eternity? For unto each of us is given a bag of rules and a shapeless mass and each must give or life is flown as a stumbling block or stepping stone.

It is my belief and the belief of the American people that Ron Brown was a stepping stone for America, American business, American jobs. Long live the legacy of the honorable Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown.

Mr. Speaker, I consider it a great privilege and honor to participate in this special order in tribute to Ronald H. Brown, former U.S. Secretary of Commerce. He had an outstanding career as a lawyer, National Urban League executive, Democratic Party chairman, Cabinet Secretary and close Presidential adviser. I am proud that the city of Houston paid tribute to Secretary Brown and the others that perished on April 3, on Friday, April 12, 1996, at Antioch M.B. Church.

Ron Brown used his many talents to create a better quality of life for all Americans. This special order's focus on his impact on the expansion of American-owned companies into foreign markets is very appropriate. During his tenure at the Commerce Department, he redefined the Department's mission to provide economic opportunity for every American. Moreover, he believed that peace and prosperity could be strengthened and promoted through international trade.

Over the past 3 years, he helped develop a national export strategy to assist American companies in increasing their exports to foreign nations. Since 1993, American-owned companies entered into commercial deals with foreign businesses in the amount of $80 billion.

Most of this expansion was as a result of his tireless efforts in leading numerous trade missions around the world. He supported the creation of strong ties with new markets in Africa. Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Brown also helped to streamline regulations that unnecessarily hindered the exports of our goods and products.

Brown served on President Clinton's National Economic Council and the Council on Sustainable Development. He was also a member of the council on Foreign Relations. He chaired the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee, which was comprised of 19 Government agencies, to strengthen the American economy through trade.

Ron Brown was a man of great vision and understood the importance of technology in our growth and development. He was a strong supporter of the Commerce Department's advanced technology program, which helped create thousands of businesses that will lead us into the 21st century.

All of us in public service owe a great debt to Ron Brown. He inspired us to always remain optimistic, to be committed to achieving our objectives and work to ensure that no American is left behind. This is his great legacy. Let us renew our commitment to public service.

Mr. WATT of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida, Mrs. CARRIE MEEK.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult for me to discuss my feelings, my personal feelings, about Ron Brown. I have known Ron Brown since he was a very young man. I have seen him come up through the ranks. He did it the hard way. He worked for it.

I appreciate the kind of commendation that we are giving Ron Brown today. I want to send my condolences to the family, especially to my baby, Michael, his son, and to say to Alma and to her daughter, Tracy, that God will go with them, as we all know, and that Ron will always be remembered, and that we will keep his legacy going. He will not be a forgotten man. I also want to say to Mrs. Meissner, who lost her husband, to send my condolences to her.

People were magnetized by Ron Brown. He lived in such a way that people would gravitate towards him because they knew he was good. I will tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker, every youngster in this country who is from a poor or disadvantaged community, or even more, all over this country and all over this world, not due to ethnicity, race, or creed, will pattern themselves after Ron Brown, because they see an opportunity in him, in what he did, to make the American dream work. That is going to be his legacy.

He walked through the streets of Liberty City with me, a very poor community, and he reached out to every one of them, yet he got to be a counselor to the President of the United States. He sat on the Cabinet.

When I think of Ron, I think of a poem which we call, and I am going to paraphrase it, The Builder:

There was an old man at evening tide who was building a bridge on the countryside. A young man came to him and said, ''Old man, why do you try to build this bridge? When the tide comes in you will be long gone. You won't be here.'' And the old man lifted his head and said, ''Young man, let me tell you something. The reason I build this bridge at evening tide is there will be a young man such as you who will come after me. Young man, I build this bridge for thee.''

That is why Ron did what he did, to build bridges for all of us. I thank the gentleman for sharing his time with me.

Mr. WATT of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for sharing in this special order tribute to Ron Brown. Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a minute or two in this final part of the 5-minute period just saying a couple of things, more from the heart.

First, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my condolences to Alma Brown and to the entire Brown family, and to the families of those others who perished so tragically in this crash. This was a devastating loss for our country and for me personally.

Second, I cannot help but recall the very last time that I saw Ron Brown, which was in the hall in the Rayburn Building. I had been involved in a hearing and was rushing in one direction. Ron had been called before a committee of the House to testify at another hearing. He was coming out of that and was rushing off to another place.

Despite the fact that both of us were in a hurry and headed in different directions, the characteristic that always came through from Ron Brown surfaced. That was the ability, for whatever small period of time he had, to look at you in the eye and make you feel that you were the most important person in life at that moment. We spent a few moments together, and that came through to me. That is the memory that I will always have of Ron Brown.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my condolences to Alma and the rest of the Brown family and to the families of those who perished tragically in the plane crash in Croatia.

The outpouring of support that we have seen since Ron's passing is a testament to the life he led and the impact that he had on people. Since his passing there have been two things that have been said about Ron most frequently. They are that Ron Brown had a lot of friends and that he had a tremendous amount of political acumen. I knew both of those things were true.

Almost 2 weeks after Secretary Brown's passing I think it is necessary for us to continue to honor his life and celebrate his legacy. Ron Brown taught us about the importance of providing jobs for our citizens through economic expansion and ensuring equality of opportunity so that all could share in the fruits of economic expansion.

EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Ron Brown knew that the success of the American economy in the 21st century would depend upon expanding economic opportunity for all of our people. In a time where the gap between the rich and the poor is ever-widening, we must see to it that our economy creates jobs which provide living wages. We must also see to it that the good which flows from economic prosperity is shared among all of our people.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Ron Brown knew that our schools and our workplaces should be a reflection of America and should ensure equality of opportunity. He saw to it that his Commerce Department reflected the racial, ethnic and gender differences of the taxpayers on whose behalf his Department worked. Ron worked to provide opportunities for others who might not have been given the chance. Ron Brown knew that there were many more Ron Browns with intelligence, ambition and the will to succeed. Ron Brown gave them an opportunity to shine. They were African-American, white, Latino, Asian-American, they were among those who accompanied him on the mission to Bosnia. We must continue to work to see to it that America fulfills this promise of equality which Ron Brown exemplified.

