After years of determined and dignified struggle, the people of India finally gained their independence at midnight on August 14, 1947. That midnight hour, evoked by India's first Prime Minister Nehru in a stirring speech to the parliament, marked the beginning of an inspiring effort by the people of India to establish a republic devoted to the principles of democracy and secularism.

In the five decades since then, despite the challenges of sustaining economic development while reconciling her many ethnic, religious and linguistic communities, India has stuck to the path of free and fair elections, a multiparty political system, and the orderly transfer of power from one government to a successor.

Anyone who doubted India's lasting commitment to these values would have had to be converted into a believer in Indian democracy after witnessing the elections of the spring of last year in 1996. In what proved to be the largest exercise in democracy in world history, half a billion people voted to shape their country's direction heading into a new century.

The coalition governments that followed that election in the spring of 1996 have shown their commitment basically not only to democracy but also to representing the broad spectrum of the Indian population and continuing on the path of economic reform.

Although many Americans may not necessarily recognize it, there is a rich tradition of shared values between the United States and India. Just as the United States proclaimed its independence from the British colonial order, so was India born of the struggle for freedom and self-determination. India derived key aspects of its constitution, particularly its statement of fundamental rights, from our own Bill of Rights; and the Indian independence movement, under the inspired leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, had strong moral support from American intellectuals, political leaders and journalists.

In turn, Dr. Martin Luther King, in his struggle to make the promise of American democracy a reality for all of our citizens, derived many of his ideas of nonviolent resistance to injustice from the teachings of Gandhi. Thus, we see a clear pattern of Indian and American democracy inspiring and enriching one another at almost every historical turn.

I happen to be, Mr. Speaker, the founder and also now the cochairman of the Congressional Caucus on India, and I represent in my district in New Jersey one of the largest Indian-American communities in our country. I want to continue to work for stronger ties of friendship and cooperation between the United States and India, in part because we have such a legacy and we are the two greatest democracies.

It is an honor for me to pay tribute to India for 50 years of independence. I know there will be a number of events celebrating the 50th anniversary as we lead up to it in August over the next couple of weeks, some of them in Washington, some of them in almost every major city and a lot of other places in this country. So as we adjourn today in the House of Representatives, I think it is particularly fitting that we pay tribute to the 50th anniversary. Many of us will be joining in these celebrations over the next 2 weeks.

THE CONCLUSION OF A MOMENTOUS PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HUTCHINSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota [Mr. Thune] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to be here this evening at the conclusion of such a momentous process. For the first time in 30 years we have balanced this country's budget. For the first time in 16 years we are bringing tax relief to the hard-working men and women and families of this country, and we are saving Medicare for the next generation.

These things are so inseparable from my whole objective in being a part of this process and my desire to seek this position in the first place. It was on a fundamental level, because I believe in those values.

And what a difference a Republican Congress can make. These are our values. When we start talking about balancing the budget and lowering taxes and saving Medicare and reforming welfare, those are the things for which we have stood.

The reason we have succeeded today in a bipartisan way, with the support of a lot of Democrats in balancing the budget and lowering taxes and saving Medicare, is because the other side has also figured out that these things are consistent with the values that the American people hold. The reason we were able to succeed in doing this is because the American people, very clearly, sent a message that they believe in a balanced budget, that they want lower taxes, that they want smaller government, that they want more freedom at home. And for the first time in a generation, we are sending more power and control back to the people of this country.

So this is an historic day, and it is a privilege to be a part of this process and be here when all this happens. It is the fulfillment of a goal that many of us have had. And as we look at the progress that we have made in achieving those goals, this has to be the cap stone.

Think about what we have accomplished and what we did today for the first time in a long time. We can talk about the intricacies of tax law, but it is really about people and it is about giving them more control of their economic future. In this Congress we have committed ourselves to doing just that.

When we look at the tax cut and the relief that will go back, and I have likened this in many respects to trying to drive a MACK truck through a car wash, because the gentleman from Texas, Mr. BILL ARCHER, the chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means, and his colleagues on that committee, had an enormous and daunting challenge, and that is how to find some tax relief, how to take a small amount of revenue and make it go as far as we can in terms of bringing relief to the largest number of people in this country. I think they did that.

We could not afford to build a bigger car wash so we had to come up with a smaller vehicle, and yet the vehicle that we have has a tremendous number of things that will be important to the people in my State of South Dakota. I look at what this bill contains and I am delighted to be a part of this.

I think rural America will fare very, very well in the final analysis. There is death tax relief. My State of South Dakota consists primarily of small businesses and family farms, and we want to encourage people who are on the farm, people who are in those businesses to be able to pass those on to the next generation. This is an important first step.

There will be a health care deduction, deductibility for insurance premiums paid by self-employed people. That also is something that is very pro small business, very pro family farm. And a home office deduction for people who work out of their homes.

The capital gains tax relief. If someone sells a steer or a stock or a home, they will pay a lower rate. In fact, when they sell their home, and it fits within the criteria in this bill, they will not pay any capital gains tax. What a wonderful thing for the homeowners and the families of this country who are trying to pursue the American dream.

And of course education tax relief, the tax incentives that are in here to encourage young people, families, to get the higher education they need that will make us competitive and prepare us as we approach the 21st Century.

These are all things that help enable people to make the decisions that affect their daily lives, and it puts more freedom and more control, and it is a shift of power out of Washington, DC and back home. That is something for which I am, indeed, very, very proud.

If we look at where we have to go, this is an important first step. We have a long road ahead of us, but for the first time in a long time we have recognized how important it is that we take a portion of that which Washington takes from the hard-working people in this country and give it back.

I think there will be a lot of people taking credit for the way this bill has played out. We have heard a lot of discussion on the floor today about various components and parts of that, but take, for example, the family tax credit. The other side has claimed some amount of credit for that, but look at where that originated.

