Additionally, I find the timing of these charges to be extremely peculiar. The avalanche of charges about Judge Massiah-Jackson' record came several months after both her initial nomination and recommendation for appointment by the Judiciary Committee.

The bottomline, however, is that these charges are completely unfounded. According to a report from the Philadelphia Bar Association, Judge Massiah-Jackson actually imposed sentences above the Pennsylvania sentencing guidelines more frequently that most other Common Pleas Court judges. Actually, in her last year on the bench, Judge Massiah-Jackson was five times more likely than her peers to impose a sentence above the state guidelines. Tell me, ladies and gentlemen, how is this a soft record on crime?

The reality is that this woman's professional record has been destroyed on rumor, unsubstantiated allegations and misplaced accusations. But what can be done for her now? Can her good name ever be restored to its previous standing? Are there any measure of apologies that can be given to restore her dreams? Judge Massiah-Jackson would have been the first female federal judge ever to serve in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, but now where is her place in history, is it the place of honor that she deserved, or is it one of shame?

Furthermore, I am disgusted by the vast number of people that have ignorantly played a role in this great tragedy of errors. Too many people simply jumped on the bandwagon of attacks in this case without substantive evidence. Judge Massiah-Jackson, wherever you are, I send my deepest apologies to you and your family. And I hope that in the future, this horrible miscarriage of justice does not dissuade other qualified women of your stature from seeking the high judicial offices that their record has earned them. We must end the backlog and conscious scheme to deny Judges appointed by this Democratic Administration their fair hearing and confirmation. Denial of them is a denial of social justice and civil rights for many Americans. It must cease and desist now!

SEARCH FOR VALUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleagues that will be joining me this evening. It seems like every now and then, once perhaps in every lifetime, there is a sense of a movement on land, a movement of a Nation in search for things of greater meaning and of deeper meaning. I believe that is the case today. I believe America is searching for values that will work in the lives of their families and the lives of their children. I believe that value search that we see going on in America today is characterized accurately, as I like to characterize it, as a search for old ways of doing things.

I believe that it is up to us in a representative democracy to represent the very best of the people that we are privileged to represent and in doing that, it seems to me we must be in touch with these issues. We must be in touch with the search that we see among our Nation's people. So towards that end of better understanding, I have gathered together a group of Members who have been studying on this matter and we would like to devote the next hour to discussing these issues.

I would like to begin with the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS), who will talk about the moral principles as the foundation of a good society.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS).

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to begin a discussion with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), the House majority leader, on the importance of values to our Nation. I thank him for giving me the opportunity to speak today on this issue of vital importance for the survival of our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, moral principles are the foundation of a good society. It is a simple fact that our democracy, the greatest government in history, was founded in large part so that Americans could practice and maintain a strong moral code in their way of life. The first people to colonize this Nation did so for the freedom of religion, not freedom from religion, freedom of religion in order to freely follow a code of ethics to which they were firmly devoted. From the time of the Pilgrims we have associated the creation of America with the privilege and responsibility of applying moral principles.

Even the modern anti-tax movement can trace its roots directly back to a moral principle present in colonial times that every penny and every power that government gets comes at the expense of personal freedom and personal opportunity.

In fact, this principle helped spur the American Revolution.

Mr. Speaker, we have a founding document in this Nation, a birth certificate, if you will, called the Declaration of Independence. This declaration is different from many others that have been issued around the world. The primary difference is the preamble that distinguishes it from all other declarations of independence. This preamble has certain principles that I would like to mention. The fact that, and I would like to quote it, the fact that these principles are highlighted, I think, are instructive.

This is what it says: We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed and that whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness.

Now, that is not the whole preamble, but in that part of the preamble we see that these principles that we are endowed by our Creator, that all men are created equal and that we are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights, that these are God-given rights, rights not given to us by government, rights that the government cannot give and rights they cannot take away, they are God given rights and the purpose of government is to secure these God given rights, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

With rights also must come responsibility. Our Nation is built on the principle of liberty. Our government exists with our consent. We choose to augment, revise and improve our laws and the very structure of our government routinely. With this privilege comes a mandate that we tend to liberty with care and caution and prudence.

