

Mr. Speaker, one glaring problem, one major flaw with our current welfare system is that in many cases it pays more for some people to stay on welfare. That is to say, welfare benefits in the aggregate pay more than what a person can make in a minimum wage job. If we want to reform welfare as the Republican majority in the Congress has been attempting to do with no help or support or cooperation from our Democratic colleagues, we have got to make work pay more than welfare. We have got to reverse that perverse incentive where welfare is more attractive than work. So reverse the equation, if you will, and that is why I support raising the minimum wage.

It is a sad fact that a full-time minimum wage worker in America today would earn approximately \$8,840 for a year's work, which is far less than many States pay in welfare cash benefits and well below the Nation's poverty level. We need to correct this inequity so that people who want to work are not forced to choose between work and welfare because welfare pays better.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the point I wanted to emphasize is that the minimum wage increase in my view should be coupled with meaningful welfare reform like the welfare reforms that President Clinton promised back in 1992 and like the welfare reform legislation that President Clinton has twice vetoed over the last 15 months.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. OLVER] is recognized during morning business for 4 minutes.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, last week 20 House Republicans introduced a bill to raise the minimum wage by \$1.50 each over the next 2 years. They broke from their leadership and agreed with what we Democrats have been saying all along. People working 40 hours a week ought to earn a livable wage.

Now Speaker GINGRICH and Senator DOLE are joining the game, but it is certainly not a done deal. The Republican leadership still plans to weigh any bill down with union-bashing provisions and maybe different minimum wages for different people. They wanted to slow the bill down. Senate Republicans have been blocking a minimum wage vote for months now, and opposition to the minimum wage from Majority Leader ARMEY is well documented.

So the future of this minimum wage movement remains to be seen. But the movement must succeed. We must fight to bring the minimum wage back in line with what working people in America need to get by. These are the facts: 10 million American workers earn only the minimum wage. The minimum wage has not been raised in 6 years, but the buying power of \$4.25 an hour is 50 cents less than it was in 1991. Two-thirds of minimum wage earners

are adults, 40 percent of these adults are sole breadwinners; almost 60 percent of minimum wage workers are women.

Here are some more points to consider: 75 percent of Americans favor increasing the minimum wage. A reasonable minimum wage combined with the earned income tax credit rewards work and is the best way to keep families off welfare. But right now the minimum wage is so low that the earned income tax credit cannot fill the gap, just the 90-cent increase in the minimum wage combined with food stamps and the earned income tax credit would put a family of four that relies on a minimum wage earner back up to the poverty line.

The ripple effect of raising the minimum wage also helps another 2 million workers who now earn between \$4.25 and \$5.25 an hour. Yesterday's Washington Post stated what is clear to everyone except the Republican leadership: "There ought to be a clean vote in Congress on raising the minimum wage."

Speaker GINGRICH and Senator DOLE should stop fishing around for provisions they can add to the bill hoping to kill it. They should listen to the moderate wing of their own party. Raising the minimum wage lifts all boats. Keeping the minimum at the 1991 level keeps everyone's boat tied to the dock.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from California [Mr. FARR] is recognized during morning business for 4 minutes.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on Earth Day to remind us that Mother Earth giveth, but the 104th Congress taketh away. Look at the battle of this year: Tried to take away Medicare benefits, affordability of Medicare, tried to take away the school lunch program. And now on Earth Day we see that they are trying to take away the Endangered Species Act, but that is not all.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard earlier today that the 104th Congress decided also to take away the public enjoyment of public lands and sell those to private interests. They want to sell the mountains to the ski resorts, the forests to the logging companies, the rivers to hydropower and to development. They want to sell wildlife refuges to oil and gas development and to hunters. They want to sell the minerals that belong to the people to the mining companies. Lastly, they want to take the Indian lands and sell those to the gambling interests.

In addition to these takeaways from the U.S. public, because the public owns these lands, and give these to private interests, they also want to take away the money that has been derived from the sale of all these resources because we receive value for when we sell the land and water of this country and

the grazing lands and so on. What do they want to do with that money? It is our money, sitting in a trust account here in Washington called a lockbox, known as the land and water conservation fund. The lockbox now has our money, \$12 billion in there that cannot be spent.

Should we tolerate this? I say no. Look what we can do. Look what happened with a little politics in this House last week, for a similar lockbox. In the transportation funds, the Highway Trust Fund, this House voted 284 to 143 to open that box and allow that money to be spent on the public interests.

In fact, the leader of that movement, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Chairman SHUSTER, said, Congress imposes taxes on gasoline, on airline tickets and other transportation goods with the assurance that those funds would be spent on the infrastructure improvement, but the problem is that the accumulated surpluses of these dedicated user-generated trust funds are not being spend to build anything. They are just sitting in bank accounts. He went on to say, this is patently unfair to the American traveling public. Well, it is also unfair on Earth Day to the American public that enjoys the out-of-doors to lock up all of their moneys in a trust fund, \$12 billion.

My colleagues, the 1995 Republican budget resolution called for a moratorium on the land and water conservation funds. The total balance in that fund is \$12 billion, as I said. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. Good roads leading to bad environment sounds like the road to hell paved with good intentions.

RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Puerto Rico [Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ] is recognized during morning business for 4 minutes.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Democratic efforts to raise the Federal minimum wage. I am proud to have joined in sponsoring legislation which was introduced in February of last year to raise the minimum wage by 90 cents. I am chagrined that over the last 14 months minimum wage opponents have prevented this legislation even getting a hearing.

