minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, President Clinton is going to give his State of the Union message this evening and I am going to listen very, very intently.

I think when we look back at this administration we can see a very successful administration. Prosperity is at an all-time high, our economy is growing, we are about to set a record in terms of the economy, and that has been done by this President and this administration.

The important things that the President will stress tonight are going to be very, very important to listen to, but I think preserving Social Security and Medicare is something that the American people want and that this administration will do.

A prescription drug program. I know our senior citizens on Medicare need help with prescription drugs.

Targeted tax cuts. We do not need a risky tax scheme that give tax breaks for the rich. We need targeted tax cuts to help middle America, to help the middle class, to help people so that they can pay for college tuition for their sons and daughters.

My daughter is going to college, and families are struggling to try to send their children to college. So the President's proposal to have tax deductions or a tax credit for college students is certainly something that we need.

Gun control, campaign finance reform, a patient's bill of rights, these are the things that Congress should pass this year.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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SUPPORT CITIZENSHIP FOR ELIAN GONZALEZ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of Congress who represents the Congressional District of Florida where Elian Gonzalez currently resides, as the mother of two young daughters, and as someone who knows all too well about Castro's brutal tyrannical regime, I ask my colleagues today to support the bill which was introduced by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MCCOLLUM) on Monday which would bestow citizenship upon 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez.

As a Cuban refugee and as a naturalized American myself, I know what an honor it is to be a United States citizen. Elian's mother Elizabeth drowned in her voyage to freedom, but she had a dying wish, to have her 5-year-old son reach the shores of freedom. To honor that deathbed declaration, we are promoting this legislation to grant citizenship to Elian, which will also have the practical effect of taking the case out of INS hands and placing it where it properly belongs, as a delicate custody issue to be handled by Florida State courts.

Some will argue that Congress should not be involved because it is a custody issue. And those of us who support the bill agree, this is a custody issue and as such it should have been allowed to play out in a court of law. As in every other custody case, a hearing should be held. The parents and the relatives should be afforded an opportunity to testify. Medical experts should render their assessment. Other experts should be granted a forum to present testimony about the conditions in which the child would live and be subjected to in Cuba. And, most importantly, the child would be able to state freely and openly for the record what his desires are and with whom he wishes to live.

However, INS has prevented this orderly process from taking place. It has made a mockery of our laws by making a unilateral summary judgment to return Elian to Cuba and, in so doing, have defamed the principles of justice, of fairness, and of equality under the law which are really the fabric of our society.

Originally, on December 1, 1999, INS quoted to the family, to the attorneys and to the press, ''Although it had no role in the family custody decision, we have discussed this case with State of Florida officials who have confirmed that the issue of legal custody must be decided by its State court. However, Elian will remain in the U.S. while the issues surrounding his custody are resolved.''

However, this was not to be. INS soon recanted this statement, decided to apply Cuban law instead to this case, and ordered that the boy be returned to Cuba without any semblance of our due process. Faced with this reality, my colleagues and I were compelled to act to protect and uphold Elian's rights as a person under the law; rights not only guaranteed by our constitution and legal system but rights protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 6 of this convention states, ''Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.'' Article 7 states, ''All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.'' And Article 14, ''Everyone has the rights to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.''

This last provision is particularly telling, as INS, in denying Elian his rights and defending only the father's rights under Cuban law, rejected various asylum applications for Elian and unilaterally withdrew his application for admission into the U.S.

There are those who will ignore these arguments and discount the fact that the U.S. and international law requires that the custody issue be resolved in a court of law and simplifies this case to a question of merely returning the boy to his father. But appropriate steps have not been taken to ascertain whether this in fact is in the boy's best interests, and that should be the guiding standard.

To those advocates who say, no, let us not advocate for that, I ask if they are aware that Castro's laws require that children and youth must prepare themselves for the defense of the country, honoring the principles of proletariat internationalism and combat solidarity? That is a quote from their code. It requires that children under the age of 11 to work long hours in farm labor camps. It mandates society and State work for the efficient protection of youth, and this is a quote, against all influences contrary to their Communist formation.

And the latter one applies even to parents. Just ask Gladys Ibarra-Lugo, age 15, who has for years been denied access to her parents because of their support of Democratic principles and human rights. Their support was contrary to the dictums of the Communist State. Gladys' parents are Amnesty International prisoners of conscience.

I wonder if those who simply say forget the court hearing have really read the testimony of Francisco Garcia. This testimony was included in a report distributed by the United Nations NGO Group for the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Francisco tells of his experience as a child in Cuba, and I commend it to my colleagues.

For Elian's present and future, for the sake of justice, liberty, and equality, I ask my colleagues to support the citizenship bill.

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PROS AND CONS OF CUBAN EMBARGO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to discuss my recent visit to Cuba. I just returned last evening from a 6-day trip to Cuba where I had the opportunity to meet with the various ministries. I met not only with the minister of health but I went into the neighborhoods, into the neighborhood clinics. I talked with the doctors there, I talked with the patients there, and I got a good understanding of the kind of health care that Cubans are involved with based on health care being one of the national priorities.

I also went to the University of Medicine, where they are training young doctors throughout the region, and I was absolutely amazed at the fact that they have 5,000 young people who are there from all over the Caribbean who are being trained as doctors. It amazes me, because here in the United States it is just so difficult to get young people of color into the universities so

that they can be trained as doctors. But they are showing that it can be done there. Over 60,000 doctors have been produced in Cuba.

Having said that, my real reason for being there was to follow up on a commitment that I made 11 months ago when I visited Cuba.

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When I visited Cuba 11 months ago to basically try and get a handle on the pros and cons of the embargo, I discovered that we have a waiver on medical supplies and equipment. However, not one aspirin had been sold in Cuba. I talked with people to try and understand why this was true.