We have another founding document, the one that we all swear to support and defend. It is called the U.S. Constitution. And that Constitution is the oldest national Constitution in the world, the granddaddy of them all. And it begins with these words: We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

We the people, as one of the prime ministers who spoke to this Congress in past years said, the most important words in the English language, the most important three words, we the people. And in those days when kings were sovereign and people were subjects, to say that we the people are sovereign and we only give you the government certain limited powers, that we the people do ordain, was a revolutionary concept. Of course we know that our Republic, our constitutional form of government cannot work in a vacuum and it should not work in a back room. It requires citizens to be involved with their representatives in order to represent them adequately.

But when we take a look at other forms of government, we realize what a powerful and beneficial system we have. When other nations were created, the citizens were thought to be subjects. They were so much chattel from which the hierarchy could prosper, and around the world governments created just a few decades ago and some longer than that, centuries ago, forced men and women to be pawns for the state. The people live at the discretion of the government. But not in America. In America the government lives at the discretion of the people. As we see when we look around the world, our democracy truly is a blessing.

Now, it is easy to argue that things have run amok. We have too much taxation. We have an overly large Federal bureaucracy. We have an administration that takes power away from families. It is pretty clear that we have taken the benefits of democracy and used them to support bad policies. But it is not the system that is flawed. It has been a lax approach to following the moral principles which created this Nation and made it strong.

In 1776, in my home State of Pennsylvania, our State Constitution decreed in its preamble, and I quote, we the people of Pennsylvania, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of civil and religious liberty and humbly invoking his guidance, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

In that same period, the 18th century philosopher Montesquieu wrote, and I quote, the deterioration of every government begins with the decay of principles upon which it was founded. And in current times we have seen that very decay in our moral principles. We have stopped advocating biblical principles upon which this Nation was founded. Instead, we have adopted relativist stances which are far easier to defend, but which are far more difficult for the progress and security of our Nation. Thus we have seen the decay. We live in a society where infidelity is either glamorized in the media or accepted as benign and inconsequential by our politicians.

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Tonight, 4 out of 10 children who go to bed will go to bed in a home in which their father does not reside in America. Tonight, drug abuse is on the rise among our youth, and child crime is more prevalent today than at any other time in the history of our Nation. As we have walked away from the moral code which binds this Nation together, we see our society fraying at the edges. We must get back to those values that created our Union for the sake of our Union.

George Washington, our first President, was a man of great moral character. It was his capacity for self-discipline and willingness for service to the American Nation which ultimately allowed this Nation to be founded. George Washington said this, and I quote: ''We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of heaven can never be expected on a Nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained.''

Washington's message was clear: We as a Nation can thrive by the adherence to a fundamental moral code. It gave Washington the vision to lead us into the era of democracy. Conversely, as we have seen, we as a Nation can fall with the disregard of that code.

This Nation was founded on the premise that fidelity to God was honorable and ought to be encouraged, not hindered, by government. Sadly, we now have portions of the government fighting alongside elite liberal factions in order to portray faith in God as a radical, irresponsible act.

While the founding fathers used prayer as a guiding influence in their fight for freedom, we now hide behind false legal pretense to deny our responsibility to gain inspiration and direction from prayer. The first act of the very first Continental Congress in 1774 was to pass a resolution as they met in Carpenter's Hall.

They did not meet, the first Continental Congress, in the old statehouse in Philadelphia. They did not want to plot against the Crown on Crown property. They met next door in Carpenter's Hall, 57 men, and their first act was to pass a resolution calling on each session, every day, to begin with prayer, to be led by a local clergyman.

They had heard a false rumor that Boston had been cannonaded. The next day they invited the vicar of Christ Church in Philadelphia, the Reverend John Dushay, to come and lead the prayer. And in those days, when they had prayer, it was not like we have a 1- or 2-minute prayer, his session lasted over 2½ hours. He first read from Psalm 35. And if my colleagues will remember the rumor of Boston being cannonaded, and in the day of slow communication they did not know it was false, and so we can understand his reading.

And John Adams, who was there, wrote to his wife Abigail. There are a lot of letters that they exchanged. And he described this scene, and it is portrayed in a picture on the wall in Carpenter's Hall, if anyone visits there. He said, Washington and Rutledge and Lee, and he named some others on their knees; beside them the old gray pacific Quakers of Philadelphia; and then behind the old pacific Puritans of England, with tears in their eyes. And he ended, ''It was enough to melt a heart of stone.'' The first act of the first Congress on their knees in prayer. Something that might be a little foreign to us today.

But heroes like Washington, Adams and Lincoln used their lives to demonstrate their effort to respond to their responsibilities as men of faith. They fought for the concept of freedom with their demonstrations of honor and integrity, and, as a result, a great Nation was born, developed and survived great challenge.

