wealthy, those who are in the upper-income brackets. They must receive huge tax breaks.

Ordinary families say, well, that does not sound too fair. If you look back over the last 20 years, we have not had any increase in the wages, those of us in the bottom 60 percentile or 70 percentile of wages in this country, people making $20,000 and $30,000 and $40,000 a year.

So if there are going to be tax breaks given out, the tax breaks should not be given out to the wealthy. We should get the tax breaks, so we can educate our children in high school and grammar school and in college. That is where the tax breaks should go, not to the wealthy.

And if you are going to cut programs, you cannot cut Medicare part B and make Grandma pay an extra $400 a year when she only makes $13,000 a year on average; all of the elderly, senior, retired women, when at the same time you are not going to touch the timber subsidies and the mining subsidies and the grazing subsidies, et cetera, et cetera, that the big business interests get. It has got to be fair.

Grandma or Grandpa, they do not mind sacrificing. God knows, they do not mind sacrificing. They took us through the Depression, they took us through World War II, and they built us into the greatest country in the world in the 1950's and the 1960's, so they do not mind sacrificing. They have sacrificed their whole lives. What they want is fairness. The tax breaks cannot go to the wealthy. The tax breaks have to go to people who can educate their kids. The programs that get cut cannot be for the elderly: Medicare, Medicaid. The programs have to be grazing subsidies and timber subsidies and Star Wars and all the rest of these crazy programs that should not be given Federal subsidies anymore. That is the only fair way of doing it.

The Republicans say, do not worry about it, because if you balance the budget by the year 2000, interest rates are going down 2 points and the oil, the water of prosperity, will flow evenly across all of those in this great country, and we will not have to do anything else for ordinary working people. The reality is that it has not flowed that way for the last 15 years, since Reaganomics began.

We have seen this distortion in terms of who are the beneficiaries of the wealth in our country. The rich are getting richer and the rest are just paying taxes. That is how this system has wound up in this country. Ordinary people are the ones who are afraid that their jobs are not going to produce the income they need for their families.

The fallacy in the Republican argument that interest rates are automatically going down two points—and by the way, the Democrats would wish that that would be the case, too, because we support a balanced budget, just as much as the Republicans do now—is that there is a doctrine. It is called NAIRU. It is called the non-accelerating inflationary rate of unemployment, the non-accelerating inflationary rate of unemployment. That means that the rate of unemployment, once it goes below a certain point, and, for these purposes below about 5.5 percent, about 6 to 8 million Americans unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, I will return at a later date to continue my discourse on this subject.

## IN HONOR OF MARY BETH BLEGEN, TEACHER OF THE YEAR

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

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a resident of my district, Mary Beth Blegen. She was honored by President Clinton with the National Teacher of the Year Award. This type of recognition is not new to Mary Beth. She has been honored before by the accolades of her community and the success of her students.

Mary Beth lives and teaches in my hometown of Worthington, MN, where she has also written an occasional column for the local paper. On several of these occasions, others in my district have sent me copies of these columns for my benefit and instruction.

I remember one in particular that provided good hometown advice from the local coffee shop on how to balance the budget and dispense with the politics that so often contaminate the process. The restaurant, after all, is a repository of much wisdom in our society, and Worthington is typical of small communities with such restaurants in rural America. Unfortunately, we did not take all of the advice from the restaurant, and our balanced budget has not yet been accomplished.

Mary Beth graciously accepted the Teacher of the Year Award this afternoon in a typical fashion, downplaying her achievement by recognizing the dedication and skill of teachers throughout America. She states that she accepted the award for all of her fellow teachers who are committed to their profession and their students.

Mr. Speaker, I urge that you and other Members of this body join me in congratulating Mary Beth Belgen of Worthington, MN, as National Teacher of the Year. Also join me in congratulating the teachers from the other States throughout the country that were named teachers of the year in their respective areas, and finally, let all of us join in acknowledging that there are thousands, tens of thousands of teachers throughout this Nation who are not being recognized today except by the students whose lives they enrich and whose lives are so important, and education is so important to the future of our Nation.

## A DIALOG ON INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLLINS of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, what I want to do is to engage in this effort tonight to have a dialog, if you will, and discussion with several of my colleagues to talk about the minimum wage. I will yield to my colleague, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GENE GREEN], and thank him for participating with us tonight. I would ask him to just kick off this effort tonight for us.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Mr. DELAURO], for organizing this very special order on the minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, I join a number of our colleagues tonight in support of an increase in the minimum wage. Since the President proposed increasing the minimum wage to 5.15 over 2 years, a river of ink has flowed on both sides for this issue. According to the latest national poll, 87 percent of Americans favor an increase in the minimum wage. Howver, some of my colleague in the Republican Party continue to oppose a minimum wage increase, and they even oppose the minimum wage.

In fact, I may have taken the gentlewoman's poster, because this is such a great quote: ''Emotional appeals about working families trying to get by on $4.25 an hour are hard to resist. Fortunately, such families don't really exist.'' That is why my colleague and a good friend of mine, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. TOM DELAY], I want him to know that I have these families in my district that are trying to get by on $4.25 an hour tonight, Maybe that is our problem. Maybe they have lost touch with what is actually happening out in America, with families trying to get by on $4.25 an hour. There ar families that are trying to do that, and it is a shame that maybe some of our colleagues in Washington do not understand that.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans continue to argue that an increase may lead to higher unemployment and increase the number of welfare recipients. Mr. Speaker, the logic of this just does not match. Ask anybody on the street if increasing the minimum wage will increase welfare recipients. Mr. Speaker, the best welfare reform we can pass is a job that pays a decent wage to get people off welfare.

Additionally, some of these same critics claim that the minimum wage is paid mainly to teenagers, and that an increase would cause layoffs of these teenagers. Americans know that the real value of the minimum wage has steadily declined for the past 15 years, and that minimum wage earners have not seen an increase since April 1, 1991. Fifty-seven years ago Congress

passed its first minimum wage of 25 cents an hour, and 57 years later, Americans are working to find that the real value of the minimum wage has steadily declined during these past 15 years. Minimum wage increases have been passed bipartisanly. In fact, our current Senate majority leader and our current Speaker voted to increase the minimum wage in the late 1980's.