When Henry Ford founded the Ford Motor Co., it was his philosophy to pay his workers well enough that they could afford to buy the products they were making. It made sense then and it continues to make sense now. An underpaid labor force cannot provide the consumer demand which is necessary to the long-term strength of our economy. Increased poverty ultimately brings harm to all sectors of our economy, not just the poor.

A 90-cent increase in the minimum wage will add \$1,800 to the annual earnings of a minimum wage worker. To

them and their families, \$1,800 can and will make a significant difference in their ability to meaningfully participate in the American dream.

For an average family, \$1,800 is enough to buy 1 year of health-care costs. We in Congress have struggled with the difficulties and expense of providing adequate health care to those who cannot afford their own. We know the tax cost to individuals and businesses when government must step in to provide healthcare benefits to the needy. The minimum wage is part of the solution.

For the average family, \$1,800 is enough to buy 7 months of groceries. Businesses cannot prosper when their employees' productivity is impaired by malnutrition. Children will not learn in school if they are not receiving regular, healthy meals at home. The minimum wage is part of the solution.

For the average family, \$1,800 is enough to pay basic housing costs for almost 4 months. Is there anything which is more important to a family's well-being and dignity, and a workers' productivity, than adequate housing? The minimum wage is part of the solution.

At a 2-year college, \$1,800 is enough to pay for more than a full-year's tuition. The changes in the American economy over the last two decades have left no doubt that only through education and training can American workers hope to better the lot for themselves and their children. Only with a large pool of well-trained workers can American industry compete with foreign companies. The minimum wage is part of the solution.

Contrary to the disingenuous claims of minimum wage opponents, the typical minimum wage worker is not a teenager flipping burgers after school to earn a little extra money to spend at the mall. The typical minimum wage worker is an adult woman, working full-time, and supporting at least one child in her household. She is working increasing hours in her struggle to support her family and to avoid having to rely on the government for her child's next meal.

Recent studies suggest that 300,000 people would be lifted out of poverty if the minimum wage is raised to \$5.15 per hour. This figure includes 100,000 children who are currently living in poverty.

We have allowed the minimum wage to drop to its lowest value in 40 years. In 1979, the minimum wage was the equivalent of about \$6 per hour in 1996 dollars. It is now only \$4.25. We have allowed this decline to happen, not during a time when our economy is suffering, but during a time when corporate profits, executive salaries, and the stock market are at record highs.

A 90-cent increase can make the difference between a family living in dignity and a family living in poverty. It can make the difference between a family being able to afford adequate health care and a family having to rely

on woefully inadequate public health programs. It can make the difference between a family being able to improve its lot by participating in available educational opportunities and a family doomed to a downward economic spiral.

Henry Ford's philosophy of paying his workers enough to allow them to buy his products is still a good philosophy. America must pay its workers enough for them to be able to buy a dignified place in our economy.

I urge my colleagues to support raising the minimum wage to \$5.15 an hour. Millions of hard working Americans who deserve a better life will appreciate our leadership.

ERMA BOMBECK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] is recognized during morning business for 2½ minutes.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, while I am all in favor of raising the minimum wage, I take the floor today to salute a wonderful woman whose loss I will certainly, certainly feel, and I think all American women will, whether they are getting the minimum wage or whether they are working at home with no wage. Erma Bombeck's loss will really go to the heart of all of us. The laughter that we will lose because of her death really seems very sad.

Mr. Speaker, Erma Bombeck made us laugh about all of the things that we live with every day: husbands' socks having so much fuzz on them you have to shave them, the green fuzz in the refrigerator that people kept asking about and then you were clearly trying to grow your own penicillin, all the problems you have with children who get dressed in the morning in some outfit that really looked more like a costume and you were afraid that somebody would think the child had been drinking before they even got to school.

The problems and the advice that she had for all of us that were so terribly important. She taught me one thing that was very critical; that was never loan a car to anyone you gave birth to. That was very good advice. And you should never have more children than you have car windows in an automobile. It prevents so many fights.

She also went on to tell us all the things about men and watching football. She really thought that there should be a law in this country that, if men watched more than 16 consecutive quarters of football, they should be declared legally dead. I think that there was some accuracy in that, too.

Yes, Erma Bombeck was a person who, even though she became very, very ill and her transplant finally got her and claimed her life, she never stopped laughing. She never stopped making us laugh. She saw the beautiful

wit and wisdom in everyday life. So many of us sometimes try to escape everyday life, but she showed us the poetry in it, the philosophy in it and the fun we should all have with it every single day. So her incredible uncommon wit will be missed by every single one of us. How very much sadder the planet is going to be without her penning away about her life as a domestic goddess in Phoenix, AZ.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the House stands in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 25 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. UPTON] at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

With praise and adoration, with thanksgiving and gratitude, we offer our prayers to You, O God, and place our petitions before You. We pray for our world and our Nation, for our communities and the people of every background and tradition, for family and friends and for ourselves. We place before You, gracious God, our needs that are both great and small, those supplications that we hold in the secret places of our own hearts, asking that You would forgive us where we are weak or selfish, and strengthen us to do those good works that do justice and mercy. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. TRAFICANT] come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. TRAFICANT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.