Abraham Lincoln, during a time when our Nation struggled to recreate itself, affirmed his devotion to the core principles begotten by faith. He said, and I quote, ''Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity and a firm reliance on Him, who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulty.''

Our Constitution embodies core moral principles. It creates a system where individual effort and integrity are rewarded. In it, men are free to support those with similar moral convictions. It rewards those who incorporate their faith-based responsibilities of honesty, hard work, devotion, fidelity and charity. It works to create a system which works for and through morality and responsibility.

The founders of our Nation recognized the importance of faith and honesty in government, requiring officeholders to publicly swear an oath before assuming governmental responsibility. And this was not a simple act of pomp and circumstance. This was a declaration of a bond with their Creator. It was a demonstration that honesty and faith are prerequisites for governing.

According to Sir William Blackstone, who was the great jurist, and he was the one who wrote the commentaries that all lawyers back in those days studied to become attorneys, he said this: ''The belief of a future state of rewards and punishments, the entertaining just ideas of main attributes of the Supreme Being, and a firm persuasion that he superintends and will finally compensate every action in human life, all which are revealed in the doctrines of our Savior, Christ, these are the grand foundations of all judicial oaths, which call God to witness the truth of those facts which perhaps may be only known to Him and the party attesting. All moral evidences, therefore, all confidence in human veracity must be weakened by apostasy, and overthrown by total infidelity. Wherefore, all affronts to Christianity, or endeavors to depreciate its efficacy, in those who once professed it, are highly deserving of censure.''

Mr. Speaker, the freedom to which we owe so many is a direct result of adherence to divinely inspired moral values. These values made us a great Nation. And as we have recently seen, there is an inverted relationship between our Nation's success and its rejection of traditional values. The further we avoid making the tough choices of honesty, fidelity, honor, self-reliance and the incorporation of our faith into our daily lives, the further we slide down the path of relativism.

As we face a new millennium, we must work to come back to those principles. Our Nation cannot afford to slide much further. Redemption can come from reacquainting ourselves with these morals, but this action must occur soon. For the sake of our Union, we cannot wait.

I thank the gentleman for letting me participate tonight and yield back to him.

Mr. ARMEY. I thank the gentleman for his participation. And, Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) has set the stage for us. We have a Nation that was founded on the highest of moral principles and faith, as, in fact, expressed and practiced by our Founding Fathers.

And while we all know that we cannot by law make a Nation good, I think it is a very clear fact that if a Nation is to legislate law that reflects the best

of its people, it can do so, and, in doing so, it can encourage those traits of human conduct and behavior, value, morality and belief that are of greatest service to a Nation.

With respect to these questions, of how we might legislate in such a way to be an encouragement to our citizens, we are privileged to have with us tonight the distinguished whip, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TOM DELAY), who has studied these issues, and studies them well, as we apply them to his critique of legislative offers that come before the body and the decision-making process by which we determine what legislation we should bring forth.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I yield to my distinguished colleague.

Mr. DELAY. I thank the distinguished majority leader, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the gentleman for bringing this special order that I think is so important, particularly in the beginning of this session of Congress.

I really appreciate the presentation done by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS). For all of those in the Nation today that are talking about the fact that character does not matter or that what one does in their private life has no affect on their public life, I hope they will go back either to the Internet or to their library and pick up tomorrow's CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and read the presentation by the gentleman from Pennsylvania, because he so eloquently points out the foundation of values to our country and their importance.

I really appreciate this opportunity to join my colleagues and the majority leader this evening in this very, very important discussion. And as we are talking, a friend of the majority leader's and mine is somewhere in the Capitol leading a tour of this Capitol, a gentleman that is vice president of the Texas Republican Party and a fellow by the name of David Barton, who is the symbol of values, particularly Texas values, that represents what we are trying to say here tonight. We are very appreciative to have him here.

I have been asked to discuss with the American people, Mr. Speaker, our legislative agenda and how it reinforces our family values. But we have to first ask the question what are family values? And according to the dictionary, the definition of a value is something intrinsically valuable and desirable.

Now, most Americans believe that a strong family structure is intrinsically valuable and desirable. This is not a new belief. Indeed, an ancient philosopher once said, the root of the state is in the family. And likewise, the root of the United States lies in the families of the United States. But for too long the family structure has been under attack. It has been under attack from many different quarters.

