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