Minimum wage earners today have seen a fall of 45 cents in real value since the 1991 increase. The idea that an increase in the minimum wage could lead to an increased number of welfare recipients is simply not correct. In fact, the opposite is true. Again, the best welfare reform is a job that pays a livable wage. What critics fail to recognize is that the current minimum wage does not even provide a livable wage. Using today's minimum wage, workers putting in their 40 hours a week for 52 weeks a year will earn just over $8,800.

In my district, the current poverty line for a family of three is $12,000. You can work full-time, one wage-earner in your family, minimum wage, and still be eligible for food stamps, so this quote by my colleague, and again, a good friend, I would say to the gentleman from Texas, I have families in my district who are trying to struggle on the minimum wage at $4.25 an hour.

This working family is supported by a minimum wage earner well below the national poverty rate and is eligible in collecting food stamps. However, this same family, if we had an increase to $5.15 an hour, figuring in the maximum earned income tax credit, would be $1,500 above the poverty level if we increase the minimum wage. This increase would give my constituents and other working Americans the ability to work their way off of the welfare rolls.

It is argued that the minimum wage is a wage for teenagers, and therefore only at entry level. While this may have been true in the past, in fact, I remember working for minimum wage at $1.25 an hour, and I was glad when Congress increased that minimum wage, but the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the average minimum wage earner today is over 20, 20 or over, and more likely to be female and working full-time. The minimum wage is demonstratively no longer just for teenagers.

If Congress does not increase the minimum wage our welfare rolls will grow, quite to the contrary of what may be said on the other side of the aisle. But with a minimum wage increase, these families will have the opportunity to be more self-sufficient. We should have a clear vote on a minimum wage increase, without cluttering up or including tax cut issues or other issues the Republican majority may want.

One of the complaints I hear so often, and my colleague, the gentlewoman from Houston, TX [Ms. JACKSON-LEE], knows this, people ask us all the time, they say, ''Why can you not just vote on a bill on its issue, instead of putting in everything but the kitchen sink?'' That is what I am worried we are going to see. We are going to see extraneous issues thrown in the minimum wage. If 87 percent of the American people want a minimum wage increase, they deserve a vote straight up and down on a minimum wage increase.

House Republicans are talking a lot about working families, but they continue to show that they may be out of touch with where reality is at. American families are working harder than ever, and it is tougher to get ahead when working full time does not even put enough money in your pocket to put food on the table without food stamps.

Republicans have a golden opportunity to give the American families what they really need, a decent wage for a decent day's work. If Congress is serious about getting people off of the welfare rolls, Congress should allow Americans to work their way off of it by increasing the minimum wage.

I would like to thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut for this opportunity tonight to talk about that, and also for swiping your poster for a few minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments, which are just incredibly accurate about what we want to try to do in getting people off of welfare, to work. With regard to the comments by your colleague and my colleague, the gentleman from Texas [TOM DELAY] I might add, he is the third ranking member of the Republican hierarchy in the House of Representatives, and his commentary is ''Emotional appeals about working families trying to get by on $4.25 an hour and hard to resist. Fortunately, such families don't really exist.''

□ 1900

This is the same gentleman. Let me tell the Members about his comments earlier this year during the Government shutdown. He said, and I quote:

> I am not a Federal employee. I am a constitutional officer. My job is in the Constitution of the United States. I am not a government employee. I am in the Constitution.

These were his comments, which is why he would not support suspending congressional paychecks during the Federal Government shutdown in December of 1995. One of the architects of this shutdown says that he is not a government employee, he should not give back his paycheck during the Government shutdown, someone who makes over $130,000 a year.

Now he has the nerve just today to say that families who are struggling on $4.25 an hour, roughly about $8,500 a year, do not exist. This will give us a little bit of a taste of what we are dealing with in this body, and how out of touch some of our colleagues are with the people that they purport to represent in this body.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield now to my colleague from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE] and thank her for joining us this evening.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut, and I thank her very much for giving us an opportunity to visit this question, as we have been visiting it now for a year.

We, as Democrats, have said that the increase in a minimum wage has been long overdue. Let me say to the Members that I remained open on the question as relates to listening to all those who would counter with a rebuttal of that concept. Why not open the door and hear what the discussion is all about?

I listened to someone more clearly, however, and that was the Honorable Barbara Jordan, who held this particular seat in the 18th Congressional District prior to certainly her demise this year, but certainly held this seat as it was first originated in 1972.

She came to this Congress offering to propose an increase in the minimum wage on the basis of social justice, and her comment was that she came here to remedy the social inequity and the economic inequity of her constituents in the 18th Congressional District in the State of Texas. She realized that if there was high unemployment there in communities where people were seeking to work, the point was that we needed to create jobs and we needed to create a decent wage.

So I come today to be able to say to all of those naysayers that in fact increasing the minimum wage will not decrease jobs. For example, the jobs are created mostly—and I have great respect for my constituents and others in the small business community, I know that we have done many things to try to lift their load—but the major jobs are created by major corporations in this country, and we realize that those major corporations are now benefiting by enormous profits. We can look at corporate CEO salaries and see the enormous increase that has come about. We are just asking for the plain working citizen to have this opportunity.

In 1979, if we looked at the minimum wage at that time, it was equal to today's $6.25. We are not even looking to increase it to that amount; 90 or 95 percent, to lift it to something like $5.25, a bare increase for our working families who have opted to work instead of get on welfare.

In fact, those families that have been mentioned that do not exist, they exist in my community and many communities out through America. In fact, they are not teenagers, they are heads of households who are trying to maintain a family unit. In fact, our increase will give a mere $1,800 increase per year that will allow those families to do something like pay their utility bills, their water bill, their rent, to provide the necessities for their children that go to school, because we have people making $4.25 an hour who have a family of four.