Today's culture all too often designates the family as the building block of our civilization. As the gentleman from Pennsylvania points out, divorce rates continue to climb in this country. Child abuse and neglect has become a national epidemic in this country. Drug abuse tears families apart. And the government has become, in many ways, an unwitting accomplice in the process.

The government continues to take more money from middle-class families in the form of taxes and regulations. If we add up local, State and Federal taxes and the cost of regulations, today the average American family is forced to fork over more than 50 percent of its income to the government. That means 50 cents out of every dollar that a family makes today goes to the government.

No wonder it takes one parent to work for the government while another parent works for the family. This puts additional pressure on a two-parent family, and all too often one parent is forced to work to pay off the government while the other works to support the family.

That money pays for two unnecessary things: One is a bloated Washington bureaucracy, and the other is a misguided welfare state that creates a culture of dependency that quite often undermines the family structure in many of our most fragile communities.

We have taken the first step to reverse this process. In the last Congress we reformed the welfare state to give families a hand up rather than a handout. And that welfare law has been a great success. In fact, there are fewer people on welfare today than there were in 1970, and I think that is quite an accomplishment. But we must not rest.

We are committed as a majority in this House to creating conditions that support strong family structures in all our communities. Our legislative agenda has five components:

First, we want to reduce the government burdens put on our families; and we want to eliminate things like the marriage penalty in our Tax Code. Our Tax Code actually has an incentive for divorce. I just feel that that is so ridiculous, and we are going to change it.

Our current labor laws also make it difficult for workers to substitute vacation hours for additional pay. If a mother or father wants to spend more time with their children in lieu of cash, that should be their choice, not the choice of some Federal Government.

We want to give more choices to parents for child care. We want seniors to have more choices for their retirement security. Giving families more choices and ending government policies that take away those choices is a very critical part of our family-friendly agenda.

A second pillar of this agenda comes with our efforts to improve education. Some of our Nation's public schools are getting better and better every day, but many others are getting worse. Parents need to have that option to send their kids to good schools. Good schools are accountable to parents. They maintain discipline. They use their resources wisely. Providing parents with school choice and making those schools face competition are innovative ways to improve education in this Nation.

The majority leader, who is standing here, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), has been a vocal proponent of a D.C. scholarship program that will give parents more choices in this beleaguered school system in Washington, D.C.

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Now the President has an opportunity by signing this legislation to help at least 2,000 underprivileged kids in the D.C. area to have access to a better education. Making certain that more dollars go to the classroom rather than to Washington education bureaucracy is another important way we can improve education.

My colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS), has introduced a bill that does just that. Under committee consideration right now, the Dollars to the Classroom Act block grants 30 Federal education programs and requires that at least 95 percent of those funds go straight to the place that they are needed most, at the kids in the classroom.

We will also be working on providing middle-class parents with a tax-free education IRA. This will give parents the ability to save for their kids' grammar school and secondary school education. I think these are fitting ways to show our commitment to an improved education.

A third pillar of our family-friendly agenda involves the war on drugs. Congressman DENNY HASTERT from Illinois, working with Congressman ROB PORTMAN of Ohio and other Members in our conference, has designed a strategy to put some teeth in our war on drugs. We must not lose another generation to violence and drugs. We need aggressive enforcement of our drug laws, we need better interdiction at our borders, and we should build on the innovative efforts of faith-based programs that have been successful in ending drug addiction.

Protecting the sanctity of life is the fourth pillar of our pro-family agenda. The President vetoed legislation that outlawed the barbaric partial birth abortion procedure. That was a shame. Because, as Senator MOYNIHAN from New York put it, this procedure is very close to infanticide. We will work to override that veto this year, later on this year.

The culture of death that surrounds partial-birth abortion and assisted-suicide laws must be stopped. We should also stop government funding for groups that promote abortions abroad, and we should be exporting policies that celebrate life, not policies that promote death.

The final pillar of this values-based agenda comes with protecting people of faith in America and across the world. All too often people of faith are oppressed and condemned rather than respected and welcomed.

One example, of course, is in China. They have persecuted Christians, they have torn down churches, and they have imprisoned peace-loving pastors who only want to promote the gospel. We should continue to put pressure on the Chinese and other governments that practice religious persecution to allow more religious freedom.

