

Lee, California; Mr. Crowley, New York; and Mr. Hoeffel, Pennsylvania.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE: Mr. Weiner, New York; and Mr. Capuano, Massachusetts.

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS: Mr. Baird, Washington; Ms. Schakowsky, Illinois.

When said resolution was considered and agreed to.

A motion to reconsider the vote whereby said resolution was agreed to was, by unanimous consent, laid on the table.

¶2.29 SPEAKER AND MINORITY LEADER
TO ACCEPT RESIGNATIONS, APPOINT
COMMISSIONS

On motion of Mr. ARMEY, by unanimous consent,

Ordered. That, notwithstanding any adjournment of the House until Tuesday, February 2, 1999, the Speaker and the Minority Leader be authorized to accept resignations and to make appointments to commissions, boards and committees duly authorized by law or by the House.

¶2.30 JOINT SESSION TO RECEIVE A
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms announced the Vice President and Members of the Senate, who entered the Hall of the House and took seats assigned them, the Vice President taking the Chair to the right of the Speaker.

Whereupon, pursuant to House Concurrent Resolution 1, the SPEAKER called the joint session of the two Houses to order.

The SPEAKER announced the appointment of Messrs. ARMEY, WATTS of Oklahoma, Mrs. FOWLER, Messrs. DICKEY, HUTCHINSON, GEPHARDT, BONIOR, FROST, MENENDEZ, BERRY, and SNYDER as members of the Committee on the part of the House to escort the President into the Hall of the House.

The Vice President announced the appointment of Messrs. LOTT, NICKLES, THURMOND, STEVENS, DOMENICI, WARNER, DASCHLE, REID, Ms. MIKULSKI, Messrs. BREAUX, KERRY, DORGAN, TORRICELLI, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. ROCKEFELLER and Mr. DURBIN as members of the committee on the part of the Senate to escort the President into the Hall of the House.

The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms announced the Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, ambassadors, ministers, and charges d'affaires of foreign governments, who entered the Hall of the House and took seats assigned them.

The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms announced the Chief Justice of the United States and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, who entered the Hall of the House and took seats assigned to them.

The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms announced the Members of the President's Cabinet, who entered the Hall of the House and took seats assigned to them.

The Sergeant-at-Arms announced the President of the United States at 9 o'clock and 6 minutes p.m., escorted by the committees of the two Houses, entered the Hall of the House and, at the

Clerk's desk, delivered the following message:

"Thank you very much.

"Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, honored guests, my fellow Americans:

"Tonight, I have the honor of reporting to you on the State of the Union.

"Let me begin by saluting the new Speaker of the House and thanking him especially tonight for extending an invitation to two guests sitting in the gallery with Mrs. Hastert. Lyn Gibson and Wei Ling Chestnut are the widows of the two brave Capitol Hill Police Officers who gave their lives to defend freedom's house.

"Mr. Speaker, at your swearing in, you asked us all to work together in a spirit of civility and bipartisanship. Mr. Speaker, let's do exactly that.

"Tonight I stand before you to report that America has created the longest peacetime economic expansion in our history, with nearly 18 million new jobs, wages rising at more than twice the amount of inflation, the highest home ownership in history, the smallest welfare rolls in 30 years and the lowest peacetime unemployment since 1957.

"For the first time in 3 decades, the budget is balanced. From a deficit of \$290 billion in 1992, we had a surplus of \$70 billion last year, and now we are on course for budget surpluses for the next 25 years.

"Thanks to the pioneering leadership of all of you, we have the lowest violent crime rate in a quarter of a century. Our environment is the cleanest in a quarter of a century.

"America is a strong force for peace from Northern Ireland, to Bosnia, to the Middle East.

"Thanks to the leadership of Vice President GORE, we have a government for the Information Age. Once again, our government is a progressive instrument of the common good, rooted in our oldest values of opportunity, responsibility and community, devoted to fiscal responsibility, determined to give our people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives in the 21st century. A 21st century government for 21st century America.

"My fellow Americans, I stand before you tonight to report that the state of our union is strong.

"America is working again. The promise of our future is limitless. But we cannot realize that promise if we allow the hum of our prosperity to lull us into complacency. How we fare as a nation far into the 21st century depends upon what we do as a nation today.

"So with our budget surplus growing, our economy expanding, our confidence rising, now is the moment for this generation to meet our historic responsibility to the 21st century.

"Our fiscal discipline gives us an unsurpassed opportunity to address a remarkable new challenge: the aging of America.

"With the number of elderly Americans set to double by 2030, the Baby Boom will become a Senior Boom.

"So first and above all, we must save Social Security for the 21st century.

"Early in this century, being old meant being poor. When President Roosevelt created Social Security, thousands wrote to thank him for eliminating what one woman called the 'stark terror of penniless, helpless old age.' Even today, without Social Security, half our Nation's elderly would be forced into poverty.

"Today, Social Security is strong. But by 2032, payroll taxes will no longer be sufficient to cover monthly payments. And by 2032, the Trust Fund will be exhausted and Social Security will be unable to pay the full benefits older Americans have been promised.

"The best way to keep Social Security a rock-solid guarantee is not to make drastic cuts in benefits; not to raise payroll tax rates; not to drain resources from Social Security in the name of saving it.

"Instead, I propose that we make the historic decision to invest the surplus to save Social Security.

"Specifically, I propose that we commit 60 percent of the budget surplus for the next 15 years to Social Security, investing a small portion in the private sector just as any private or State government pension would do. This will earn a higher return and keep Social Security sound for 55 years.

"But we must aim higher. We should put Social Security on a sound footing for the next 75 years. We should reduce poverty among elderly women, who are nearly twice as likely to be poor as our other seniors, and we should eliminate the limits on what seniors on Social Security can earn.

"Now, these changes will require difficult but fully achievable choices over and above the dedication of the surplus. They must be made on a bipartisan basis. They should be made this year. So let me say to you tonight, I reach out my hand to all of you in both Houses and in both parties and ask that we join together in saying to the American people, we will save Social Security now.

"Last year, we wisely reserved all of the surplus until we knew what it would take to save Social Security. Again, I say, we should not spend any of it, not any of it, until after Social Security is truly saved. First things first.

"Second, once we have saved Social Security, we must fulfill our obligation to save and improve Medicare. Already, we have extended the life of the Medicare Trust Fund by 10 years, but we should extend it for at least another decade. Tonight I propose that we use one out of every six dollars in the surplus for the next 15 years to guarantee the soundness of Medicare until the year 2020.

"But again, we should aim higher. We must be willing to work in a bipartisan way and look at new ideas, including the upcoming report of the bipartisan Medicare commission. If we work together, we can secure Medicare for the next 2 decades, and cover the