That was in the Contract With America in 1994 that the Republicans, before they were elected to Congress, signed on to. It is an important part of this final package, and it is something that will benefit a whole lot of families in this country, and I am glad that we were able to retain it in there.

We have started down a road on which we have a long ways to go before we reach completion in this battle, and one of the things that I hope to be a part of, as we continue that fight, is simplification of the Tax Code.

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One thing that we have done, if nothing else, we have, hopefully, at least started to lower the revenues and made Government smaller, the values that we believe in. But we still have an inordinately complex Tax Code which is in desperate need for simplification. And we have not done anything in this bill that in any way lessens the complexity in the tax bill.

So I hope that as we continue down the road that one of the priorities for this Congress, as we come back here in September, is to continue to bring additional tax relief, but also to come up with a Tax Code that makes sense to the American people who have to comply with that Tax Code. I am looking forward to being a part of that process.

Again, I want to thank my many colleagues who supported this bill today because it is an important first step and it is a critical step for the future of this country.

GRAND JURY PROCEEDINGS

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

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, earlier this week the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. DUNCAN], a good friend and distinguished Member of the Congress, on the floor of this body, charged that the ongoing Federal grand jury investigation of the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BURTON], chairman of the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, was a political prosecution and was brought because the chairman was trying to do his job. My colleague from Tennessee further accused the Attorney General of politicizing our system of justice.

I would like to examine those remarks for a few minutes to determine whether there is any foundation in these remarks. As the senior member of the Committee on the Judiciary, I have tried to follow the activities of the Department of Justice as carefully as I can, and I am trying to find where the Justice Department is politicized or whether it prefers, as has been alleged, to investigate and prosecute Republicans or in particular the chairman of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, the gentleman from Indiana Mr. BURTON.

The first thing I would bring to the attention of Members of the House of Representatives is that this Justice Department has prosecuted numerous Democratic Members, including Messrs. Rostenkowski, Reynolds, Bustamante, and Fauntroy.

And so, I am not sure whether it is fair or not to characterize the Department of Justice's conduct as politicized in the sense that the administration has acted in disregard of its legal obligation when the record to date is that the Attorney General has repeatedly exercised her discretion with very due diligence and has appointed repeatedly independent counsels to investigate prima facie allegations against this administration, its Cabinet officials, and others.

Now what kind of job the chairman of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight is doing is not in my province this evening. But we are well aware of the objections that the campaign finances and investigation, that the chairman of that committee is conducting has had some problems. I refer particularly to the fact that the general counsel of the committee, who submitted his resignation earlier this month, has indicated that his resignation was based on the fact that he was unable to implement the standards of professional conduct he was accustomed to at the U.S. attorney's office.

In any case, it is not important how well or poorly the chairman may be doing his job. Right now I am concerned about the allegations being raised in his defense, which challenge the integrity of the Department of Justice in this instance. And I would suggest that it is a leap of faith to believe that the coincidence of the chairman's investigation followed by a subpoena of his records mean that the subpoena is a consequence of his investigation.

I do not know the scope of the grand jury that it is alleged concerns itself with his conduct, nor may I be privileged to know the scope. And I would refer the gentleman from Indiana and the gentleman from Tennessee to the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, rule 6(e), which quite carefully says no attorney for the Government can disclose what the grand jury is doing. It is at page 36 of the 1997 edition of the Federal criminal code and rules.

For the same reason, I do not know what evidence, if any, prompted any subpoena the grand jury may issue of the grand jury matters are secret in order to protect the person under investigation. For that reason, the Department of Justice may not comment on the scope of its investigation, nor may it publicly justify the legitimacy of the subpoena or its scope.

But the chairman has a remedy, or his counsel. They may challenge the scope and appropriateness of the subpoena.

I would close by pointing out that the gentleman can file a motion to quash or modify the subpoena and indeed he can challenge the entire grand jury proceeding in the Federal district court in which these grand jury proceedings is brought.

WELFARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this has been quite a day. Sometimes in the heat of debate the clarity of what has been done has become more confused and a little less evident. So I think it is important today to clarify for the American people and for those who have worked so hard to drive the economic engine of this Nation to clarify for them that this legislation, this tax bill, this tax bill that was truly a creature of a bipartisan effort led by a President who never shies away from the Democratic principles that helped to elect him orchestrated.

It is a time, as well, to be able to applaud those who sat at the negotiating table and to recognize those of us who were soldiers on this floor who said that we would maintain the battle line to ensure that dignity would be given to those citizens who worked every day making $25,000 a year, $30,000 a year, $50,000 a year, and $75,000 a year.

It is important, however, that those of us who advocated that position, those Democratic principles for working men and women not be labeled as not understanding that it is business that adds to the economic engine, it is business which we foster under the capitalistic system that those around the world applaud and admire and try to emulate and imitate.

So it is important in this discussion to say a few things. One, it is valuable to acknowledge, as my colleagues have heard over and over again, the tax credit that will be given to families no matter what their income if it falls under, for example, $75,000. So a $20,000-a-year family making $8,000 maybe the spouse and $14,000 the other spouse, $22,000 they can get the tax credit for their children. The children of the working poor and working families are no less valuable than those making thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars. I am gratified for that.

We stayed on the battle line for that issue and it is very, very important. Then I would like to mention that I voted against the Republican welfare reform bill. Oh, not because I was not the advocate of all of those who want to raise themselves up, all the constituents in any district whose homes did not look as attractive as someone else, when I went to their homes and they were on welfare and they were dependent on public assistance. They said, ''I really want a job. I want to get out of this.'' But I was not going to vote for a bill that did not give child care, give job training.

And yet, now we have a tax bill that gives $3 billion to cities. We bypassed