ASKING THE PRESIDENT TO PUT ASIDE PARTISAN DIFFERENCES AND WORK WITH CONGRESS ON BEHALF OF AMERICAN PEOPLE

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, we all know President Clinton is coming to this Chamber tonight to deliver his last State of the Union address. As we all await with great anticipation what he will say and what he will propose, I would like to mention a few items I hope he will emphasize.

The House Republican leadership wrote to the President this week asking that he discuss three specific initiatives. I would like to echo their call to the President to, first, join us in protecting 100 percent of the Social Security Trust Fund; second, detail how he will pay off the public debt by 2013; and, third, sign meaningful and responsible tax fairness into law and do not propose higher taxes or more burdensome user fees.

If the President can address these items and resist the temptation to propose new spending programs that increase the size and scope of the Federal Government, then his speech will be well received by Congress.

Tonight is a major opportunity for cooperation, not confrontation. I hope the President will work with us this year on behalf of the American people and put aside partisan differences.

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TAKE UP UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF 1999 AND PREPARE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES FOR 21ST CENTURY

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, over the past 7 years, we have made significant progress in creating jobs, creating a budget surplus, and expanding opportunity. We now have the historic and unique opportunity to prepare for the future and to bolster American families.

Let us strengthen Social Security and Medicare for future generations, including a prescription drug benefit for all Medicare beneficiaries.

Let us provide tax cuts that eliminate the marriage penalty, help working and middle class families afford health care, child care, and a college education, enact HMO reform that puts medical decisions in the hands of the doctors and patients, and allows people to hold their HMOs accountable.

Let us improve our schools, modernize our classrooms, reduce class size, and increase discipline and standards in our school. Let us pass gun safety reforms and keep guns out of the hands of kids and criminals.

These are sensible proposals. They have bipartisan support. Let us take up the unfinished business of 1999, make good decisions for the long term, and prepare our families and our communities for the 21st Century.

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FCC VIOLATES FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, it turns out that during the Christmas holiday season, when not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse, the Federal Communications Commission violated America's freedom of religious expression.

You see, the FCC on December 29, last year, concluded that in order for noncommercial educational television stations to retain their licenses, stations must devote 50 percent of their programming hours to shows that are educational and cultural. However, the FCC decided that ''statements of personally held religious views and beliefs'' could not qualify as educational or cultural.

Thus, broadcasts of religious sermons, simply the sermon, and church services, according to the FCC, would have no educational or cultural significance and would not count towards the 50 percent obligation.

As a result, I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the ''Religious Broadcasting Freedom Act,'' which reverses this decision.

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ACT AS AMERICANS WITH FAMILY VALUES; RETURN ELIAN GONZALEZ TO HIS FATHER AND GRANDMOTHERS

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I do not have a prepared text this morning, and I would really rather be discussing the issues that this Congress needs to address for the American people, school construction, the idea of a Patients' Bill of Rights, and opportunities for Americans who have less than many of us. But having spent over 2 days with the grandmothers of Elian Gonzalez, today I come simply to plead to America and to plead to this Congress.

As the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims, I simply ask, as a mother and as a parent, let us all put the angst of divisiveness aside and let us rule not with our political interests but with our hearts and ask ourselves, if it was us, our child, our grandchild, how would we want a Nation, a government to respond.

Mr. Speaker, we should not move on the citizenship legislation or the permanent residency. We should act as Americans who believe in family values. Return Elian to his grandmothers and his father.

A REAL BALANCED BUDGET MEANS DEBT WILL NOT INCREASE

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

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, it is important that the American people understand tonight, when we will hear the President brag about a balanced budget and paying off the debt, what is really involved. For the American people to understand that, the press has got to start understanding what a balanced budget is and the fact that our total debt of this country, the public debt of this country, is going up every year.

The suggestion is that we simply increase our borrowing from Social Security to reduce the so-called Wall Street debt. The current debt to this country, as defined in law, is $5.72 trillion. It is important that everybody understand we are not going to have a real balanced budget until the total debt of this country does not continue to increase.

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SUPPORT RELIGIOUS BROADCASTING FREEDOM ACT

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

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, it is a cold day in Washington, but the chill is on religious broadcasters. A word to the Members: If one has a religious broadcaster or people who listen to religious broadcasters in one's district, their rights have been compromised. The rights are less than they were in 1999 because of an FCC decision on the Cornerstone license swap in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Since this order, traditional religious programming can no longer be counted toward the 50 percent educational programming requirement that must be met by those who would hold noncommercial television licenses.

Basically, the FCC wants less religion and more of what it considers educational on the noncommercial airways. The majority of commissioners apparently want religious broadcasters to look more like PBS.

My office has received hundreds of e-mails and telephone calls from people who want to protest this decision. I know many other Members have been contacted, and I want to invite all the Members to cosponsor the bill, the Religious Broadcasting Freedom Act. Join me and over 50 cosponsors already to protest the FCC's efforts to limit religious programming.

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RHETORIC DOES NOT ALWAYS SQUARE WITH REALITY

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