I am aghast at the interpretation and, as well, the definitions that have been attributed to middle class and lower middle class and upper middle class. I am just maybe trying to find the dictionary that these definitions are coming from.

I have a colleague here in the House, a Republican who has indicated, ''When I see someone who is making anywhere from $300,000 to $750,000 a year, that is middle class. When I see anyone above that, that is upper middle class.'' This is a statement by the Republicans, and they have here listing $100,000 to $200,000, that is lower middle class; $300,000 to $750,000, that is middle class. I guess $750,000 and above is upper middle class.

We are talking about the basic infrastructure of this country, the kind of people who day to day get up and drive that 1979 car or that 1982 car, that get on our public transportation, that work every day, grown-ups, not teenagers, who need this kind of increase to make them whole. This is certainly evidence that we are not connecting on the other side of the aisle, that they are not listening to the American people, the 87 percent.

My colleagues from Texas and of course from Connecticut are so right that we have got to speak for those individuals who are simply asking for a better day to see the end of the tunnel. Let me just say as I bring my comments to a close, thanking the gentlewoman so very much for giving us this very vital opportunity, when we begin to talk about welfare reform, it really pains me that we are not talking realistically.

We are not talking realistically because we are suggesting that an individual should rid themselves of a safety net, not because they want to be a hold or a deadbeat, if you will, a hold on this Nation, or to draw on taxpayers' dollars or working Americans' dollars, but because they simply have to survive, and because of whatever reasons, viable reasons, their children have to survive.

When we reach the point where these individuals have made commitments to work, and everyone I speak to that is on welfare wants to work, then we must be able to provide the opportunity for them to support themselves and their children. That requires child care sometimes. It requires health care, of course, with that, and it requires making ends meet by paying for your food and your housing.

How can they do that on $4.25, when a grown man will come to me and say, ''I don't know, I'm prepared to give up, and maybe welfare is the best alternative because I'm working but I can't make ends meet on $4.25. I want to stay in the work force. I want to work.''

Those companies who have people employed, it is well known that the increase of minimum wage will not in any way generate a major loss of jobs or a loss of profits. It may even increase productivity. We must begin to work together on this issue, small businesses, large businesses, Republicans, Democrats, working America to make America better.

I will simply say let us get rid of the politics, just like we wanted to pass a clean continuing resolution to keep the Government open. Let us pass a clean minimum wage bill, and anyone who wants to come and debate us on the loss of jobs, I am prepared to debate them, to show the numbers, that there is no documentation in fact that will show that there will be a demise of productivity.

My last point is that we have had over 100 economists tell us that an increase in the minimum wage will not cause a demise of this country. We should listen and move forward to make Americans whole.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut for this time to discuss this very important issue.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for her remarks and for participating this evening. When the gentlewoman holds up a chart that has someone in this body who truly believes that middle class America's salary range is somewhere between $300,000 and $750,000 a year, and literally believes that, and then we have someone who says that such families do not really exist, families that make $4.25 an hour, roughly about $8,500 a year, once again it emphasizes how truly out of touch that some Members and Members in the majority are in this body with the people that we represent.

We took this special order tonight really to urge our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, Speaker GINGRICH, the Republican leadership, really to stop their cynical effort to stiff working Americans. Bring to this floor legislation to raise the minimum wage. Do not do what the public believes we do all of the time, and that is to cloud the issue of minimum wage with a variety of other pieces that will kill a 90-cent increase in the minimum wage.

My colleagues and I know that hard-working American families are scrambling just to make ends meet. They scramble to put together the money that they need to pay their bills every week. These families have done the responsible thing to raise their families. They work hard every day. They try to feed their kids. They try to pay their bills. They work and they struggle. They pay taxes that seem always to be going up but their salaries do not go up.

These are good citizens who want to know that they are going to be rewarded for a lifetime of work, and that is that they have taken the personal responsibility in their lives to do the right thing, and that that needs to get recognized by those of us who serve in this body.

Plainly, working Americans need a break. They are working harder and they are working longer hours and they are working for less and less. The rewards of all of this hard work just do not meet the needs of today's families.

All the while, our country has forgotten workers struggle and they scramble, and countless working Americans find themselves the victims of downsizing. The stock market booms to record the highs and the corporate executives line their pockets with outrageous compensation.

Since 1990, the salaries of corporate CEO's have surged by 9 percent a year, yet the minimum wage is at its lowest level in purchasing power since Dwight Eisenhower occupied the Oval Office. In fact, last year, the median income of corporate executives in this country was $2 million—$2 million. That is over 200 times the annual salary of a minimum wage worker.

The Nation's minimum wage today is a paltry $4.25 an hour, and I am really proud to join my Democratic colleagues and President Clinton to sponsor legislation to boost this wage to $5.15. That is 90 cents. A mere 90 cents, while we have individuals in this country who are making on average $2 million a year and some much more than that, sometimes $40 and $50 million a year, which does not include their stock options.

We have people who serve in this body who make a very good salary, over $130,000 a year, the people who have gotten up and who have said that families that make $4.25 do not exist and that middle class Americans are making $300,000 to $700,000 a year.

What are we going to do? Again, another quote from the majority leader, the majority leader of the House of Representatives, let me tell the Members what his quote is. His quote is: ''The minimum wage is a very destructive thing. I will resist a minimum wage increase with every fiber in my being.'' This from the House majority leader.

It is truly unconscionable and disingenuous for people to stand here and say these kinds of things and purport to represent working men and women in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I see my colleague on his feet here, the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS]. Please go ahead and join the debate.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for taking this special order on the minimum wage.

The kind of quote that the gentlewoman just read, that ''the minimum wage is a very destructive thing. I will resist a minimum wage increase with every fiber in my being,'' that is House Majority Leader DICK ARMEY, who is at least honest enough to say what he believes.

□ 1915

The danger now is that we have entered a new period where there are people now who recognize that the common sense of the American people, as expressed through opinion polls, and I am sure people are on the phone calling

their Members of Congress, common sense says that people deserve an increase.