As we honor our late Secretary of Commerce we must not forget these things which his life has taught us so well and we must work to continue his legacy.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for providing this opportunity to do this special order before his special order comes forward.

## TAXES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, the topic of our special order this evening is taxes, and periodically, we will likely be joined by some other principally freshman Members of this House. One of the things that we all share is that we all believe very firmly that taxes are just far too high in this country. The American public is overtaxed, and our Government overspends, and we have to do something about that.

I am 43 years old, and back when I was born, and I was born in the early 1950's, during that period of time the average American family in this country sent about 5 percent, 3 to 5 percent to Washington in the form of taxes.

Here we are 40 years later, and that has gone from 5 percent up to about 25 percent that Americans send to Washington to cover our Federal Government's spending. But that is not the whole picture. It is even worse than that. When you add State taxes, local taxes, city taxes, county taxes, township taxes, school taxes, sales taxes, real estate taxes, all the other taxes that we pay as Americans, the average American family now spends about 40 percent, 40 percent of what it earns in the form of taxes.

□ 1800

Another way to look at that 40 percent figure is that if you work Monday through Friday, you are working Monday and Tuesday for the Government and only Wednesday, Thursday and Friday are you able to support your family on the money that you earned. That is far too high, far too much of a bite out of the taxpayers of this country coming to the Government.

Another way to look at it is if you work an 8-hour day, about 3 of those hours are worked for the Government. That is just ridiculous. I am sure that our Founding Fathers and founding mothers never envisioned anything like the burden of taxation that we now have on the people of this Nation.

Wages have gone up somewhat. If we look since 1989, for example, wages have increased somewhat. However, when we look at the tax burden, the fact that taxes have gone up, we are at best in this country treading water. We are trying to stay even. But we are really losing out on the American dream.

Our parents, I know my parents, envisioned their children doing better than they did. We all want to advance some in life. The problem is right now because taxes at all levels of Government, particularly at the Federal level of Government, have gone up and up and up, the American dream is being destroyed. Because we are overtaxed, we cannot keep enough of our own money to support our families, and that absolutely has to change.

A group called the Tax Foundation, for example, calculates that in this country we right now pay more in taxes than we do for food, clothing, or housing, shelter, medical costs. Think of that. Food, clothing, health care, housing, all those things, we are spending less for that than we are for taxes. That shows again that we are just overtaxed in this country.

At this time I have been joined by several of my colleagues. I will pick up here in a few minutes but I would like to, I believe, start with the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. BROWNBACK] since he was here first, and I will at this point yield to a good friend of mine from Kansas [Mr. BROWNBACK].

Mr. BROWNBACK. I appreciate the work that the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT] does in representing Ohio in this great Nation, one of the big power forces we have had in this new freshman class of things we have been able to get done. I do not know how many American people recognize that this freshman class has hit here and people like the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT] have gotten things done, sent here to make Washington smaller, more efficient, work better for the American people, and it has happened.

One of the things we have not gotten done yet is changing the taxes and being able to get the tax burden less on the American people. We have passed it and passed it again, and have been vetoed and sent back by the President. As the gentleman aptly put forward, the American people are I think taxed to the max, to the point now that they work nearly 40 percent of their year just to pay taxes at all levels, and it is just too much.

I wanted to make another point, if I could, on the issue of taxes. I have got some words here in front of us that rule our lives, if I could show these to the American people. I think it will be kind of interesting to other Members of Congress.

I have got on this page the Declaration of Independence, where we declared independence from a dictatorial nation that was telling us to live a different way than what we wanted to, and these are some words that rule our lives. Within this page is the Declaration of Independence that talks so much about the freedoms and justice that we treasure so much as the American people.

I also have with me today the Holy Bible, words that help with our life as well. I have got the number of words here, 773,000 words approximately in the Holy Bible. The size of this, Declaration of Independence, 1,300 words.

I have got to show the Members of Congress the 1940 Tax Code. I thought we would go back a little ways and we would see the 1940 Tax Code, and I can still lift this one up. It is 4 volumes, the United States Code Annotated, Internal Revenue Code of the United States, 1940's Tax Code.

I cannot pick up the current Tax Code of the United States. I guess I need to be lifting weights better, then I would be able to. The gentleman from Arizona [Mr. HAYWORTH] might be able to do this, but it is a stack about 2½ feet tall of books. It contains 555 million words that control our lives.

This is no joke at all. Unfortunately, this is the real thing. This is just the Tax Code itself, so we can see how much it has grown and how much it has expanded over a period of from 1940 to what it presently is today.

The IRS actually sends out 8 billion pages a year in forms and instructions, which itself would stretch around the world 28 times, just the words that they send out and the billions of pages.

In 1948 a typical family paid only 3 percent of its income in Federal taxes, 3 percent. Imagine that. Because today they pay 24 percent, 8 times as great as in 1948. Imagine what an increase in salary and wages and income we would be giving the American people if we could cut the Government back even a quarter of the way to where we were in 1948.

According to the Tax Foundation, more than 3 hours of every working day are dedicated to the Tax Code. That is how long Americans work on average to pay their taxes. In total, individuals will spend 1.7 billion hours filling out their taxes, responding to this stack of books here, of rules and laws and words that govern our life.

My point in mentioning all of this, and there is a number of other facts that move forward with this, is that we have far too much tax burden on the American people. Average working American people across this country are working too much for the Government and not enough for themselves and their own families.

We have got to much manipulation out of Washington, trying to micromanage our individual economic and personal decisions, trying to make everybody, I guess, perfect across the country as somebody might have designed from here. The Tax Code was written by a thousand different Members of Congress at different times over the eight decades that we have had an Internal Revenue Code.

I just think it is time we say enough is enough. We have got too much of a tax burden, it is too complex, it is too much manipulation out of Washington, and it is time we cut it down to size. It is time we cut the tax burden, and give the American people a real raise by cutting their tax burden.

It is time we cut back on manipulation out of Washington and say that the Tax Code is not for social engineering, it is not for economic engineering. The Tax Code is for raising revenue for the Federal Government. It should be done with a lot of change that we are going to have to get through, and making these sort of changes so the American people can get the relief that they need to have both in the burden and the quantity of manipulation they are getting out of Washington.

I see we have been joined by some other colleagues.