We should also end policies in America that unfairly discriminate against people of faith. The courts have changed our Constitution by distorting the original intent of the First Amendment. The First Amendment to the Constitution says, and I quote, Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

There is no separation of church and state in that statement. That does not mean that the Founding Fathers wanted us to ignore God or to forbid our children to pray. We believe that children should be allowed to pray in our schools. We should talk about the moral basis of our Government. We should be allowed to post the Ten Commandments in Federal buildings.

Moses looks down on this Chamber every day. Right over that door, I am looking at the face of Moses; and he gazes down at the Speaker's chair. We open each of our sessions with a prayer to God. We should not allow the judicial branch to stamp out religious expression in other areas of the government.

My colleague the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) has introduced a religious freedom amendment that reestablishes the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience, and it has been reported out of committee and should see floor action in this session.

So let me just conclude by saying that some liberals have called us the ''do-nothing Congress,'' and maybe we are the ''do-nothing-they-like Congress.'' But we are a busy Congress, doing the things that support the values of this country, the values that have built this country. And it is wrong to call us a ''do-nothing Congress.'' We are working on a value-based agenda that will strengthen families into the next century.

I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) for yielding me the time.

Mr. ARMEY. I thank the gentleman for his comments. I so much appreciate his hard work and his clearly focused understanding on what is indeed of value to the American people.

Mr. Speaker, we are blessed by our creator with certain inalienable rights. Certainly, liberty and personal freedom is the greatest blessing of all; and our Government should be protective of that freedom. But I think anyone who is clear and judicious in the understanding of freedom understands that we really can only be free if we purchase that freedom through the exercise of personal responsibility.

Tonight we have with us Congressman J.D. HAYWORTH of Arizona, who has studied on this matter a great deal and wants to share with us some of his reflections on the relationship between freedom and responsibility. At this time, I yield the floor to my colleague from Arizona.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished majority leader.

Mr. Speaker, as we spend time together here in this Chamber tonight and by extension electronically with citizens of this great Nation from coast to coast and beyond, one cannot help but remark on our proud heritage and our history. And I would thank very much not only the majority leader but our colleague from Pennsylvania, where so much of the early history of this Nation took place, and the distinguished Majority Whip for offering his thoughts as well.

Indeed, as the Whip explained, Mr. Speaker, from the vantage point of the Speaker's chair we can see the visage of Moses represented here in this Chamber looking down on these proceedings. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, above the chair where you sit are inscribed the words, ''In God we trust.''

So tonight, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues and fellow citizens, it is important to reaffirm what it is we believe, to stand and celebrate the notion that we are free in this constitutional republic to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience.

Indeed, citizens are free to choose not to worship God. But even as we acknowledge that freedom, we must also acknowledge that tremendous history and tremendous responsibility that is inexorably part of the American experience. Here we stand free to express our ideas, our convictions, our philosophies in this Chamber; and citizens around the country are doing it I think tonight in a City Council meeting in Flagstaff, Arizona. Similar meetings may be going on in Fargo, North Dakota, or in Philadelphia, the cradle of our liberty, as our colleague from Pennsylvania pointed out. And undergirding all these notions are firm and solid principles.

I could not help but reflect, as I heard our colleague from Pennsylvania offer his historic observations, of the actions involving our Founders, not only the actions taken to win our independence but subsequently the actions taken at that constitutional convention at what became Independence Hall, actions that were so incredible Catherine Drinker Bowen called the entire proceeding in her great and definitive work the ''Miracle at Philadelphia.'' And from that heritage and from those principles springs the deep convictions of our citizenry.

Polls can never take the place of principles, and yet polling information offers insight into the psyche and indeed the souls of America. And in stark contrast to some of the polling results that have been offered by various media outlets in recent days, there are important things we can see from surveys taken across our country.

A Terence survey reports that 71 percent of Americans polled in this Nation believe that our Nation confronts a moral crisis. Contrast that with only 16 percent of Americans believing there is an economic crisis. So, indeed, even as there are times of economic plenty, citizens of this country are concerned that there are problems with the morality and the fealty and the convictions which we attempt to affirm and uphold each day.

Pew Research Center suggested that a decline in moral values was the top problem facing our Nation, three times higher than economic insecurity.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, as we come and we celebrate our diversity in the fact that many of us celebrate and worship God according to many different traditions, I know that many of us pray for the wisdom of Solomon, that we might, in taking on these constitutional responsibilities, understand that with freedom comes those responsibilities. And indeed, those unique circumstances the constitutional republic offers us in this role in this Chamber are mirrored by responsibilities that belong to each and every citizen. Other speakers have bemoaned the fact that four out of 10 children in America tonight will go to sleep in a home where their father is not present.