We are talking about pennies here, a 90 cent increase over a two year period. But that adds up over a whole year, and there are people that say, ''That would put some more food on my table and make it easier for me to pay my bills, so I want the 90 cents.''

Having recognized that there is a rising tide out there among the voters for a minimum wage increase, we have now some Members of the Republican majority who want to pretend they are concerned about an increase. They want to pretend, and then come with obfuscating, devious moves, to bog down the debate.

I sent out a special alert today to all my Democratic colleagues. I serve as the ranking Democrat on the subcommittee on Workplace, Protections, which is responsible for the minimum wage as an issue, and I thought that I should alert them right away as to what is coming.

I got a letter from the Republican side that showed that we are not going to see any rapidly escalating recognition of the will of the people resulting in a passage of the minimum wage. We are going to see a new kind of diversionary tactic.

So I sent out this item which I called ''Special alert. Republican wage ambush is coming. The diversionary quagmire.''

DEAR COLLEAGUE: Pretending to be suddenly concerned about livable wages for workers the Republican majority is preparing a legislative obstacle course to forestall the passage of meaningful legislation. We must avoid this quagmire of quicksand.

A simple Straightforward Increase Is Best for America. Our current position must be reaffirmed and kept focused: we demand an immediate increase in the minimum wage. Step by step let us go rapidly all the way to $6.25 per hour which would bring the lowest paid person even with inflation. Step one requires passage of a 90 cents increase to $5.15 per hour.

No bureaucracy, government intrusion, and no cannibalizing of EITC should be allowed to take place behind the banner of raising the minimum wage. Hearings may be scheduled very soon to promote a Byzantine proposal that makes a mockery of livable wage legislation. It proposes more corporate welfare through wage subsidies for employers, it imposes government intrusions on a scale greater than the present socialism of the farm subsidy programs, and, finally, the Republicans propose to raid the EITC program and siphon funds away from low income workers into a tax cut.

Emergency action is needed. I am calling on all the Members of my party, Democrats, to sign up to cosponsor the true minimum wage increase bill, the Gephardt-Clay bill, H.R. 940.

Now, what am I talking about? What did I receive from the Republicans? What did I have sent to me by somebody? It is a letter which is sent by my chairman of the Subcommittee on Workplace Protection, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. BALLENGER], and another member of the committee, the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON]. I am going to read portions from their letter to give them equal time. I am quoting from the letter sent out by Mr. BALLENGER and Mr. HUTCHINSON. It reads as follows:

We will be introducing legislation which would accomplish the goal of helping America's working families, while avoiding the economic pitfalls associated with a minimum wage increase. ''The Minimum Wage for Families Act'' would fundamentally redesign the Earn Income Tax Credit (EITC) by: converting the large annual lump sum EITC payments into monthly payments so as to more practically supplement family income; by denying credit to undocumented workers; by eliminating credit for childless adults; by increasing the support credit for parents; by renaming the EITC the Working Families Support Credit.

If you believe that those people who are in need of wage assistance are America's working families, as opposed to teenagers employed during their summer vacation, please join us in support of this proposal.

This is a proposal coming from the Republican side. This is the ambush that is waiting for us before we get to that goal of a minimum wage increase.

They propose a three-tiered minimum wage. They want individuals to be employed at $4.25 an hour, and families with one child would get $7 an hour, and families with two or more children would get $8 an hour.

How does it work? Employers would be able to hire as many job applicants as possible at the current starting wage of $4.25. The Federal Government would provide families with children a monthly cash payment to bring these families up to the $7 or $8 level as outlined above. The payments would be administered through the Internal Revenue Service.

You talk about the intrusion of government into lives of Americans? You talk about corporate welfare? Here are two blatant examples of it. They are going to subsidize the salaries so the corporations can hire people at $4.25 an hour. Then they are going to have the government get involved in determining who should make $7, who should make $8, and the Internal Revenue is going to be the administrator of all this.

The proposal is expected to be scored by the Joint Tax Committee they say, and it is going to save, according to the Republicans at least $15 billion over six years.

Now, this is really a quagmire we are headed into. I am reminded of the story of the young sophomore who came home from college, and he sat down at the table with his father, who was a factory worker, and the rest of the family, and they had a big chicken on the table they were about to eat. The young sophomore had just taken a course in philosophy. So he told his father, dad, there are really two chickens on this table. I can show you starting with the right a priori assumptions and using ontological progression and based on epistemological reasoning, I can show you where there are two chickens on this table.

His father looked at him for a while and listened, and suddenly reached over and grabbed the chicken, pulled it to him, and started carving the chicken and said, ''Look, son, if there are two chickens on this table, I am going to carve this one, and we are going to eat this one, and you can have the other one all by itself.''

This is what we have here. The Republicans are giving us a chicken in a pot, a dodo in a pot, to confuse the issue, and we are going to have long-winded sermons about how EITC is the answer to the minimum wage problem.

Never before have I seen a proposal which so much ran against the grain of the Republican ideology. They are going to put government in the business of subsidizing wages and have government administering the difference between the $4.25, determining who should get the $7 and who should get the $8.

So I think we have a long way to go. I was getting very optimistic myself about the rising tide of public opinion and how everybody suddenly is responding. There are 20 Republicans proposing a bill to increase the minimum wage by $1, not 90 cents, and I was getting euphoric about the democratic process.

But now I see we are going to get bogged down, and only the image of being concerned is what they are after. They want to appear to be concerned about working Americans and play with the lives of working Americans, and play with it with all of these high-falutin proposals to have government put people through some kind of obstacle course or maze and finally come out with an EITC that is going to be robbed in order to create some more money for a tax cut.

So I agree very much with the gentlewoman, that we must keep our eyes on the price, and focus, because the kind of straightforward statement that Mr. ARMEY has made, we should be grateful for that. We are going to have something far worse to deal with in the days ahead, the ambush that is being prepared for the minimum wage.