Mr. CHABOT. Reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman from Kansas. I particularly think it is very interesting the figure you used about 8 billion forms and instructions that go out to taxpayers all over this country.

I think one of the interesting figures that I had seen recently was to put together those forms, we have to cut down 293,000 trees just to put together these forms that we send out to the American public and I personally think that we ought to leave a lot more of these trees standing and cut down the Tax Code substantially. I yield to the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. WICKER].

Mr. WICKER. I thank my colleague from Ohio for yielding. I certainly also want to commend my friend from Kansas for the remarks which he just made. I certainly hope that he will leave those books there on the desk. They are a graphic example of the increase in the complexity of our Tax Code over the past number of years. They translate into something very, very practical, and, that is, the fact that too much money is being taken out of household budgets and brought to Washington, DC, and that is just a very graphic example there.

Yesterday was tax day all across the United States of America, which was another reminder to American families and American working men and women of the bite that the Federal Government takes out of household incomes. But there is another date that is also very, very significant, and that is May 7, to be exact, May 7, 1996. That is Tax Freedom Day in the United States of America. That means that the average American has had to work until May 7 just to pay his obligation for all Federal, State, and local taxes. Not until May 8, 1996, will the average American begin working for himself.

This is the latest time during a calendar year that Tax Freedom Day has occurred. What that means is that the tax burden on Americans is heavier than it has ever been in the United States of America. I want to commend our party, the Republican Party, for proposing a solution to that and proposing to change the direction.

Sometimes I go back home and people say, ''Well, ROGER, there's too much partisan rhetoric on the floor of the House of Representatives,'' and certainly I applaud any effort at bipartisanship, and I also applaud the efforts of those who have put forward the civility code. I think we need more of that.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is a reason for the very pitched partisan debate about the tax issue. And that is this. That there are two very, very fundamentally different approaches to taxation represented here in this Capitol building. There is the Democrat approach of 40 years of increased taxation, increased overreaching into the pocketbooks of American workers, and we are here now as a Republican majority for the first time in 40 years to reverse that trend.

The differences at the national level are certainly heightened, I think, by none other than the President of the United States. Candidate Clinton ran in 1992 promising a middle-class tax cut. The American people responded to that plank in then Governor Clinton's platform and he was elected. Once elected, President Clinton not only abandoned his pledge for a middle-class tax cut but he gave us the largest tax increase in history. I note that one of my colleagues yesterday came onto the House floor and disputed that, saying that actually maybe it was the largest tax increase in peacetime history.

Regardless of how you do your figures there, it was a whopping increase of nearly $260 billion, which meant a 4.3 cent per gallon tax on gasoline which affected farmers, truckers, and people certainly living in the rural areas of my district in north Mississippi. The Clinton tax increase involved a 70-percent increase in the amount of Social Security benefits that can be taxed. I certainly am proud to stand as one of the Members of this House of Representatives who voted to reverse that tax and repeal that tax and certainly regret the fact that President Clinton has stymied us and not allowed that repeal of that tax to go through. Also small businesses were hit hard. Don't take my word for it. The National Federation of Independent Business called the Clinton tax plan about as anti-small business as you could ever see.

So I would simply point out to my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, that there are fundamental differences in our approach to this very, very significant issue. The Republicans in the House of Representatives and in the Senate stand for lower taxes, tax cuts which not only benefit families but also which will encourage job creation. And so I thank my colleague from Ohio for putting together this special order and I look forward to participating in it this afternoon.

Mr. CHABOT. Reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman from Mississippi for sharing his thoughts on taxation. You mentioned the disparity, the discrepancy between the two parties in this House and I do not think it could have been plainer than as recently as yesterday. What we attempted to do in essence was to make it tougher, make it harder for the Government to raise income taxes on the American people. Right now we can do it with a simple majority of Congress, taxes can be raised on the American public and assuming that the President signs the bill.

What the Republicans in this House tried to do was to make it tougher, to go up to two-thirds. We tried to pass a constitutional amendment that would require two-thirds of this House and then two-thirds of the Senate in order to raise taxes on the American public.

Mr. WICKER. If the gentleman would yield on that point, I think the gentleman would agree that four out of the last five tax increases would not have been enacted had that provision been part of the Constitution when they were voted on.

Mr. CHABOT. Reclaiming my time, I think that is absolutely correct. I firmly believe that we should make it tougher for Congress to ever raise taxes again.

□ 1815

Unfortunately, since it is a constitutional amendment, we needed two-thirds of this House to pass it. Some 234 Members of this body voted for it, 177 voted against it. Almost every Republican, there were only 17, I believe, Republicans voted against it. And 200-plus Republicans voted for the constitutional amendment. There were a relatively small number of Democrats who joined us on this.

But there are many people in this House, and even though we did not get it this time, we are going to keep coming back, because we should definitely make it tougher for this Congress ever to raise taxes on the American people again.

At this time, I would like to yield to one of the most articulate and truly one of the leaders of the freshman class, the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. J.D. HAYWORTH.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio and the gentleman from Mississippi and the gentleman from South Carolina for joining us here to talk about taxation. I thought especially eloquent was the gentleman who preceded me at this podium, the gentleman from Kansas. And while he is quite eloquent in his verbiage, I thought the stack of books that now comprise the Internal Revenue Code, Mr. Speaker, with those joining us on television this evening and this afternoon back in my home State of Arizona could see with their own eyes that huge stack of books in a system that has grown more and more complicated. I think just as there were volumes upon volumes, that picture spoke volumes.

The gentleman from Ohio, you mentioned yesterday's proceedings, and I thought it was interesting what transpired in this Chamber during the course of the debate. A couple of arguments used and one, quite candidly, that some Members of the new majority bought into, was this notion that somehow the Constitution of the United States should not be amended or amended only sparingly. I just thought it was worth going back to article 5 of the Constitution, this document of limited and enumerated powers, to see precisely what is said. Again, I think the first clause in article 5 lays it out quite simply: The Congress, whenever two-thirds of both houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose amendments to this Constitution.

Now, for the accurate historical picture, of course there is one prohibition dealing with the Government and dealing with a certain year date, 1808, with reference to some amendments to the Constitution, but that had to do with the foundation of this very republic and some time-sensitive matters.

