our workers, for their families, our communities, and our economy.

American workers are already on an economic treadmill, working longer hours and earning less, struggling to buy homes, struggling to send their kids to college. The Davis-Bacon Act helps many American workers to keep pace. To repeal it now would turn up the speed on the economic treadmill and put the American dream out of reach for too many working families.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here tonight with several of my colleagues who are going to address this very, very important issue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. TIAHRT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

DAVIS-BACON: PROTECTING THE AMERICAN STANDARD OF LIVING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I join with several of my colleagues tonight to discuss the Davis-Bacon Act, an act which for more than six decades has protected the standard of living of all Americans. We are going to hear in the debate that comes up as there are efforts to repeal this act that somehow the Davis-Bacon Act merely helps a few union workers, that it is a special interest law for only a few.

Mr. Speaker, Davis-Bacon benefits all Americans. It does help union workers who have negotiated good wage rates across America. But it helps nonunion construction workers also because prevailing wages in almost 75 percent of communities across the country are based on nonunion pay scales and because Davis-Bacon extends the same protections to nonunion workers as it does to union members.

Davis-Bacon benefits communities like my own in San Diego, because wages in our city are protected from cutthroat out-of-State lower wage labor and our economy is enriched because our working people maintain the purchasing power to keep our own small businesses thriving and our own retail operations going.

Contractors in our community are helped because they have a level playing field on which to compete and our taxpayers are benefited because they can rely on quality and the productivity, the timeliness, the reliability that more than compensates for the additional wage cost.

All our citizens, Mr. Speaker, are benefited because all the construction projects we rely on, whether they be bridges or schools or dams, nuclear waste removal sites, military installations, superhighways, all are built to the highest specifications by the most qualified, well-trained workers. That is why Davis-Bacon protects the standard of living of all Americans.

Now, we are going to hear in the debate that follows in a few days, in the months ahead, that eliminating Davis-Bacon will save the government billions of dollars, that Davis-Bacon adds to the cost of government at a time when we can ill afford that.

Mr. Speaker, the facts say otherwise. In fact, eliminating Davis-Bacon will not save the government money. Lower wages, it turns out, does not mean lower cost. And why is that? As has been shown in comparison after comparison, high-wage states complete the work of the Davis-Bacon contracts with 56 percent fewer hours worked. High-wage states, as contrasted to low-wage states, build 74.5 more miles of roadbed and 33 more miles of bridges for $557 million less, and at the same time workers received a wage package more than double that in those low-wage states.

In addition, if Davis-Bacon were repealed, construction employees would be misclassified as independent contractors and the government would be cheated out of billions of tax dollars.

As my colleague, the gentlewoman from Connecticut, [Mr. DELAURO], pointed out, nine States have already repealed their little Davis-Bacon acts because they have found out that tax collections actually fell because of lower rates. The Federal Government, it has been estimated, will lose nearly a billion dollars a year because of the decline in construction earnings. That is simply not a very smart way to address our deficit problem.

In addition, construction injuries increase by 15 percent in non-Davis-Bacon States, and that results in enormous loss-of-work days and productivity.

So, Mr. Speaker, not only does Davis-Bacon benefit all Americans; repealing it will not reduce any cost. It may, in fact, raise the cost of doing business.

My own district in San Diego has a majority of residents who are either African-American or Hispanic. They always ask, is anything I propose or anything that I favor harmful or of benefit to ethnic minorities?

Mr. Speaker, Davis-Bacon protects all working people, regardless of race of ethnicity. The intent of the act is to mandate that a fair and liveable wage be paid to every worker to stabilize local wage rates.

Mr. Speaker, we must not repeal Davis-Bacon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. KINGSTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

REPEAL OF DAVIS-BACON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, a number of us are taking the floor tonight in an attempt to respond to some of the misinformation used to justify the repeal of the Davis-Bacon, a law that requires fairness for our workers. The Davis-Bacon Act provides a process in which the Federal Government and many local governments must pay workers in a specific area the same wage on federal contracts as any other contract. There are several arguments put forth by the Republican majority or at least some of the Republican majority, because I would like to insert into the RECORD a letter from President Reagan in 1981 showing his support for Davis-Bacon Act.

WE AGREE WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN JUST SAY ''NO'' TO REPEAL

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, September 29, 1981.

Mr. ROBERT A. GEORGINE,
President, AFL–CIO,
Washington, DC.

DEAR BOB: I want to acknowledge the Building and Construction Trades Department letter of September 11 concerning efforts to repeal the Davis-Bacon Act. I have asked the Secretary of Labor to respond directly, but I want to assure you and your General Presidents that I will continue to support my campaign pledge do not seek repeal of the Act.

With best wishes.

Very sincerely,

RONALD REAGAN.

The arguments revolve around the act being racist, as barring minorities from earning prevailing wages and adding costs to Federal contracts for multiple reasons.

Let us take the issue of Davis-Bacon being racist Federal law. This argument is based on language that was passed, was discussed when this original bill was passed in 1931. I would submit to the House that many things said in 1931 and the early 1930s on this House floor could not be used today, but that still means that Davis-Bacon is not a racist law.

A Congressman Upshaw from Georgia in 1927 asked Congressman Bacon if this bill was based on preventing a large aggregation of Negro labor, and Congressman Bacon vehemently stated that any influx of labor, union or nonunion, regardless of race, being paid below prevailing wage would be detrimental to a local job market. Stating that Davis-Bacon is racially biased also assumes that minorities are not earning a prevailing wage. That argument that repealing Davis-Bacon helps minority workers goes against documented proof to the contrary.

I would also like to insert into the RECORD a resolution from the NAACP in its July 1993 convention supporting Davis-Bacon and the continuation of Davis-Bacon.