

our privilege to be here, and how precious is our duty to always do honor to this body.

VACATION OF ROLLCALL 405 AND MAKING IN ORDER DE NOVO VOTE ON AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. FAZIO OF CALIFORNIA, AS AMENDED

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the proceedings of the Committee of the Whole on rollcall No. 405 be vacated and that when the Committee of the Whole resumes consideration of H.R. 1854 pursuant to House Resolution 169, the chairman of the Committee of the Whole be directed to put the question de novo on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO] as amended by the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York [Mr. HOUGHTON].

The SPEAKER. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

Mr. GEPHARDT. Reserving the right to object, Mr. Speaker, and I am reserving the right to object, but I will not object. I want to respond briefly to what the majority leader said.

Mr. Speaker, I think what the majority leader is attempting to do is right. Our version of the facts is different than his, and I would like to give that version just for the purpose of all of us understanding what was involved here and so that we can try to not have these kinds of things happen again.

As all of my colleagues know, the Speaker made a ruling early in the year that we would try to hold votes to 17 minutes. The ruling stated unless someone was in the well. Our version of the facts was that these two Members, who will speak for 5 minutes and will give their version of it in a moment, were in the Chamber, were trying very much to get into the well, but were not able to physically get there, but were, clearly understood by everybody in the Chamber, trying to vote, and in fact at some point, and there is a dispute about when they handed the card in or even handing cards in to vote, when the vote was called to an end, they were not allowed to vote. There is added suspicion because the vote was close and the majority was winning by one vote, and we had two Members coming into the Chamber, so there is added suspicion from that end of it.

Mr. Speaker, there is very strong feeling on this side. I have been here now 19 years, and I have not in my experience seen the depth of feeling that occurred on this particular issue because, as the gentleman said, the thing that we all hold most dear is our ability to represent over 500,000 people in this Chamber on every issue that is voted on. These Members were doing their best to be here on time and to vote. I think there is added feeling on this side because we seem to be into a differing standard from vote to vote. As was said on the vote just before this

vote, there was a long time that the clock was held open. On the vote after, on the motion to adjourn, it again was held open for a much longer time than 17 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, what I think we must do, and I hope we will be able to do, is to have a small group meet and try to figure out some standard that everyone can know so we do not wind up with either the reality or the perception of unfairness in how votes are conducted.

There was another issue yesterday that has also been resolved that I need to bring to the attention of the Members, and that was a situation in the Committee on Science where a vote was held in the committee after the first bell had rung and maybe after the second bell had rung, and a lot of our Members left the committee thinking there would be no other votes in the committee. They came here to vote and missed a vote in the committee. The chairman of the committee recited that this morning by having a revote in the committee so that people who had not voted in the committee could get the chance to vote, and on this issue, too, I think we need to have an understanding as to when votes will not be held in the committee after the bells have begun to ring at some point.

The final thing I would say is that the most important thing we bring here is our ability to cast a vote. All of us love this House. All of us come here with a serious purpose of representing over 500,000 people. We must never call into question, in perception or in reality, that we all are treated fairly in our ability to vote in committee and our ability to vote on this floor. This is the people's House, and, if there is ever a perception that we are not running this House in a fair manner, perception and reality, then we are in great difficulty.

The minority will work in every way possible to make sure those standards are established and that they are lived with, and I believe that the right thing was done here today, and I hope and believe the right thing will continue to be done.

I would like, as part of the request, to have the Members on our side have 5 minutes to explain their version of what went on.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GEPHARDT. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I am about to make, as soon as this request is over, another request.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER. Therefore, proceedings on rollcall No. 405 will be vacated, and, when the Committee of the Whole resumes consideration of H.R. 1854 pursuant to House Resolution 169, the Chairman of the Committee of the

Whole will be directed to put the question de novo on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO] as amended by the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York [Mr. HOUGHTON].

PERMISSION FOR SUNDRY MEMBERS TO ADDRESS THE HOUSE FOR 5 MINUTES EACH

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FOGLIETTA], the gentleman from Alabama [Mr. HILLIARD], and the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. EHRLICH] be allowed to address the House for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER. The Chair, before recognizing the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FOGLIETTA], wishes to make several observations:

First of all, the Chair announced at the request of the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. WOLF] and the committee on trying to help with families at the beginning of the year that there would be 17-minute votes. The Chair wishes to restate that 17 minutes is a reasonable limit, that if Members are in the Chamber, that they should be recognized, but the Chair also wishes to observe that on final passage on various bills Members who were getting off the elevator on the majority side did not get to vote on the final passage of bills earlier this year. The Chair simply wishes to reassert and to remind all Members we are trying to save time, we are trying to find a way to get this House home so Members can be with their families, and, as a general principle, that is a reasonable thing to do.

Second, the Chair has asked the majority and minority leaders to work both together and with those Members they wish to appoint to resolve the question of committee voting when the House is voting, and obviously, having abolished proxy voting, things are a little more difficult than they used to be, particularly adding 17-minute votes.

Third, the Chair simply wishes to reassert what both the majority and minority leaders have said. Every Member should have the right to participate fairly. Every Member should have the right to vote. This body, as a group, should recognize that there have to be some rules.

The Chair thinks the 17-minute rule reasonably applied is the right kind of thing to do, but we will do everything we can, I hope today, in what the Chair believes is an action he does not remember was taken during the preceding years when I served in this body. The Chair hopes that today's effort will be a sign of good faith that we truly intend for every Member to have their rights protected.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FOGLIETTA] for 5 minutes.