

Because we have increased taxes so often on workers, this chart shows how many years you are going to have to live after you retire in order to get the money back you and your employer put in. If you retire after the year 2006, you have to live 26 years after you retire just to break even. It is a serious problem. We need to deal with it.

#### ON THE INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO ALLEVIATE THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WORKER SHORTAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow I will introduce a package of 5 bills to help our economy address the critical shortage in information technology workers. We are fortunate to live and work in a time of economic growth and expansion. Unemployment is low and production is up. But we cannot take these good times for granted. We have to continue to take those measures necessary to sustain our thriving economy.

One of the hazards that could derail our economic engine is a growing shortage of skilled workers. Too many firms across the country are facing serious difficulties in hiring workers with needed skills. This shortage, which has been estimated to be as high as 190,000 employees nationwide, is especially restricting the growth and development of our Nation's information technology industry, which is the vanguard of our national economic boom. This shortage of skilled workers is costing our economy over \$10 billion a year in lost revenue.

But high tech firms are not the only ones suffering from this workforce shortage. When asked about the main barriers to expansion and competitiveness, companies across the country in many different industries point to the difficulty of getting skilled workers.

While the current low unemployment rate contributes to this problem, its roots are more fundamental. In the new economy, skill requirements are going up in many industries, even so-called low-tech industries. More than half of the new jobs created require some education beyond high school. The percentage of workers who use computers at work has risen from 25 percent to 46 percent, nearly half, in the last 10 years. States such as Colorado, Maryland, Rhode Island, Washington have all recently released reports highlighting the pressing need of employers for skilled workers.

Standard supply and demand economics will not address this shortfall. Most firms, but particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, have limited capacity to engage in significant and sustained workforce development efforts. Managers and owners of most firms are simply too busy running

their business to develop training systems. Firms lack information on the type of training they need and where to get it. And, unless their competitors are willing to invest in training as well, such an investment will increase the relative cost of their products above that of their competitors.

So there is a natural inclination not to be the first ones to invest in training. And so when confronted with a shortage of skilled workers, most firms try to hire workers from other companies. Competition for skilled employees is so high that companies are offering irresistible packages, including signing bonuses, long-term bonuses, finder's fees, to lure trained employees away from firms who have invested the time and money to train them. Just across the Potomac River, SRA Technologies, a fine firm, a technology firm in my district, offers a \$10,000 bounty to employees for every trained worker who signs on as a result of their recommendation. But we are not increasing the supply sufficiently, which is the real long-term solution to this problem.

As the United States enters its unprecedented seventh year of growth, attributed in part to the dynamic expansion of the technology industry, Congress must move to remove barriers to technology industry expansion. My legislation addresses the worker shortage and the need to provide additional training through a number of approaches.

The first bill creates Regional Skills Alliances. Modeled after the successful Manufacturing Extension Program, this bill would provide Federal support to encourage companies to participate in consortia which would address their industry's specific skill needs. The Federal involvement in this program amounts to one-third of the cost. Every dollar in Federal support will be matched by a dollar in State and local government support and a dollar in direct industry support, so that the competitive pressure not to be the one to take the initiative on training is relieved.

The second provision allows the Secretary of Labor to establish Regional Private Industry Councils. PICs play a constructive role in addressing the workforce needs within a State. But these organizations are State organizations and not formed to address problems that may cross State lines. To remedy that situation, my legislation would allow the Secretary of Labor to certify and fund regional PICs that address regional problems. They would be funded directly by the Secretary of Labor to ensure that they do not detract from existing State programs.

The third bill would offer employers who train employees for information technology jobs a tax credit for 50 percent of the training costs up to \$2,500 per year per employee.

The fourth bill would ensure that the Federal Government's investment in training is well spent by allowing these

Private Industry Councils to reward bonuses to training providers with a high percentage of placement. This will help establish a more outcome-based system to ensure that training providers emphasize placing their students in jobs. My bill would amend JTPA to allow funds to be used for bonuses for the most successful training providers.

It would also allow high technology professionals to more easily immigrate to the United States so that we are not exporting jobs abroad but are paying American workers at home. It is a good and necessary package of legislation. I urge my colleagues' support for it.

#### TAX REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to suggest that we can increase take-home pay and improve retirement security in America by leading our country to a new level of freedom and opportunity for every American worker and taxpayer. I am not talking about raising the minimum wage. I am talking about reducing taxes further, especially on working-class Americans, those who are on modest incomes, those who have fixed incomes because they are wage earners and salaried workers. The first step in reducing taxes, as the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER), who preceded me here in the well, suggested, is to eliminate the marriage penalty in the Tax Code. Then we should go on to pass the Middle Class Tax Relief Act and the Taxpayer Choice Act, both introduced by the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE), which would have the effect of raising the income levels for the 28 percent tax bracket. That would put more working Americans in the lowest tax bracket, the 15 percent tax bracket, and for those who are already in the 15 percent tax bracket, we would increase the personal exemption. The effect again, more take-home pay for working-class Americans.