But that is clearly where it is left. You see, our Founders did not say, now

we would limit you to a Bill of Rights or to 40 subsequent amendments. They left no numerical prohibition there. Nor did they feel it was their place to articulate a procedure that either of these two Houses in the legislative body would follow.

Indeed, yesterday, Mr. Speaker, it was very interesting to watch Members of the liberal minority stand up to profess great feeling for the Constitution, but in reality, to hold higher alleged rules and customs of this House than the Constitution. To somehow claim, and I know that I am joined here by friends who work on the Judiciary Committee who are in their own right juris doctors. And for the purpose of full disclosure Mr. Speaker, ''J.D.'' in my name does not stand for juris doctor. It stands for JOHN DAVID. I am not a lawyer, nor have I played one on television.

But I think it is worth noting that our Founders simply said whenever two-thirds of both Houses deem it necessary, they gave us the ability to bring these proposals directly to the floor. And if there were ever a proposal that we needed to move on, it was the tax limitation amendment that fell somewhat short last night but is long, long overdue.

Mr. Speaker, I attempted to offer some perspective during the course of last night's debate, and indeed I thank the gentleman from Ohio for allowing me to fulfill a promise, because as I said from that well that we would have to wait for a special order to articulate this. But a couple of points worth noting. Those folks who were so reluctant to amend the Constitution failed to answer the question I proffered last night. And that was, if a direct personal income tax were such a good idea, why did the Founders not put it in the original document? They were strangely silent about that amendment.

But also it is worth noting what transpired in the wake of the 16th amendment. The Center for Small Business Survival put together a survey, put together a study, went back and took a look at the original tax code in 1913, in the wake of the passage of the 16th amendment, and the numbers were absolutely astounding. If we wre to take the tax code of 1913 and apply it in 1990's dollars, a single person filing singly, of course, would be exempt on the first $46,000 of his income. A married couple filing jointly would be exempt on the first $59,000 of their income. And most astonishingly, to take the 1913 tax code and project it into 1990's dollars, 1 percent tax would be levied on the first $298,000 of earnings. Absolutely astonishing.

How then do we account for the change? How do we account for the volumes the gentleman from Kansas brought? Quite simply this. The insatiable desire of this Federal Government to take money from its citizens, to reach into the pockets of hard-working Americans. If you need proof, understand this. Adjusting for inflation, according to the Center for Small Business Survival, even adjusting for inflation, the cost of the Federal Government from 1913 until the present day has increased in excess of 13,500 percent. The marginal tax rate on families has increased some 4,000 percent.

The arguments have been made eloquently here again in this special order. I commend the gentleman from Ohio. But simply this thought should be remembered: When the average American family surrenders more to the Government in taxation than it spends on food, shelter, and clothing combined, something is fundamentally wrong. We were sent to this Congress with a basic premise and a basic promise: To let the hard-working people of the United States of America hand on to more of their hard-earned money and send less of it to Washington.

Mr. Speaker, I salute my colleagues who join me here tonight. I salute them also for voting for this tax limitation amendment.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona.

Reclaiming my time, I would like to at this time recognize, introduce the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SANFORD], a very good friend. I also want to compliment the gentleman from South Carolina on a recent score he received from one of the groups that ranks Members of Congress, and that is the National Taxpayers' Union. And what they do is they go through a very large number of votes and keep track of which Members are really serious about cutting spending and cutting taxes. They put all the votes together, and of the 435 Members of the House, this gentleman was tied for No. 4, I believe, and of the freshman class, you were tied with lead, coincidently with myself.

But in any event, I want to thank the gentleman and commend you on that particular score, and let us keep cutting taxes and reducing the rate of spending in some areas and cutting spending in other areas.

The gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SANFORD].

Mr. SANFORD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for yielding the time.

I consider it good company that I had both this evening and on that particular scoreboard. I do not know if I thank you, though, for putting me behind J.D. It is always horrible following J.D. J.D., you are a walking encyclopedia on this stuff, and I admire the almost ever-growing list of things that you know about on the whole tax matter. I applaud your efforts there.

I would simply say this. I do not want to beat an old horse, and a lot of things have been covered as we have talked about taxes, but I would like to throw in these two cents. That is, we had a town meeting last Saturday, just prior to everybody sending in their tax returns, back home in Charleston, and I tried to think about what is it that you are going to talk about just prior to tax day. I thought about well, May 7 is Tax Freedom Day. I thought about how the average family sends almost 40 percent of what they earned off to the Federal, State, or local government. I thought about how, you know, a hard-working couple works almost until noon to pay for the total cost of Federal, State, and local government. But what occurred to me was why in the world would I be telling them that? Because they know it a whole lot better than I do. In fact, when I have neighborhood office hours, people come up to me saying, MARK, do you realize how much we are paying in taxes?

So I did not want to state the redundant, and so I looked. I do not know if you all have heard, Charles Adams wrote a book entitled ''For Good and Evil: The Impact of Taxes on The Course of Civilization.'' So I got out pen and pad and began to work my way through his book. What he does in his book is he looks through the course of civilization, and with each different civilization breaks out tax rates.

What was interesting about his study is that if you start, let us say, with the Egyptians, go all the way back to the Egyptians. You go back, let us say, 3,000 B.C., to all the way to when they ended, which I guess was around 476 A.D. And if you look at taxes in their civilization, what you would find is that on average, they had an agricultural production tax of about 20 percent. And then during hard times, this is nothing you would see with the IRS today. But during hard times, they had what they call philanthropa, wherein the pharaoh would say, we had a bad year with crops this year, therefore, there would be no taxes this year. It was rumored that is where the word ''philanthropy'' came from. But roughly around 20 percent.

Then you move to the Greeks. Athens and Sparta had this sort of military sharing arrangement there with the other city/states to fight off the Persians, which they did quite successfully. And what was interesting there was they had an indirect tax, a tax ranging anywhere from 2 percent to around 10 percent, 10 percent if it was a shipping channel covered with pirates, 2 percent if it was not. And then around a 10 percent harvest tax for the city/states. They actually had the first progressive tax, which they called liturgy, where it was a voluntary tax for somebody who lived in that city/state who was doing well, they would come and say, we need this help with *x*. Would you help us? And there was a voluntary tax. But roughly again somewhere on the order of 10 and 15 percent on average.