Ms. DELAURO. I want to thank my colleague from New York. You are absolutely right. This is a move, it is called rehabilitation here, to talk about how we are going to try to help working families. These are from the same crowd that just not too long ago wanted to cut $23.2 million from the EITC, take 14 million families in this country and say, and these are people working, remember, this is Earned Income Tax Credit, not someone on welfare, Earned Income Tax Credit. They were willing to set adrift 14 million families, not too many months ago, by cutting that Earned Income Tax Credit.

Now, so that they can delay and they can stall and they can stonewall on the opportunity to vote on a minimum

wage and to raise that minimum wage a mere $.90, they are going to come up with all kinds of bells and whistles and tricky programs here. We must recognize it for what it is, a stalling tactic and an unwillingness to bring before this body the opportunity to vote on the minimum wage yes or no, with no fancy language, just a plain and simple vote. That is what the American public wants to hear. I thank my colleague for joining this conversation.

Let me recognize the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE].

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me. I just want to say I want to thank Ms. DELAURO, the gentlewoman, for raising the issue of the minimum wage. I believe we will eventually have a vote on the minimum wage. It is primarily, I believe, because of your efforts to force the Republicans to give us a vote. They do not want to do it.

As you have mentioned, they are stalling, they will continue to stall, they are going to find every way around it. But already I notice that because of your activities and because you have raised the issue so often on the House floor, we have gotten to a position now where Speaker GINGRICH and some of the others have said that they may have to or be forced to bring up a vote on the minimum wage. I think a lot of that has to do with your efforts.

To me this is a very important issue. My own State of New Jersey actually has a much higher minimum wage, and it has worked very well. As you mentioned, with a minimum wage right now at $4.25 an hour, that adds up to $8,800 a year. To me it is an absolute disgrace that someone in America can work a 40-hour week for 52 weeks a year and only earn $8,800. Basically I guess what they have to do is go out and get a second job. When you are working 40 hours a week, what are you going to do, work another job for the same amount of time, and then make only twice that amount?

My understanding is that a minimum wage worker right now is below the poverty level. It is just as easy to go on welfare rather than work for the minimum wage. Here we have a Republican majority constantly bringing up the fact, suggesting in some way part of their reasoning is they want to get more people off the welfare roles. This belies that. If they want to do that, they should raise the minimum wage. Otherwise we are basically saying that a person might as well go on the dole or get welfare from the Government.

The other thing I was going to say is that I really do not see any one legitimately coming on the floor of this House and saying that the minimum wage should not be raised. I think that is why you get some of the Republican leadership like the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY], the majority whip, making the statement that you showed before, where he says that fortunately such families do not really exist.

The only way out of this is to basically say there is no such person, because if you say no such person, then you eliminate the need to raise the minimum wage. But of course there are people, there are a lot of people out there, who are just making minimum wage. There are a lot in my district and they have come up to me. They are young people, they are senior citizens, they are people from every walk of life.

Let me just make a few points, if I could. I know we do not have a lot of time. I just think one of the most important aspects is how this is a good thing for the economy. An increase in wages will increase purchasing power and improve the quality of life for millions of hard working Americans, not only the wage earners, but the local economy. Greater purchasing power will bring more money to our local economies and in the long run provide more stability and jobs for many small businesses. The purchasing power of our minimum wage earners is the lowest it has been since the early 1950's. I know you pointed that out over and over again.

One of the things that really gets me mad is when I hear Republicans talk about how an increase in the minimum wage will cause an increase in inflation. You have to be kidding me. You have the nerve to tell people who work for $4.25 an hour that they cannot have a modest 90-cent increase in their wages because you are worried about how it will affect inflation. I think there are a lot of things we can do in our economy to keep inflation at reasonable levels. But to tell hard working Americans that their below poverty levels will have that effect on our economy and inflation is ludicrous.

Let me talk briefly about our home State of New Jersey and our experience if I could. We have already seen the wisdom of raising our minimum. It is now $5.05 an hour. This increase has been a complete success. We have increased the purchasing power of our minimum wage workers and they have used that increase to purchase more goods from our local grocery stores and department stores.

This is not pie in the sky. There are studies that clearly show this on a bipartisan basis that the leaders in our State legislature and our Governor have pointed this out. It actually helped to keep our unemployment rate from growing too high, even with the downsizing and corporate restructuring that is so heavily affecting the State of New Jersey. It also provided for long-term growth. We have seen in New Jersey more jobs have been created and our economy has benefited from the higher wages.

Let me say what I see in my own State, this is the right thing to do. I just want to join my Democratic colleagues, and a few Republicans, I think Ms. DELAURO has pointed out there are some Republicans that have joined us who are going to help us in our efforts to get this passed. This is ultimately going to benefit all Americans. I just want to thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut again for her work on this, because I know you do not like to take credit, but I think you have single-handedly done the most in this House to bring this issue to the floor.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you very much. Before I recognize the gentleman from California, let me just say there are going to be other people out here tonight trying to talk about statistics and the fact that this increase in the minimum wage is going to lose jobs.

□ 1930

I will set the record straight. One hundred and one economists, Nobel prize laureates in economics, public statement they signed. ''We believe that the Federal minimum wage can be increased by a moderate amount without significantly jeopardizing employment opportunities.''

Mr. DELAY will say that if you are on a minimum wage, you receive the earned income tax credit in food stamps. Reminder: They wanted to cut the earned income tax credit by $23.2 million. They will shred the Food Stamp Program. Also the crowd that brought you a $245 billion tax break for the wealthiest Americans at the expense of those who are today on Medicare.

So just to set the record straight a little bit, and, also, final point. Who are the minimum wage workers? Who are these $4.25 an hour folks who do exist in every single Member's district? And if you close your eyes to them, you do it at your peril in this body. Two-thirds of minimum wage workers are adults, 60 percent are women, 40 percent are the sole bread winners in their family.

So that what you have here is the opportunity to lift these households up so that they can raise their families. We could lift up 300,000 families out of poverty in this country, 100,000 children who are currently living in poverty. Again, just to set this record straight.