Our distinguished Whip reaffirmed legislative priorities that help affirm the principles that have made this Nation great. We can see this not only in remembering and holding in reverence the words of our Constitution but also on the Nation's bookshelves, as so many Americans seek out supplements, if you will, to scripture on the notion of spirituality.

Annual sales of religious books has topped $1 billion in this Nation in 1997. The sales increase of these items grows at a dramatic pace, nearly 100 percent over the last 3 years. Indeed, the best-seller that remains number one on every list in this great country remains the Holy Bible. Last year, nearly 30 million Bibles were sold in the U.S., far dwarfing the sales of any other book in our Nation's history.

Indeed, as we stand and celebrate that fact, we cannot help but note that, in this world, as others begin their business day, indeed, across the dateline, as others live in another day temporally, sadly there are areas in this world where that very freedom to pick up Holy Scripture is abridged, where that notion is denied. How more remarkable, then, is this great constitutional republic.

Indeed, even as Americans are concerned about a moral crisis, there are signs that America in general, from Main Street to Wall Street, seeks the help of the supreme creator.

In new technology, matters of faith are leaping to providence. On the Internet, the Christianity on-line web page is named as one of the most popular web sites on America Online.

In my former profession of broadcasting, we have all witnessed the phenomenal success of Dr. Laura

Schlessinger who has taken to the airwaves to reaffirm the simple notions of faith and family and fealty to those principles which made us great and to the responsibilities engendered in taking on fatherhood, in taking on marriage, in taking on a leadership position, not only at home but in a fellowship of faith or in a business or, dare I say it, in a position within government.

Mr. Speaker, I have learned a lot in traveling the width and breadth of the Sixth Congressional District of Arizona, an area in square mileage roughly the size of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A message continues to come from my constituents, many of whom had forbearers who came to what was a relatively desolate place at one point in our history, folks with the help of technology and faith literally made the desert bloom. It has given flower to freedom but, with that, a notion that is not peculiar to the West but reaffirmed there that with freedom comes responsibility, and those responsibilities we dare not shirk.

The other note I have heard, Mr. Speaker, from my constituents is this notion that while there are those who say you cannot legislate morality, it is also true that you cannot exercise moral leadership without a firm foundation of moral authority. So that is what we seek.

Even as we celebrate the differences in our religious expressions and backgrounds, even as we celebrate the fact that we will not all speak with one voice on every issue when we come into this Chamber or stand in this well or cast a vote on behalf of those we represent, but we give thanks for the opportunity to be here to be able to worship according to the dictates of our own conscience, to discuss these matters freely and openly, and to have the opportunities to see that we can address the so-called moral crisis with a commitment to seek wisdom, with a commitment in the words of the prophet Micah to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

With that, I yield back to our distinguished majority leader.

□ 2030

Mr. ARMEY. I thank the gentleman for his contribution. It is truly appreciated. Mr. Speaker, we will follow up the distinguished gentleman from Arizona with the distinguished gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT), who will give us further reflections on this subject.

Mr. TALENT. I thank the majority leader for yielding to me. It is always hard to follow my friend from Arizona.

Mr. Speaker, we are a country that has been blessed with great prosperity. With our affluence has come more choices for all the American people. The more choices we have, the more important it is to exercise responsibility along with our freedom. Mr. Speaker, the law does not directly legislate responsibility typically. It does not require directly that you engage in moral activity. It just says you cannot engage in activity that hurts other people. There is no reason why the law should do that. Typically there are very important consequences that follow socially if you do exercise these choices in an irresponsible or an immoral way.

There is no law, Mr. Speaker, against lying. If you lie too much, you are going to find yourself without any friends. There is no law against borrowing too much. But if you do, you typically end up losing everything. The problem is not that our laws do not, except in very limited areas, legislate responsibility along with freedom; the problem is in the last generation or so, we have allowed government policies to develop that actually detach responsibility from freedom, that actually seduce people into exercising their freedom in a way that is irresponsible because it at least holds out the prospect of immunizing them from the natural and normal consequences that typically follow from making bad choices. We see that in a lot of areas of the law.

The criminal justice system over the last generation developed in a way that tended to treat criminals as if they were the victim and so sent the messages to young people that they were not responsible for their behaviors, that if they did wrong it was because they were the victim of an unjust society. The tax system that punishes savings and investment by taxing it tends to reward people who consume and spend everything that they earn.

