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

million. In addition, PBS received $4 million more than other Federal agencies.

Public TV stations are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit group, and as such, they are tax exempt. Being tax exempt, they are prohibited from supporting any political party or engaging in any lobbying or other partisan activity.

I serve on the Committee on Commerce's Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade, and Consumer Protection last week, during consideration of the reauthorization of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a story came to light about a Boston public TV station which had shared 32,000 names with the Democrat National Committee. It reported that Sam Black, a 4-year-old received a fund-raising letter from the DNC.

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It appears that Sam's mother included his name with her own when she sent a donation to the Boston station WGBH. The first time this fund-raising exchange was reported, the station originally maintained that it was an isolated incident, a mistake by an ill-informed employee. Of course, the facts, Mr. Speaker, showed differently.

WGBH first approached the Democratic Party in 1993. In that first year, the station received 5,000 names of Democratic campaign donors. The next year WGBH, in a sense, paid for new names by swapping the names of their contributors.

The station also received a financial payment for providing 10,200 names. My colleagues and I on the Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade, and Consumer Protection wanted to know more; specifically, if this practice was widespread or if there was just one station involved. We found, of course, that their stations in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, and even here in the Washington, D.C. area that had been cooperating with the DNC in fund-raising activities for as long as 20 years.

I am not concerned that the Republicans were excluded from this fund-raising effort. I am concerned that tax-exempt organizations are engaging in partisan politics. Since the beginning, there has been a close relationship between the Public Broadcasting Service and what many of us perceive as the liberal agenda. In the mid-1990s, the Media Research Center studied 73 PBS programs for political bias. It found there was a liberal slant on these shows. Now, more recently, Mr. Speaker, PBS decided not to air the President's videotaped testimony before the grand jury or to offer live coverage of the impeachment debate in the House Judiciary. Instead, Mr. Speaker, it ran Barney and the Teletubbies. However, it did find it appropriate and in the public interest to provide full coverage for the Watergate and Iran-Contra hearings.

Now we have discovered that there is more than just an ideological connection between PBS and the Democratic Party. This financial cooperation is clearly in violation of our tax laws and could be of interest to the FEC and to the IRS.

During consideration of the reauthorization for CPB, I prepared an amendment calling on the comptroller of the United States to conduct a study, a simple study, on this swapping of donor lists and to report what stations, which political parties, and the circumstances of this cooperation. However, the hearing on reauthorization has been postponed, but Congress needs to act now.

The next step is for the GAO to launch an investigation into this matter. I also want to see the CPB take steps themselves to find out the extent of these joint fund-raising activities and to assure Congress and the Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade, and Consumer Protection that this has ended and will not occur again.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the American people now endure the highest level of taxation in this Nation's history. These hard-working people should not be sending their tax dollars to help support public TV stations which are working with the DNC to enrich their respective organizations. Public TV stations should be serving the public interest and, of course, not any partisan political interest.

SUNDRY MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sundry messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

MOVING FORWARD IS BEST FOR ALL

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

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I have been struck by the change in the rhetoric from my Republican colleagues with regard to the work of the Congress, particularly the House of Representatives. For years, I have heard them talk about what they were going to accomplish beginning with the Contract with America that they trumpeted.

Now in the last couple of weeks, there is a new tone. Instead of telling us what they are going to do, they are explaining why they have been unable to do it. The Republicans are into a new phase in the Republican revolution, whining. They are complaining that while they wanted to do all of these things, they have been unable. What we now have, rather than an announcement of a program is an explanation for its failure.

I was particularly struck to note that they were blaming the minority leader, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), in large part. I reread the Contract with America. One does not get to read only for pleasure in our work. Sometimes we must read as a duty, so I reread the Contract with America, and I did not find in there that the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) was listed as a subcontractor.

I did not read in there that the Contract with America said here are these bold things we will do if the Democrats let us. But now what do we hear? The Democrats would not let me do it. It is a kind of a reverse Flip Wilson. It is no longer the devil made them do it. It is that the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) would not let them do it.

Well, I should say in fairness, Mr. Speaker, that they have even been giving me a little bit of the credit. We are not a profession known for great modesty, but I am a little reluctant to accept quite as much credit for their failure as they give me. Clearly, it would be in my interest in many quarters to accept that credit without dissent but I do have to be honest and say they give me a little more credit than I deserve.

I want to say right now that when the Appropriations bills have come up, I have not worn my costume of the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN) and held the bills up. That was not I. It was not the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT). That was a member of their own party.

It is not I who has decided, for instance, that term limits, and remember term limits? Some members do. The gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) does because he is an honest man who is abiding by his promise, but term limits was part of the Contract with America. Well, that contract apparently has been declared null and void because in this year we have the Republican Party in control of the House, and no one has brought up the term limits issue. It seems to have evanesced into the wind.

Now, as I said, they are arguing that it is the fault of the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) and myself. They are clearly wrong. They have been the majority. They are in their third Congress of a majority. They have the votes. They are, in fact, unable to do things for which I am glad, but they have misargued the cause. Their platform has not become law, not because of myself and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), much as I would love to take the credit, but because it is unpassable, and it is unpassable because it is unacceptable to the American people.

Their problem is that they won an election in 1994 based on dissatisfaction with the Democrats, acknowledgedly, and then proceeded to a program which included at one point shutting down the government, excessive tax cutting that even a few on their own side do