I want to recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. MILLER, and thank him for all of his efforts in this area.

Mr. MILLER of California. I thank the gentlewoman for taking this time, and this very opportune time. Not only are we struggling to get a clean vote on increasing the minimum wage for those millions of American workers who need it to support themselves and their family, but now we start to see the limits to which the Republicans will go to keep us from having a clean vote.

They talk about attaching all kinds of anti-labor riders or attaching a lot of legislation that they think will be unacceptable to us and to the President so that he would have to veto the bill. Majority Leader ARMEY has said he will resist the minimum wage increase with every fiber in his being. Apparently, that is what is going on here.

But what they have done in the last couple of hours by suggesting this proposal to take the earned income tax credit away from poor single workers to provide for people with families with children is incredible, because what the Republicans are saying is they are now going to tax the poorest of workers in this country. They are going to raise their taxes because those people will have less income after this action than before and they are going to give it to other poor people to increase their income.

But why are they doing it? Because they have decided they would rather have the taxpayers in this country subsidize low-income jobs than have the marketplace provide a livable wage.

Now, it is ludicrous on its face. As was pointed out by the gentleman from New York, they are talking about one tax rate for workers without children, workers with one child, with two children. We just passed the farm bill, where we provided hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies to farm families. We did not distinguish between farm families with children, farm families with one child, farm families with two children, farm families where only one person is working with farm without children. We based it upon their outcome and output of that farm.

Why do we not tax rich people? Rich people with a lot of children would be at one tax rate and single rich people would be at another tax rate and we could give that to poor people.

What do we say about work in this country? Equal work for equal pay. But now what the Republicans have decided is in fact it is going to be some other classification to determine whether or not Americans will get paid. It does not say the employer cannot provide an increase in the minimum wage. Under this the incentive is for the employer not to provide any increase. The Government will pick up the tab. The Government will go into the marketplace and subsidize his employment. In fact, we essentially have an incentive not to pay an increase in the minimum wage, not to increase your wages. Why? Because the Government will pick it up.

We could understand this on its face if we did not know the history of this party, the Republicans on the other side, because not only are they against the minimum wage, but they also have been slashing all of the supports to those people who are working at the minimum wage and cannot sustain a livable wage for their family even though they go to work every day.

So what we see is there are only two places people can go. They can either go to the Government or they can go to the marketplace. But what the Republicans are saying is the market has no obligation to provide you a livable wage, a wage that will support you or your family. So what we will do is we will just have the Government subsidize those employers who simply choose not to pay the minimum wage. This is ludicrous. It is absolutely ludicrous.

If that is a conscious decision, and they will be back here cutting the EITC, as they did the beginning of this year when there was no intent that they were going to pass it on, they were simply going to use it to balance the budget or pay for their tax cuts. We simply cannot allow that to happen.

I think there is a fundamental decision. If you choose, if you chose and you admit that the American economy cannot provide livable wages, then you may be dissident. But I do not think that is what this is. This is an effort to derail a clean vote on the minimum wage. This is an effort to try to put something up here so people can look, sort of like we saw today, where they put some bills so they could look like they were friends of the environment but their voting record was completely to the contrary. That is what this is.

It is an outrageous proposal to tell two people who work hard side-by-side that somehow that the employer has no obligation to them to provide an increase in their wage, if in fact they have a child or they have more than one child, even though they are doing the same job, they are working the same hours and working the same schedule.

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

Mr. MILLER of California. I will in a moment. It is actually the gentlewoman's time.

Mr. DREIER. The gentleman referred to me.

Mr. MILLER of California. I did not refer to you.

Mr. DREIER. Well, you pointed to me. I considered that a reference.

Mr. MILLER of California. Well.

The point is this, that what this country deserves and what its low income wage earners deserve is they deserve a raise, they deserve the dignity of having the ability to stay even with the increasing costs in our economy; to be able to provide for their family; hopefully maybe even to reach out and provide health care, which is unreachable to most of these individuals.

But what happens? The employers in this country simply choose not to pay that wage. Quite legitimately, there are some owners that may not be able to, but there is no distinction in this provision. You simply choose not to pay it and the Government comes in and picks up your costs. There is a lot of people in the same business side-by-side in the same towns, we know them all, people pay more than the minimum wage and other people choose not to. People offer health care in the same business, the other person chooses not to.

Do not offer health care, the Government will pick up the cost. Do not offer a pension, the Government will pick up the cost. Now do not offer a minimum wage, the Government will pick up the cost. This is starting to sound like corporate welfare. This is starting to sound like people who decide they are simply not going to meet their obligations to their fellow human beings in terms of their work, their labor, and their efforts on their behalf.

This is the suggestion that the corporate body, the working party, is only because of the owner of that capital, or somehow that they are the only people that contributed as opposed to the employees who work every day for these individuals.

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

Mr. MILLER of California. What we need is we need an up or down vote on the minimum wage. We now have a majority in this House asking for that up or down vote. We have a majority in the Senate asking for that up or down vote, and what they ought to stop doing is throwing all of these things to try to throw people off the track and suggest that somehow they are there for low income working people in this country, because the fact of the matter is they are not there for low income working people in this country.

These people are going to work every day, and when they get done at the end of the year after working every day, they end up poor and they cannot provide for themselves or for others, and that simply is unacceptable in this country. The country recognizes it is unacceptable. Apparently only the leadership in the House of Representatives and the Republican Party fails to recognize the need to do this and the need to do it now and to do it in a clean fashion.

Mr. DREIER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MILLER of California. It is the time of the gentlewoman from Connecticut. I want to thank the gentlewoman for raising this issue and taking this time so that we could discuss this issue.

Mr. DREIER. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. DELAURO. I want to thank the gentleman from California for his eloquent remarks, and for pointing out that in fact what this is about is a basic and fundamental—these words are accurate. These words are accurate. There are those in this body who feel the same way about resisting a minimum wage increase with every fiber in their beings, which is what this is about in terms of bringing up a program that will try to borrow from an earned income tax credit, set some folks adrift.