And then the subject, the area that I want to discuss tonight very briefly, Mr. Speaker, the welfare system, which is perhaps the best example we have of a system that over the years made it harder and harder for decent people to live honest, responsible lives. Today we are living and they are living with the consequences of that system. Mr. Speaker, in the immediate postwar era in the late 1940s, the poverty rate in this country was around 30 percent. It declined steadily for the 20 years following that until 1965 when it reached 15 percent. It was at that point that the Federal Government declared war on poverty. The Federal Government decided that it was going to help poor people in this country, a natural and good impulse. But it did it by providing the wrong incentives.

Mr. Speaker, there are two programs, if you will, two things that typically over the generations have gotten Americans out of poverty, that has gotten my parents out of poverty, that gets people out of poverty or got their parents out of poverty, because, Mr. Speaker, almost everybody in America either grew up poor or had a parent who grew up poor or at least had a grandparent who grew up poor. So this is not something that most people are not familiar with. Those two things that tend to get people out of poverty the quickest in this country are work and family, typically marriage. The Federal Government decided in 1965 that it was going to condition a very substantial package of assistance on people doing neither of those things, a package of assistance that grew until it reached $8,000 to $15,000 a year in cash and other kinds of benefits, an amount of money that seems very, very large to a person coming from a low income background. What the government said in effect to people was, ''Look, if you don't work, if you get married without having children, we will provide you with a large package of assistance.'' And so we effectively changed the behavior that people would otherwise engage in. If people wanted to get out of poverty in the way my parents did it, that is the way that requires a lot of faith, a lot of work, a lot of long-term thinking, a lot of responsibility. You have to decide that in America, you can make it out by working, make it out by staying in school as long as you can, make it out by raising a family after you have married someone who has made a commitment to doing that. That is one alternative that was available to people from lower incomes. Then the other alternative the government was offering was, ''Now, wait a minute, you can have an apartment of your own, you can have health care, you can have food stamps and you can have walking around money. All you have to do is not get a job and have a child without being married.''

Then we were surprised at the results, Mr. Speaker. The poverty rate in 1965 when the Federal Government declared war on poverty was 15 percent. In 1995, 30 years later, it was still 15 percent. Only we had changed the poverty from something that was transient, that typically went away after a generation, to a situation where people were mired in dependence on the government without the family or neighborhood support that had made it possible for them to get out of poverty. What we got was not a decrease in poverty but a vast increase in the out of wedlock birthrate, from about 6 percent in 1965 to about 32 percent in 1995.

What a sad thing, Mr. Speaker. I talk very often to teen moms. What a sad thing, because if you are 16, 17, 18 years old, you have had a child, you are not married, you have not finished school, you do not have any family support, well, then you really are not going to get out of poverty very quickly probably, and it is heroic that so many young people are trying, notwithstanding the incentives in this system. They wake up after a couple of years and realize that what they were seduced to do is a dead end.

We changed that with an act in 1996 that was aptly called the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996. We are already experiencing the good consequences of that as caseloads around the country are dropping on average 20 to 25 percent, something that has not happened in the postwar era. The system, Mr. Speaker, was such that as my friend

the majority leader said one time, ''We need to reform welfare, not because people on welfare are abusing the system but because the system is abusing people on welfare.''

Let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that that bill should be a model of what we try and do and in fact have done in other areas. We have reformed substantially the incentives in the criminal justice system. We have made a start in changing the tax system. We need to continue linking once again the law to responsibility, linking once again the responsibility that people normally have for the decisions that they make. That is the way to rebuild America. That is what we are trying to do here. That is the new consensus that is emerging in Washington. Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to declaim on this subject for a few minutes.

Mr. ARMEY. I thank the gentleman again. Mr. Speaker, here we are. We have had a pretty decent, as we like to say, truck driver's review of a lot of the things very important to the American people. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) came in earlier and talked about the founders of this great Nation, how they were governed by faith, born mostly from our Judeo-Christian traditions; how serious were such words as honor, duty, dignity, respect, decency, morality, ethics, truthfulness, and how much that was the foundation on which this great Nation was built. We have had some look at the character and the nature of the American people. For all our foibles, Mr. Speaker, we really have not as a Nation strayed that far from those wonderful, courageous, devoted, dedicated people that founded this great Nation. We are still fundamentally good people, and we are still fundamentally people that depend upon rules of law and rules of governance around which we might organize ourselves and our personal lives and our relationship to one another. We do look to the government. Then it comes to some of us to be part of the government.