Let me be clear about one thing. I think I speak for almost all House Republicans when I say this. If the President has money for more social spending, then we have money for tax cuts. But also let me be clear about one other thing. That is we cannot have, we should not have, tax relief without real tax reform. We have to stop the IRS collection abuses. The best way to do that is to end the IRS as we know it. That is why I and many House Republicans have signed a pledge, a written pledge, and we have cosponsored legislation to sunset the Tax Code by the year 2001. This is a death sentence for the Tax Code and we hope would move the country in the direction of a fairer, a flatter, a simpler Tax Code and a tax system, one that is hopefully based on a single rate of taxation. But we do not have to wait until the year 2001. What

we could do right now is let taxpayers choose between paying a flat tax and the current system. You heard me right; they could simply, come tax day, choose whether to report their income and pay a flat tax on that income or to stay in the present system. We do not have to wait to 2001. That is the Washington way of studying things to death; it is called paralysis by analysis back here in Washington.

We could also and should also let taxpayers have the choice of investing a portion of their payroll taxes, their FICA contributions, into a directed IRA, an individual retirement account, so that they can earn a better return on their money than Social Security. To do that though we have to, as Mr. SMITH just has suggested here, we have to take the Social Security Trust Fund off budget once and for all. We have to let the trust fund stay in, the surplus rather, stay in the Social Security, let the surplus stay in the Social Security Trust Fund so that it will continue to accrue and compound interest.

We can do this. We can give workers a choice now again between a flat tax and the current system, between being able and having to put all their payroll taxes in Social Security or at least being able to put a portion in a directed IRA so that they can earn a better return than Social Security. The net effect is higher take-home pay, better retirement security and more freedom and opportunity for every American.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA).

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to represent the citizens of central Florida's 7th Congressional District. Our area and other central Florida communities were in the path of devastating tornadoes yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, while our residences, our businesses and our communities can and will be replaced, the lives of an unprecedented number of wonderful human beings has been lost forever. I would like to extend my heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends who have lost loved ones in this terrible natural disaster.

The people of my district are strong, determined, faith and family-oriented. They will rebuild, they will heal their wounds, but they will never forget that night or those lost.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to again see the wonderful people of my district in central Florida come together. I saw volunteers, law enforcement, emergency management personnel, utility workers, Red Cross representatives, private contractors, State and local and Federal officials and employees working together.

Mr. Speaker, I salute and pay tribute to the fine citizens of my State and district, and I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to my colleagues and others who have made expressions of concern and support during this difficult time.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 34 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 2 o'clock p.m.

#### PRAYER

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

We know, O gracious God, that in our lives and in our world we experience the contrasts of life. There are threats of war and promises of peace. There are moments of laughter and times of tears. There are seasons of love and occasions of disdain. There are instances of trust and others of suspicion. And yet, with all these feelings and attitudes, we have Your abiding word and Your reconciling peace.

As we walk through the uneven paths of our existence, may we rejoice and be glad that underneath are Your everlasting arms supporting us and making us whole. For these and all Your blessings, O God, we offer this prayer of thanksgiving. Amen.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. 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. 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.

#### SALUTING ILLINOIS BROADCASTERS AND BROADCASTERS ACROSS THE NATION

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, broadcasters across this Nation have a single mandate from the Federal Government, to serve the public interest in the communities where they operate. I am pleased that the Illinois broadcasters in my State do such an excellent job both on and off the air.

A recent survey conducted by the Illinois Broadcasters Association indicates that the average TV station in my State contributes over half a million dollars annually in air time for public service announcements and over 80,000 per radio station.

These stations are an integral part of small town USA and even create a sense of community in large cities. Local stations provide the news we depend on, the weather warnings we count on, and the public affairs programs which give viewers and listeners the opportunity to hear from their elected officials.

I salute the Illinois broadcasters in my district and the broadcasters across the Nation that do such a fine job day in and day out. America's system of free, over-the-air broadcasting has been on the job since the 1920s and still serves us well almost 80 years later. It is one thing we can all count on in the next millennium.

#### WE NEED ALLIED SUPPORT IN IRAQ

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, the American people are saying if military action is needed in Iraq, America should not do it alone, and the American people are right. The days of sending American soldiers overseas with a rifle on their shoulder and a credit card in their pocket just does not cut it anymore, Mr. Speaker, especially when many of our so-called allies sit on the sidelines and shout Yankee go home to boot.

Kofi Annan is to be commended for his efforts. It sounds good. But in any event, I think the wise words of Ronald Reagan apply here: Trust but verify; trust but verify.

But I will not, Mr. Speaker, support military action unless our allies are on the battlefield with us. We represent Uncle Sam; we do not represent Uncle Sucker.

#### PROTECTING SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. ROGAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, I was among hundreds of Republicans last month who stood and applauded President Clinton when he spoke in this Chamber I applauded because I thought he said that we should use any budget surplus to save "Social Security first." That is why so many of us vigorously applauded a position we thought he was taking. However, I have gone back and looked at his speech. What he actually said was we should "reserve" every penny of the surplus until we "save" Social Security.

What does that mean? We find out from the President's budget recently