One of the most interesting commentaries we have heard in the last few weeks on this issue is that the Republican Presidential nominee said recently he wanted to use the issue of the minimum wage increase to pass some things, quote, that the Democrats might not be so crazy about. Those kinds of threats represent political posturing that in fact sells the American people short, as you were pointing out.

Instead of trying to stick it to Democrats, what the Gingrich-Dole Congress

should be doing is to do something for working Americans, not just talking about it when it becomes a political albatross.

Mr. DREIER. Would the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. DELAURO. I am sorry, you will have your own time in a few minutes.

Mr. DREIER. I do not have any time at all. My friend from California indicated that he was going to yield.

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, could we have regular order here?

Ms. DELAURO. If I can continue. Rather than trying to lend a hand——

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, may I ask, is the gentleowman not going to yield; so should I sit down?

Mr. MILLER of California. The gentlewoman is not going to yield.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLLINS of Georgia). The gentlewoman from Connecticut controls the time.

Mr. DREIER. OK. Thank you.

Ms. DELAURO. The Republican leadership continues to try to score points with these political ploys.

Mr. DELAY. Would the gentlewoman yield? She used my name. Would she yield?

Mr. MILLER of California. If the gentlewoman would yield to me.

Ms. DELAURO. Be happy to yield.

Mr. MILLER of California. What we have seen is time and again, time and again, that as this issue has been discussed, they have tried to avoid it. Now, because a few Republicans have broken ranks, a few Republicans have even suggested they would be prepared to sign a discharge petition, as necessary, because apparently what we will not get is we will not get a clean vote on this matter. They will try to trick up the bill in the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities or trick it up with an amendment on the floor or in the Committee on Rules.

We have watched this process now time and again for the last 16 months in the House of Representatives. What the committees do does not matter, so, then, they go to Rules and they trick it up there.

The fact of the matter is this, what a majority of this House of Representatives has now asked for is a vote on the minimum wage, to raise it either 90 cents or to raise it a dollar. And what we now are starting to see are a whole series of proposals suggesting what they could do to load down that legislation so that either people who would support the minimum wage will not be able to get a vote.

One of the things that angers the public the most is the notion of riders, is the notion of taking subject matter A and attaching subject matter B to it. When President Reagan stood here and said never again would he sign a continuing resolution with all of these riders on it, he was cheered across the Nation. So what do we see now? We see the same old parliamentary tricks that are going to be used to try to keep this House away from a direct up or down vote on raising the minimum wage.

Raising the minimum wage, I think the gentlewoman said, I do not know, that it is the lowest now that it has been in?

Ms. DELAURO. In 40 years.

Mr. MILLER of California. In 40 years. To restore the purchasing power to where people who have——

Mr. DREIER. Would the gentleman yield on that point?

Mr. MILLER of California. I will not yield. We have our time. We are here to make a point.

Mr. DREIER. But I think the debate is something that is very important here.

Ms. DELAURO. Regular order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. DREIER. I just think it is a very important matter.

Ms. DELAURO. Regular order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, may we have regular order?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Connecticut controls the time.

Mr. DELAY. Well, then, would the gentlewoman yield to me, because she used my name on the floor?

Ms. DELAURO. The gentleman has his own time, which is coming up, so the answer to that question is no.

Mr. MILLER of California. The point is that what we are talking about is taking people who have continued to lose purchasing power, who have continued to lose their ability to support their families, to purchase the very basics, the very basics of the American economy, health care, put away money for a pension, put away money in savings, to be able to have decent housing for themselves and their children.

Those basics are now not afforded to people who go to work and work 8 hours a day, work 52 weeks a year, in many instances find that they have to try to work overtime, all of those things simply to try to reach the poverty line. That is what we are here for and that is what the gentlewoman has talked about restoring. That is what the President of the United States has talked about restoring, and it is absolutely fundamental and important that it be done.

Ms. DELAURO. I would just make the point that the Members of this Congress made more money when they shut down the Government during the Christmas holidays than a minimum wage worker makes in a full year. I think that that speaks volumes as to where some of the folks in this body are.

One of the other comments that has been made in the last few days is that what we need to do is to have hearings, again one more way in which to delay the process of this.

□ 1945

The revolutionary Republican leaders last week wanted to rewrite the Constitution of the United States without a single hearing. We have called for $270 billion that they have called for in cuts in Medicare where they have had one hearing, $168 billion in cuts in Medicaid and no hearings. We do not need any hearings. What we need to do, this is a no-brainer. Bring up the minimum wage as this body wants, 84 percent of the American public wants to see an increase in the minimum wage. That is what we need to be doing, bring it up for a clean vote, a vote that says that we recognize what hard-working Americans are doing every single day in this country and that we need to recognize what they do instead of just talking about it, when we are sent here by them and that card that they give us, which allows us to vote here, which is what we are supposed to do, is vote on the minimum wage, when there is clamoring in this country to do that and when we have one party that will just hold it up except for a few who split off, and I welcome their participation, I am not sure that they are welcome in their own ranks. But we welcome them because what we need to do here is in fact what the public has asked us to do, is to represent their interests.

I will tell you what some of my constituents say to me these days, why are you arguing back and forth. I will tell you that I think there is a fundamental difference in people who stand in this well, those people who believe we ought to have an increase in that minimum wage to reward hard-working Americans and those who truly do not believe that they should. There is some fear in that belief and the debate and the issue is worth fighting about. That is what this Nation stands for, what its values and what its priorities are. And its values have to do with working middle-class family values of work and personal responsibility and rewarding people to do that and not fighting it with every fiber of their beings and not saying that these families do not exist in this nation.

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman will continue to yield, when we see all of this concern all of a sudden about whether or not an increase in the minimum wage is going to contribute to inflation, when in fact at best what we would be doing is allowing people to partially catch up for purchasing power that they have lost, but I do not see that echoed when we see all of these other indices that are raising way ahead of inflation, CEO salaries, increased values in stock, stock options provided to people, apparently none of that contributes to inflation. The fact that people, that people have increased their earning power thousands of times.