We finally came back and we got together with representatives from the Treasury Department, from Commerce and from the State Department to try and understand the rules and the laws as it related to the waiver. We finally all got on one track and we got with those individuals who have been trying for years to get a medical trade show going in Cuba, and we finally got it on track and that trade show did open. I was there to help cut the ribbon, along with the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) and many of our representative of our business community.

I was very pleased that we had almost 300 representatives there from various businesses in the United States representing over 90 of our largest businesses who were delighted to be there to show their medical supplies and equipment. We had companies like ADM. We had companies like Eli Lilly, Procter Gamble, Pfizer, many of the huge companies of America with goods and products that they want to share, that they want to sell.

I think it is foolhardy for the American business community to allow China and Germany and Canada and all of these countries to be in Cuba selling their goods, selling their supplies, and we are just 90 miles from Cuba.

They have many, many needs. They want to do business with us, particularly with medical supplies and equipment. They have trained the professionals. They have trained the doctors. They have children who desperately need the supplies, the state-of-the-art equipment. I think that our American firms should continue to seek these opportunities and to be there.

Now, having said all of that, none of this happens in a vacuum. As you know, the center of debate in Cuba and it appears in the United States is Elian Gonzalez, this young child who is in Miami, who one side is saying he should be kept there, he should be given citizenship, he should not be allowed to return to Cuba to his father.

Well, I met with his father while I was there, Juan Gonzalez. There is no logical argument, none that anybody can make, that should take this child from his father. This child lost his mother on the sea. This child should not be deprived of his father. This child should be returned to Cuba immediately.

This political spectacle that is being created in Miami is unconscionable. There is no reason a little child should be a political pawn. This is not about whether or not we like Castro. This is not whether or not we agree with the revolution, that we are one of the Batista people, that we do not believe in what is going on there. This is about parental rights. This is about the right of a father to have their child and to raise their child.

By all accounts, this man is a good father; he had a great relationship with his child. Let us stop the political madness. Let us allow little Elian to go home.

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TAX RELIEF FOR FAMILIES: ELIMINATION OF MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, it is great to be back here for another session of good and hard work.

I represent a pretty diverse district. I represent the south side of Chicago, the south suburbs, and Cook and Will counties, a lot of industrial as well as farm communities. And even though this district that I represent is so very, very diverse, I find there is a common message; and that is the folks back home want us to come here, Republicans and Democrats, and work together to find solutions to the challenges that we face.

That is why I am so proud that over the last 5 years we have done so many things we were told we could not do. We balanced the budget for the first time in 28 years. We gave a middle-class tax cut for the first time in 16 years. We reformed our welfare system for the first time in a generation. And a great accomplishment just this past year was we stopped the raid on Social Security for the first time in 30 years.

That is progress on our agenda, and we are continuing to move forward to find better ways to help find solutions.

Our agenda is pretty simple, paying down the public national debt, saving Social Security and Medicare, helping our local schools. And we also want to bring fairness to the Tax Code. That is one of the issues I want to talk about today. Because I believe that as we work to bring fairness to the Tax Code, particularly to middle-class working families, that we should focus first on the most unfair consequence of our current complicated Tax Code and that is the marriage tax penalty which is suffered by almost 21 million married, working couples.

Let me explain what the marriage tax penalty is. Under our current Tax Code, if they are married, both husband and wife are working, they pay more in taxes than they do if they stay single.

Let me give this example, a marriage tax penalty example: A machinist and a schoolteacher, middle-class working folks in Joliet, Illinois, with a combined income of $63,000 pay more. And here is how they do it. If they have a machinist making $31,500, he is in the 15 percent tax bracket. If he marries a schoolteacher with an identical income of $31,500, under our Tax Code they file jointly. Their combined income of $63,000 pushes them into the 28 percent tax bracket. And for this machinist and schoolteacher, they pay the average marriage tax penalty of almost $1,400 more just because they are married under our Tax Code.

Now, if they chose to live together instead of getting married, they would have saved that $1,400. Our Tax Code punishes them if they choose to get married. That is just wrong.

It is a pretty fair question: Is it right, is it fair that, under our Tax Code, this machinist and schoolteacher in Joliet, Illinois, pay more in higher taxes?

Let me give my colleagues another example here of two schoolteachers also of Joliet, Illinois, Michelle and Shad Hallihan. They were just married in the last couple of years, a wonderful young couple. I have had a chance to sit down and talk with them. And, of course, I have a nice wedding photo.

The point is that Shad has taught a little longer than Michelle, and he makes $38,000 a year. His wife Michelle makes $23,500. Because they chose to get married, to live together in holy matrimony, they suffer the marriage tax penalty because their combined income when they file jointly pushes them into the 28 percent tax bracket.

For them, for Michelle and Shad Hallihan in Joliet, Illinois, two schoolteachers, they pay almost a thousand dollars more. Michelle has pointed out to me, since they have just had a baby, that is almost 3,000 diapers that $1,000 of marriage tax penalty would pay for in that family if they were allowed to keep it.

Now, the Republicans in this Congress believe that eliminating the marriage tax penalty should be a priority; and we believe that, in this era of budget surpluses, when the Federal Government is taking in more than we have been spending, that we should give some of it back. We want to focus that on bringing fairness to the Tax Code.

This past year we sent to the President legislation that would have wiped out the marriage tax penalty for people like Michelle and Shad Hallihan. Unfortunately, the President and Vice President GORE chose to veto that legislation because they wanted to spend the money on new Government programs.

My colleagues, should it not be a priority to help people like Michelle and Shad Hallihan, married working couples who work hard and who are unfairly treated by our Tax Code?

We have legislation today which now has 230 cosponsors, a bipartisan majority of this House, that is cosponsoring the Marriage Tax Elimination Act,