I was struck today, I had for me an incredible privilege. I actually was able to substitute for the Speaker of the House today in the business of swearing in a new Member of our body, 435 people, all of whom are given a trust, a sense of responsibility, a certain amount of confidence and faith and expectation placed in each and every one of us. I suppose maybe we do not stop and think back about how big a deal that is in our lives and how big it can be in the lives of others who have trusted us. I am sure the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) did today on this day of her first day of work as a Member of the Congress of the United States, charged with the responsibility of writing law.

I think what we must do is ask ourselves, what is our responsibility? Who are we and what are we doing here? We look for examples. We in Texas, for example, like to cite our favorite Speaker Sam Rayburn, a man of great sage advice. We read the history books and we know of other great Speakers. We know of other great Members. We have read Profiles in Courage and we all hope that someday we might be included in the same way. But how do we decide the model that will govern us? What a difficult thing to reconcile the authority and the responsibility placed in us with the fact that what it is we are responsible for is to writing the law by which a Nation of free people will govern itself.

It begins, I believe, with our first knowing the goodness of the American people and first committing ourselves to represent the best of the American people, not their fears and not their doubts and not their reservations or their jealousies or their envies or their angers, but what is truly the best of their hopes and their dreams, their abilities, their contributions, their citizenship and, yes, indeed, their faith. So we look for examples. It is not enough, I believe, for us to be here and be satisfied that the work we do is good. I think we must go beyond that and conduct ourselves in our own personal life either on the job or off such that others that look to those of us that were given this responsibility and this privilege and yes, this authority, will see in us an example of someone that is good, that is at once an example that can be held up before your children and at the same time an encouragement to those children to live out in their lives the best of all that goodness that was placed in each and every one of those precious children by a wonderful God and Creator who had the generosity to create us after His own image.

So where do we look? Let me suggest that we look to that Creator, that most wonderful Creator who must have had his frustrations, do you not suppose, with the children of Abraham, as we read in the Old Testament, as they wandered and they struggled and they were serving and they vacillated between faith and doubt? How many times do you suppose they let their God and their Creator down with their inability to understand or their inability to accept or their inability to practice in their own lives a disciplined faith? Yet He never left them. How many times have we said, you and I, in our own childhood and we have heard it from our own children, have we not, ''Well, if God is so powerful, why doesn't he just stop me from doing those things?''

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So if I was bad, it must be his fault. But that is what freedom is all about, is it not, giving us both the freedom to do, to choose, and the responsibility that goes with it.

As I read in the Old Testament about the struggle and the search of the children of Abraham and the expressions of hope by their God and their Creator, our God and our Creator, I am struck by something. The Lord God Almighty looked down on these people searching for a way, and He said, I hope My children will know My laws and obey them so things will go well for them. He did not say, so that they would know My power and know My authority and know I am in command here. His hope was about His children, that they would know His laws and obey them so things would go well with them.

Lord God Almighty did not give us many laws, Mr. Speaker. He gave us a lot of helpful suggestions, many of which can be found in Proverbs, my favorite book of the Bible. So many helpful suggestions, but very few laws. It should not be hard for us to remember them. But Lord God knew His people. He knew the goodness that was in these people. He knew their needs, and He wrote only those laws that were necessary so that a free people, knowing his laws and obeying them, would find that things would go well for them.

Maybe, Mr. Speaker, as we practice the authorities and the responsibilities and the privilege granted to us by people that have elected us to these positions, maybe someday if we are successful, we can draw from that model; we can look back on our careers, we can look at the way we have conducted ourselves as an example before others, and hopefully, as an encouragement before others, and look at our legislative record, and maybe we can say, I hope my children know and obey my laws so things will go well for them. And perhaps, if we can have any confidence, we might in some way emulate that wonderful kindness and great charity given to us by a God who is of such generosity that He would create us humble beings in His own image.

It is a serious matter we have discussed here this evening. We have not done justice to it. We find ourselves leaving this hour's discussion, even after the wonderful contributions given by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS); the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH); the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT); and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), and my own meager offering here, probably with more questions than answers. But are they not great questions, Mr. Speaker? Questions about the goodness of a people in a land that was created by people to do honor to the greatest gift of all, the gift of freedom from Lord God Almighty, our Creator.

CONTINUING STATE OF EMERGENCY IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURR of North Carolina). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the continuing state of emergency in African American education. I have come here many times to