Then in Rome, you break out the republic versus the empire during the first part. During the republic, there was very little in the way of tax because you had a volunteer economy. What you had there is with their army, every citizen who was a landowner volunteered for the army for 1 year. That

spirit of volunteerism, if you want to call it that, was so pervasive that even the magistrates volunteered. So as a consequence, there was not a lot in the way of taxes. They had indirect commercial taxes and custom duties, which ranged from on the order of 2 percent to 5 percent. Unfortunately they had slave auctions back then, which were roughly another 2 to 5 percent. But those were the two big taxes.

Then as you moved into the empire, taxes began to go up because, first, they had tribunal, which was a war tax. There was a 5-year census. Every 5 years they took a census, and then depending on your wealth, if you were poor, roughly about one-tenth of your wealth was taxed. If you were wealthy, roughly about 1 percent of your wealth was taxes. And that tax went off. And if they were successful in their war effort, there was a rebate with the booty that came with war.

They had a couple other taxes, again a 10-percent harvest tax, a 20-percent orchard tax, a 5-percent custom tax. And toward the end of the empire, they actually began to have an inheritance tax of around 5 percent. But again, something just slight of 20 percent on average.

If you looked at the Spanish decline, the Spanish empire and how it declined, what you found was they had two main taxes there. The second tax began to get out of whack, if you will. There was a revolt there with Charles V around 1520 as a result of these taxes because they were not viewed as fair.

□ 1830

They almost had an arrangement wherein the legislature was promised a whole lot of benefits, pensions, et cetera from the king, which worked fine until the taxes got too high and then there was revolt.

The Swiss have long understood the connection between liberty, taxes, and democracy, and for that matter all revenue matters essentially come to vote. An example of that would be, in 1991 a value added tax was proposed in Canada and passed. The same value added tax was proposed in Switzerland and failed, in large measure because they could take that vote straight back to the people.

But what struck me about all this, and you could wander through a whole lot of empires and civilizations, was that you can only squeeze so much blood from a turnip. Those numbers happen to fit, in terms of the study of civilizations and taxes there with his book, fit with OMB numbers, and they fit with Reader's Digest, which is an unlikely pairing in my book.

Because with OMB they went back and looked at numbers from 1950 to present, and what they found was that regardless of which tax rate you were at, roughly the government share was around 19.8 percent, just shy of 20 percent. Whether you were in the 70-percent tax rate or the 20-percent tax rate, as tax rates ratcheted up and down, you could only squeeze so much blood from a turnip.

People responded to that tax. If the tax was up at 70 percent, sure enough, the second earner stopped earning. They stayed home more. If it was down to 20 percent, they went back to work. People responded. So, first, you can only squeeze so much blood from a turnip; and, second, this is where Reader's Digest recently did a poll and went out and asked folks, ''What do you think a fair tax rate would be?''

They asked males, they asked females, they asked whites, blacks, and people earning below $35,000. They asked people earning above $35,000, ''What would be a fair tax rate?'' Resoundingly, in each of those different categories people came back with the answer, around 25 percent.

Any yet, as you know, our overall tax burden is closer to 40 percent, which again says to me two things: First, civilizations must have had something right throughout time, and the fact that they were at or below 20 percent on average says to me that we are probably out of whack. And, second, if Reader's Digest gets it right, maybe they could pass along the lesson to us here in Congress, in that here we are bouncing along in the neighborhood of 40 percent. What do their readers say? Around 25 percent would be fair.

So I just thought that that was interesting to look at that whole time frame and just say where are we in the grand perspective. Because when I say tax freedom or I say, do you realize you are paying *x*, people already know that.

What was interesting was to look at those numbers and to say, boy, 20 percent seems to be a number that has worked throughout time.

I will yield back. I do not want to take too much of your time.

Mr. CHABOT. I thank the gentleman, and reclaiming my time, I think the gentleman from South Carolina makes many, many very good points. I cannot touch on all of them, but I think you cannot squeeze blood out of a turnip or only so much is right on the mark. That has been one of the problems with the government, particularly the Federal Government, is they thought there was just an unlimited ability to squeeze blood out of the American public. The limit for taxes, just unlimited, just keep raising them, and we have gone far beyond a level which is appropriate in this country.

This Congress, particularly on this side of the aisle, we have made some effort. Before yielding to the gentlewoman from California, I want to touch on a couple of things that we have done in this Congress thus far to give the American people a break, to reduce the level of taxation on particularly working people in this country.

For example, right now a married couple in this country is penalized for being married. We wanted to eliminate the marriage penalty, and passed appropriate legislation here in Congress to do that. Unfortunately, down at the White House it was vetoed. This is unfortunate because we should not penalize married people. We should encourage people to be married in this country.

Capital gains relief is another example of tax relief that we tried to pass this year in this house. Capital gains I think is something that is very important, because some people think capital gains is just for rich people. Seventy-three percent of the people who benefit from capital gains relief earn less than $75,000.

Many senior citizens in their pension plans and their IRA's and other things benefit from relief. Most importantly, capital gains relief means that the economy will thrive more. It will mean more jobs for Americans, more entry level jobs for teenager, for example, so we need capital gains relief in this country.

The adoption tax credit is something we passed here. The President, by the way, vetoed the capital gains relief. The adoption credit, we wanted to give a $500 tax credit to people in this country for adopting a child. There are many diverse views in this House about the issue of abortion, a controversial issue. Some are pro-life, some pro-choice, but I think we all agree that we want to reduce the number of abortions, and the $500 tax credit or, excuse me, $500 adoption credit would encourage people to adopt children.

We wanted to give seniors in this country relief. Right now a senior citizen, once they earn about $11,000 they start losing their Social Security Benefits. That does not seem fair. Seniors all over this country have paid into Social Security all their lives. Then they retire, want to make a little bit of money, and they start losing their Social Security benefits.

So what we did is, we passed in this House relief which allowed seniors to go from $11,000 to earning up to about $35,000 over a 7-year period. It was a gradual increase in the amount that could be earned before they started to lose their Social Security benefits. Fortunately, that was one of the things that the President did not veto, so that was passed, and I am very pleased about that.

