act of 1999. We help married couples. We also address the need to help family farmers and family businesses, many of whom are put out of business when the founder passes on because of the so-called death tax which can consume up to 55 percent of the family farm or family business. That is just wrong. We eliminate the death tax in the Financial Freedom Act of 1999.

I am often asked by folks back home, is there not a way we can make it easier and more affordable to go to college and send our kids to school; if I am an adult who wants to go back to school to do that as well, we provide education relief. We address the marriage tax relief, we eliminate the death tax, we help small business and family farmers, and we help families better afford education.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for bipartisan support for this legislation, which I hope will be voted on later this week.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES FOR AMERICA

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, my goal in Congress is for the Federal Government to be a full partner in helping our communities be more livable. I discussed improving liveability of the physical environment on this floor dealing with transportation infrastructure, managing our water resources in a more rational fashion, and reducing gun violence. These are all elements the Federal Government can profoundly influence in our communities and provide the quality of life that our citizens desire and deserve.

A critical part of that well-planned infrastructure for a livable community

is access to the global economy through Internet connections. That is why I have strongly supported the E-rate, which helps schools and libraries connect to the Internet with subsidized costs.

The Internet is to America's tomorrow what the highways and railroad systems have been in the past. It has had the potential to change our communities and landscapes in ways that are truly profound.

There is an Internet drama unfolding now which has profound implications for how the Federal Government can help communities realize their vision of a livable future. I am referring to high-speed broad-band Internet access via the cable systems which are part of the households of many Americans. This issue is being played out as the consolidation of America's cable delivery system is almost complete, featuring ownership by telecommunication giants like AT&T which recently purchased the TCI cable system, America's largest.

Ironically, 7 years after the passage of legislation to deregulate cable, titled the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992, the consolidation in the industry is resulting in fewer choices for cable consumers. In fact, by this time next year, only New York and Los Angeles will have more than one cable operator. Why is this important?

The majority of Americans are still in the horse and buggy era of Internet connections, by connecting on the Internet through their phone lines. Cable has the potential of moving millions of American households into the equivalent of a high-speed rail Internet connection. As we make this quantum leap from the horse and buggy technology to truly the information super highway, we must ensure that this new service provides the same type of competition that has inspired better service options at lower costs for long-distance and for Internet service over the phone lines.

What happens if these cable systems are owned by just a few companies? Soon, AT&T will provide cable service for almost two-thirds of American households. We get a little glimpse of this in my hometown of Portland, Oregon, where AT&T is the only cable provider in our entire metropolitan area. As a condition of the approval of the merger with TCI, the citizen advisors in my community made the recommendation to our elected officials that there be competition for high-speed Internet connections over the cable platform.

AT&T has chosen to argue strenuously that it should have a monopoly. The company insisted that everybody have to pay for AT&T's Internet service, regardless of whether or not people want to use it. Forcing people to use its service or pay twice for Internet connection is an integral part of AT&T's business plan.

In fact, it is such an important part that when the elected officials chose to

support the recommendation of our citizens, AT&T warned, in not very subtle language, that the city better have a big legal budget, and in fact, sued, trying to win in the Federal court what AT&T could not justify to Portland's citizens and to its elected officials.

But AT&T lost in a powerfully worded decision by a highly respected and moderate to conservative local jurist. Yet AT&T is continuing its appeal and in the meantime is threatening not to invest in our community that had the temerity to suggest that we ought to have competition.

While the company's influence is being felt in Washington, D.C., it is time for the administration and Congress to protect connectivity, competition, and choice. This is a national issue, not just Portland. Cities all over the country are dealing with this, in L.A., San Francisco, Seattle, Minneapolis to Boston, Atlanta, Chicago and Detroit. Just last week, Broward County in Florida passed a resolution just like Portland's.

I will be introducing legislation this week to help local communities in their quest to determine their own technological future through competition, connectivity, and choice. Congress, the FCC, the private sector and local governments, everybody has a role to play. We all must fight to protect the competitive forces that so many of us say are important. The stakes are high not just for this vital telecommunication link, but also to prove that we are serious about making competition work for more livable communities.

SWAPPING OF DONOR LISTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. METCALF). 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, last week a lot of us became aware of the fact that public television stations around the Nation were exchanging their donor lists with the Democrat National Committee. I would remind everyone, of course, that public television is supported by American taxpayers' dollars; that is, the tax dollars of Democrats, Republicans, Independents, even people who do not vote.

And the public broadcasting service is a private, not-for-profit corporation. It is owned by 350 noncommercial TV stations. Its mission, Mr. Speaker, is to provide over-the-air broadcasting that serves the public interested. PBS is partially funded by the Federal Government through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the CPB.

This year, in fact, we were considering providing CPB with as much as \$475 million a year. In turn, CPB provides public broadcasting stations with 14 percent of its funding. In fact, last year that amounted to more than \$37