Ms. DELAURO. Repealing the alternate minimum tax, which is something that they would like to do.

Mr. MILLER of California. So these people can escape taxation; they can have all of their deductions. But what we said was at the end of the day, you

pay something for the privileges of living in America. They have tried to repeal that. So even the wealthiest of people and corporations do not have to pay. But all of a sudden we are worried about whether somebody making $4.25, $4.30, $5 an hour, whether these people are going to be those who spark inflation. I think there is something wrong with the priorities of the people who suggest that, that somehow the culprits in this fight, these low income people who are doing in many instances some of the most difficult jobs in our society, in some cases some of the dirtiest jobs, some of those thankless jobs, some of the most tiring jobs, and we have all been in business institutions where we have looked at people who are much older than we are, who are still out there pounding, trying to stay equal in our society, working at the minimum wage, working there, trying to support their own children, trying to support themselves, and very often I am sure we have said, boy, I am a lot more fortunate than they are. But now all of sudden they are the bad people. They are the bad people in the war against inflation, somebody who is trying to catch up because they have lost their purchasing power, that that is going to ignite it.

I think the gentlewoman is right. It is fundamentally a different set of values about human beings, about the values of their work, about the value of their families, about the needs that these people have and the dignity that they are entitled to when they work as hard as they do and yet they still end up poor at the end of the year. We owe them better than that. I thank the gentlewoman for taking this time.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California. I would like to really close with what a great American President Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican President of the United States said. I quote, ''No man can be a good citizen unless he has a wage more than sufficient to cover, to bear cost of living so that after his day's work is done, he will have time and energy to bear his share in the management of the community to help in carrying the general load.''

Theodore Roosevelt, a great American President, said this. He was not a revolutionary but he did, in fact, understand progress and what it means.

I just finish by saying that it is time to assist working men and women in this country. Bring the minimum wage vote to this floor. Make it a clean vote and let people do what they sincerely believe ought to be done as to whether or not we ought to raise or not raise the minimum wage in this country.

In my view, it needs to be raised.

Mr. FRAZER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Congresswoman from Connecticut for holding this very important special order on the minimum wage.

Today, I want to join my colleagues in urging the Speaker to bring the minimum wage increase legislation to the floor for a vote.

Approximately 30 percent of the Virgin Island work force is employed in the service industry. A majority of these workers are adults who support families. It is very difficult to support a family on $4.25 an hour. The Virgin Islands is considered the American paradise, yet 36 percent of the population live below poverty.

Mr. Speaker we need a commonsense approach to solving our economic problems. If we can give small businesses 100 percent deductibility for health care, then we can raise the minimum wage by 90 cents.

I urge my colleagues to support raising the minimum wage, its good for small business, its good for workers and its good for the Nation.

## REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 175, FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996

Mr. DREIER, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 104–534) on the resolution (H. Res. 411) providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 175) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 1996, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

## MORE ON THE MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLLINS of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I take this special order to point out to the American people what we are going through, you just witnessed, here in the House. The liberal Democrats do not want to debate. They would not yield time even when they used a colleague's name and pulled out quotes of what a colleague has used on the floor. They did not even have the courtesy to debate that colleague because they know that they have taken the words of their colleagues and taken them out of context and twisted them.

They are not the points that the colleagues were trying to make. They know it. That is why they will not yield to us. That is why they will not debate us. All they are doing is calling for a vote on minimum wage, and they really do not care about entry level workers or the poor in this country because, if they did, they would really want to debate this issue. But they do not want to debate. They want to get up and talk and talk and talk and talk, misrepresenting everything that these Members are doing down here, and trying to allow the American family to take home more pay by getting big government and Washington Government out of their pocket.

Mr. Speaker, that is the way to help the American family in America, not some arbitrary Government-set wage and price controls that disrupts the market and actually puts people out of work and lowers the ability of people to create jobs, to put people to work.

I yield to the gentleman from California [Mr. DREIER]. I am very happy to yield to the gentleman from California. Unfortunately, the liberal Democrats do not want to debate the gentleman from California.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, let me say to my very dear friend that this is a historic moment for me. I wondered if at any point in my life anyone from the well would in fact yield time to me. So we have gotten to that point, and I would like to express my gratitude and say that I plan to use it briefly but, I hope, very wisely. It is unfortunate, as my friend said, that on the other side of the aisle that our colleagues refuse to engage in any kind of discussion on this issue. They want to simply embark on a monolog.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just take a couple of moments to respond to some of the preposterous claims that were made on the other side of the aisle. First let me offer a disclaimer and say that I concur with my friend who has worked long and hard on this issue that having a federally mandated minimum wage is in fact not a benefit to working Americans. In fact it is something that will jeopardize job creation and economic growth, something which we seek very sincerely.

During this special order I did not hear this but it was just written down by one of our crack staff members on the floor. Our colleague from Connecticut reportedly said their taxes keep going up but their wages do not go up.

The fact of the matter is we on this side of the aisle tried to help President Clinton comply with one of his campaign promises back in 1992 by giving him an opportunity to reduce the tax burden on working Americans. We all know what happened with that opportunity that he had. He chose to veto that legislation and prevent those working Americans who, and the gentlewoman from Connecticut is absolutely right, saw their taxes keep going up, prevent them from having the chance, the chance to have a reduction.

Mr. DELAY. Not only did the President veto tax cuts for the American family, the people that have been calling the loudest for a minimum wage voted against tax cuts for the American family.

Mr. DREIER. That is absolutely right. Those people who argue that their taxes keep going up are the ones who keep increasing their taxes as opposed to those of us who want to reduce that burden.

The other thing that I found to be preposterous is that my friend from California proceeded to say that we now see the minimum wage at the lowest level in 40 years. Assuming that you are a strong supporter of increasing the minimum wage, the last time the minimum wage was increased was in 1989, and it was increased to $4.25 an hour.