The final thing I wanted to mention that we have done in this Congress thus far is, we wanted to give a $500 tax credit for families who have children. So if you have two children, that would be a thousand dollar tax credit, not a deduction but a credit. When you are raising kids, everybody knows it is an extra burden, and we should give relief to families across this country.

Now, again, 89 percent of the people that would have benefited from this would have been people who made less than $75,000, but the President vetoed it. What we heard was tax cuts for the rich, tax cuts for the rich. These things were not tax cuts for the rich, they were tax cuts for hard-working American citizens, and it is time we give the American public tax relief. I think that is what we are all about.

At this time I would like to yield to a good friend from California, a lady who has made many courageous votes in this House thus far in her career, the gentlewoman from California, ANDREA SEASTRAND.

Mrs. SEASTRAND. Thank you to the gentleman from Ohio. I appreciate your gathering this time for us to talk about taxes, especially this day after April 15.

I am very proud to just find out today that I was given a great score from the National Taxpayer's Union and got an A from them. So I am pleased to be here.

I noticed one of the preceding colleagues mentioned a townhall meeting on taxes, and I know there were a number of us that did that throughout the Nation this past Saturday. I was one. I held a townhall meeting on taxes in a little town called Paso Robles on the central coast of California. It went so well that I hope to do, even though it preceded April 15, I am hoping to do this all through my district, because the information and the give and take from the constituents went so well.

I think the thing that I wanted to get across to them was to tell them that this Congress tried so very much to give them tax relief, that we are starting to talk about tax reform and had some votes on reforming taxes, and that we want to give taxpayers rights.

I know a lot has been said about the hours, the dollars that taxpayers have to spend just to figure out their taxes. We have talked about the hurdles that many of our taxpayers have to endure to get their taxes done, and so I am glad that you are talking about some of the solutions to the problem. I am proud to be part of this 104th Congress that has looked to solutions.

We had the vote yesterday in trying to get a supermajority to pass taxes in this House. It is interesting because I come from a State, the State of California, that does just that. To increase taxes you have to get two-thirds.

Let me tell you, the liberals in that House howl every time we talk about the budget because they are down and they want to take it to a simple majority. They tout how it is better for everybody involved, and some of the same arguments that I heard on this House floor yesterday from the liberals that have been in control of this House for 40 years, and why it was a stupid idea in their estimation to try to even bring this issue up on the floor. They talked about publicity stunts, and I should be shameful because I was talking about increasing the number to a supermajority on this House floor.

Well, I would just say it has worked in my State, and I want to remind everyone that even if you are a supermajority State such as California, they still have the opportunity when we are in facing a dire fiscal situation that, even though I disagreed with that vote about 5 years ago, they raised taxes in the State of California even with a supermajority.

So it was a great vote yesterday. We did not have enough people, the 290 votes, to pass a constitutional amendment requiring two-thirds of this body to increase taxes, but there is another day, another time, and it is just the beginning of continuing to talk about reform in this House.

Now, I am glad that my colleague from Ohio just went through the litany of relief that we tried to give to the taxpayers, those working families throughout America, those working families in Paso Robles in my central coast of California. You talked about the $500 per child tax credit. You talked about the marriage penalty. You talked about your capital gains relief to create jobs for especially the small businesses on the central coast of California. I do not have any of those big corporations in my district.

The tax credit for parents who adopt a child, I know what that is about because my two children are adopted, and know about what it means to give tax deductions to children who have elderly parents at home, and my mom is always worried, concerned about that aspect. And to also give a tax deduction for the first $2,500 interest on a student loan. My children have just graduated from college, but we are always concerned about students, and can they get a tax deduction for their loans.

All of these issues the gentleman from Ohio pointed out just about working families. I am one of those freshmen, about half of our class is under attack by the old guard that have controlled this place for 40 years, particularly those big labor union bosses that sit here in Washington, DC, and then more or less dictate what their members in my part of the country will do.

I have been under siege now for a year, since last April, radio ads, TV ads. You name it, they have done it to me, trying to say that ANDREA SEASTRAND voted for tax relief for the rich. I keep saying, ''Where?''

I have just read the litany, you read it prior to, and it is interesting, what we just mentioned, what we are trying to do in this House, and yet the distortions and the misinformation and downright, I guess I could say, lies stated about what we have tried to do in this House to give tax relief to the working families across this Nation.

But you know what I found interesting was that at the townhall meetings, and Saturday was the 50th townhall meeting I have had since I have been elected, the first question is what are you going to do about the Internal Revenue Service. I am telling you, people stand up out of their chairs and they cheer.

What are we going to do? I tell them I am interested in reforming and looking to taking that Tax Code and throwing it out as we know it and looking at something else. Again cheers. So it was no different on Saturday because people actually sit on the edge of their seat and say, ''What are we going to do?'' What about the flat tax? What about a national sales tax? What about repealing the 16th amendment, the income tax as we know it? What about doing away with the Internal Revenue Service?

So it is exciting to listen to people wanting to start the national discussion, and I hope that through my townhall meetings we can promote a national discussion about not only the tax relief that we have done in this House, but the tax reform that we have begun with our vote yesterday and the discussion that we have started. Should we do away with the Tax Code? Should we repeal the 16th amendment? Should we go to a flat tax or a sales tax?

Now, I think we need to focus on reforming the current income tax, and just to give you a little thought, the national sales tax would abolish that need for the IRS because there would no longer be any income tax.

□ 1845

Americans would only pay tax on the money they spend so it encourages savings and investment. Imagine bringing home your paycheck and looking at the whole thing and then you decide what you would do with your dollars, what kind of things you would buy. Like the flat tax, it would be easy to comply with, easy to administer. And there are many that have advocated that. I have not myself endorsed either the flat tax or the national sales tax, but I am anxious to continue the discussion with the American taxpayer as to what they think is the best way to go.

The flat tax has just one rate, treats everyone the same. That is what proponents of the flat tax say. All the flat tax plans include a generous family exclusion. There are no special interest loopholes and the form is a simple postcard, enough to fit it all on one little postcard, not the numerous forms that we have to look at today.

The National Commission on Economic Growth and Tax Reform appointed by Speaker GINGRICH and Majority Leader Senator DOLE concluded on six principles that should be included on needed tax reform: First, that we have economic growth through incentives to work, save, and invest; second, that there is fairness for all taxpayers; third, simplicity so that anyone can understand the system; fourth, neutrality so that people and not government can make choices; fifth, visibility, so that people know the cost of government; and sixth, stability so that people can plan for the future.

The bottom line is that our current Tax Code is not a good system. It is time-consuming. It is peppered with loopholes. It discourages savings. It needs help desperately, and the American people are saying that they definitely want a fair, simpler, and more equitable Tax Code and tax system.

So I am glad to be down here and talking with my colleagues that are

trying to do something about it. I just appreciate you taking this time etching it out of our busy schedules here in the House so that we can talk about what is so important, more important than anything else but the importance to our particular constituents at home and how it is important that we do something, not only get that tax relief, get that reform, but also give some good old-fashioned taxpayer rights to the taxpayers of America.

Mr. CHABOT. I thank the gentlewoman from California. I just want to compliment the gentlewoman on the may votes that she has taken to give tax relief to the American people. We need to keep fighting this battle.

I now would like to yield to the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. GRAHAM], a gentleman who has been one of the true leaders in the freshman class this year and in fact in the Congress as a whole.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, it has been a great debate to listen to. It has kind of brought me down here, kind of got my blood stirring.

One thing that was talked about a lot is the two-thirds supermajority vote requirement to raise taxes. And it has been very well articulated why you need that. One observation I would like to make, if you took 435 people at random, any town in America, any district in the Union, and you asked them to vote on this particular measure, the only group I know of that would have less than a two-thirds agreement is here in Congress. You could take 435 people in any town in my district and ask a simple question, should there be a wall between you and the politician to get in your pocket a little higher than the one that exists, they would have jumped on it a lot more than two-thirds vote. It would have probably been unanimous.

Unfortunately, because it was a constitutional amendment, we needed a two-thirds vote. We were about 30 votes short. The idea is alive and well and the good thing about this Congress, it has been an historic Congress. We have not spent much time talking about what we have accomplished because we have been so busy doing it and ducking rocks being thrown at us for having done it.

The line-item veto by itself is probably the biggest change in the last 200 years. The line-item veto allows the President to look over our shoulder for the first time and look at how we spend money.

This tax debate is a good debate to be having, but it needs to be linked up with the spending debate that is going on. One thing is for sure, Americans are going to complain about the umpire and they are going to complain about taxes. If you go back in time at any time in the history of our Republic, you will find people complaining about how much they have to give to the government, I think that is just our nature. But we always give. We always meet our obligations.

But the question that you must ask now, are people complaining for a good reason. I think they are complaining for a darn good reason. When you take money from the American public you should have a game plan in mind on how to spend it. We collect taxes to provide services at the national level. Are we providing quality service? Are we spending an appropriate amount of money, or are we spending too much? Are we doing too many things at the national level? Should some of those things be done at home? Should some of those things be done by the private sector?

That is a great debate that must be joined with the tax debate. I would suggest to you that the money that we are taking from you is too much. The average person, black, white, rich, poor, conservative, liberal, says 25 percent from State, local, Federal taxes is enough taxation on the American family, and the reality is it is almost 40 percent.

So I would suggest to you that not only does the American public believe we are taking too much, there is a new group in Congress that believes we are taking too much. But we are in the minority, but we are growing. Thanks to the vote in 1994, we have grown a lot. And just hang in there with us and get enough people up here to do something about it. We are here talking about it. We need more votes to make it happen.

But the average American believes very sincerely they are having to pay too much. I agree with them. You agree with them. It is about time to start delivering. But we take their money. And what do we do with it? We provide services.

Medicare is a good program. I come from the South where a lot of people who have worked in the textile industry in years gone by did not have good pension plans or health care plans. That is getting better. Medicare was a safety net program for folks that has grown tremendously. Do you know how much we have increased Medicare spending since 1980? We have increased it 2200 percent. Welfare, a tremendous explosion in welfare spending in the last 30 years; $5 trillion have been spent in the name of compassion. And we have more illegitimate children, more poor and disadvantaged people than we have ever had.

I would suggest that the Federal Government could get by with less, that not only are you right when you are saying we take too much from you, you are right when you believe that Congress does not spend your money wisely. We can come up with a Medicare system that will take care of our seniors, that will not grow at 2200 percent every 15 years.

We can provide compassion. We can provide welfare. We can help those people who are disadvantaged without paying them to have children they cannot afford. We can help people of alcohol problems without sending their check to the bar. We can reconfigure this government. We can take less of your money and do a better job. But you are going to have to help us. We have got to reinvent systems that are long overdue to be reinvented, and we can get by on less money. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise, because it is a complete distortion to say that the Federal Government is a few billion dollars short.

I thank the gentleman very much.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina for his thoughts on taxation. He also has been a true leader around here in trying to cut the tax burden on American working people in this country.

In summarizing where we have been tonight, I would just like to make a couple of points here. Something that we passed today that I think was a very good move, something in the right direction, was something called the Taxpayers Bill of Rights. And in essence what that does is, if you call the IRS right now, and the IRS gives you bad information, you are responsible for penalties and interest, even though the IRS gave you bad information. That sounds ridiculous. It is ludicrous, but that has been the law.

We passed, however, today a law which basically said that if the IRS gives you bad information, then you cannot be held responsible for interest and penalties due to bad information from the IRS.

I think that is a step in the right direction. Congressman JIM TRAFICANT, who is a Democrat from Ohio, my State, I think has—I am cosponsor of something I think is a very good piece of legislation. It basically would put the burden of proof on the IRS rather than on the taxpayer.

Right now it is supposed to be you are innocent until proven guilty. But with the IRS, basically you are guilty unless you can prove you are innocent. This takes the burden off the taxpayer and puts it on the IRS where it ought to be. Something else that I found kind of interesting in preparing for this issue this evening was the fact that we have got 6,000 border patrol people in this country, 6,000 people on the border patrol to protect our borders. We have got 24,000 employees of the FBI, and we know all the good things that the FBI does for our Nation. So that is 30,000 employees with border patrol and the FBI. With the IRS, the IRS has 111,000 employees, almost four times the number of employees that we have in those other two departments. It really shows you what our government's priorities have been. I think we need to change those priorities.

Another thing that is interesting, as we mentioned, April 15 was just yesterday, taxpayers all across this Nation were trying to figure out how much they owed to make sure that they paid what they owed; 1.7 billion hours were spent by taxpayers figuring their taxes and the next figure is really shocking, $140 billion was spent by taxpayers for attorneys and accountants to figure

out what their taxes were, time basically wasted figuring out taxes, $140 billion. I would argue that that time could be much more productively spent in many other ways.

I had a town meeting, many of the other Members that spoke here this evening mentioned they had town meetings on the weekend. I had a town meeting in my district. I represent the 1st district of Ohio, which is basically most of the city of Cincinnati and some of the western suburban communities. We had about 125 people at the town meeting.

I started out with a question at the beginning: How many people here feel that taxes in this country are relatively low and perhaps we could raise them to balance the budget or do more government programs, whatever? Not one hand went up.

Then I asked, how many people feel that taxes are about right in this country? I expected we might get a few hands. We did not get one hand that said that taxes are anything near what they ought to be. Then I asked, how many people feel that we are overtaxed in this country, we need tax relief? And every single hand in that room went up.

These are just regular citizens from my community, the Cincinnati area, and that is probably true all across this Nation.

We had a couple of groups that were represented there, a group called TEE. We have had some grass roots groups that just formed in the community a few years ago. TEE is one. It is Taxed Enough Already. Brenda Kuhn is the founder of that organization. We have the True Blue Patriots, Pat Cooksey, founder of that organization that was there, and also Tom Brinkman, who is the treasurer of a group called CATS, Citizens Against Taxes and Spending.

So we have actually in my community, in reaction to this high level of taxes, we have actually had regular men and women, average working people form groups to try to petition their government to get off their backs, give them some tax relief. And I think it is time that we did that.

I want to thank all the Members of the House who came here this evening to discuss and participate in this topic which could not be more timely about tax relief. I would like to say finally that I think it is time that we work together, Democrats and Republicans, and, yes, the President of the United States, we should all work together to give tax relief to the American people. It is time we get the job done. Let us get working on it. Let us relieve the American people of the huge tax burden that this government has placed on their backs.

Thank you very much for participating this evening.

## TAXES, EXPENDITURES, AND BUDGETS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to continue the discussion about taxes, let us talk about taxes and expenditures and budgets. But before we do that, there were some tributes by my colleagues to Ron Brown, and I would like to add my tribute to that number. And I think that the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PAYNE], is here for that purpose, too.

I yield to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. PAYNE] for his statement on Ron Brown, and then I will follow with my statement on Ron Brown and then go on with the rest of the discussion.

### TRIBUTE TO RON BROWN

Mr. PAYNE of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me at this time.

Let me say to Mr. OWENS from New York that following your time, we are going to have members of the caucus come and make expressions. And so what I will do at this time is to yield back until the gentleman completes his special order. And then I will return back to the podium.

I thank the gentleman from New York for yielding to me at this time.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my voice to the numerous voices that have been raised to pay tribute to Ron Brown. Ron Brown, the mentor for all public servants, he could teach us all a great deal.

I will enter my statement in its entirety into the RECORD, but I would like to read the statement and comment on it.

Ron Brown was a renaissance politician. He was a jack-of-all-trades who mastered all the trades in politics. He was a mentor for seasoned professional politicians, and he was qualified to tutor most of us.

Ron used his considerable influence and charm to become an extraordinary fund raiser for the Democratic Party. From the complex job of raising money to the details of election day engineering, Ron performed with great enthusiasm.

Ron Brown was the kind of person who could raise funds, and I admire him most for that. He probably had a problem like everybody else but he plunged into the process of raising funds and did a great job of that.

There are some people who do fundraising very well, but they are not good at strategy. They are not good at tactics. They do not have certain other qualities. But in addition to being able to raise funds, which we all admired him for, Ron Brown had the talents that went across the entire spectrum in terms of skills that are needed in public life.

I first met Ron Brown in Chicago while campaigning for Harold Washington for mayor of Chicago. Former majority whip Bill Gray, Ron, and I were in a car on a tour through the public housing projects on Chicago's south side. We had been assigned that area to campaign. At that time Ron was working with a well-known, prestigious, and powerful law firm in Washington.

□ 1900

However, on that day it was simply Ron, the lawyer, friend, campaigning for a fellow democrat. We went into huge, tall, cold, concrete buildings and walked on floors which seemed to be completely out of this world. The deterioration and the garbage inside the halls were unbelievable, even to a poor boy like me, whose father has never earned more than the minimum wage. I had lived in some of the poorest neighborhoods in Memphis, TN, and I had worked in some of the poorest neighborhoods in New York. but never had I seen such despair. The only glimmer of light I saw in those high-rise urban tunnels that day were the Harold Washington posters that the residents waved at us when they saw our familiar signs.

We had connected at that point with the most depressed among us.

As my eyes met Ron's eyes, he broke into his signature smile. This is what politics has got to be all about, he said, as we plunged into the crowd of outstretched hands and marched through the halls reminding folks that tomorrow was the day to go out and elect the first African-American mayor of Chicago.

Ron Brown was the unifying driving force behind the most successful and conflict-free convention the Democrats have had in nearly two decades. Ron was a star who kept his poise. He kept peace among the many party factions and made the Democratic National Committee an effective force to be reckoned with in politics.

Ron Brown was a masterful strategist who began his tenure as party chairman with several special election victories despite great obstacles. He was a great communicator, and he was a great cheerleader who also understood the nuts and bolts of winning campaigns.

Seldom in America does one man so gracefully transcend the racial chasm as Ron Brown did, and in his journey he deeply touched the heart and soul of a Nation.

As our Secretary of Commerce, he was our corporate ambassador to the world. As the chairman of the splintered, fractured Democratic Party, he was the glue that held it together, and in so doing he delivered the White House and became the most beloved chairman in history.

Ron Brown was undaunted and unfazed by challenges. Being a first was not unusual for him. He was the first African-American in his college fraternity, the first African-American counsel for the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the list goes on and on.

Ron was a trailblazer and an eternal optimist. He saw no mountain that