The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Chair's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE HONORABLE NEIL ABERCROMBIE, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable NEIL ABERCROMBIE, Member of Congress:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 3, 2000.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: This is to formally notify you, pursuant to Rule VIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, that a staffer in my Honolulu, Hawaii district office has been served with a trial subpoena for testimony, directed to me and issued by the U.S. District for the District of Hawaii.

In consultation with the Office of General Counsel, I will determine whether compliance with the subpoena is consistent with the precedents and privileges of the House.

Sincerely,

NEIL ABERCROMBIE.

END THE MARRIAGE PENALTY

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, nearly a half century ago, Albert Einstein said that the hardest thing to understand in the world is the income tax. Since then, our income tax system has not gotten better; it has gotten worse.

Today, American taxpayers, including myself, just cannot understand why married couples must pay more in taxes simply because they are married.

Mr. Speaker, in my home State the marriage tax penalty robs over 290,000 Nevadans every April 15. While I welcome the President's support for marriage penalty relief, his proposal simply does not go to the heart of the problem. His proposal fails to help all of America's hard-working couples.

The Republican plan will provide over the next decade $180 billion in marriage penalty relief to 25 million couples, including millions of middle-class Americans hit hardest by this unfair tax burden.

Mr. Speaker, one thing is clear to me: it is time that we right this wrong and provide real marriage penalty relief for America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back this corrupt burden of our Internal Revenue Code.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1996 TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

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

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, we all know that monopolies do not serve the public interest; they keep prices high, limit consumer choice, and fail to innovate. In 1996, in an effort to break up the entrenched local phone monopolies, Congress overwhelmingly passed the Telecommunications Act. I am happy to commemorate the 4-year anniversary of that Act.

The theory of the 1996 law is simple: in order to encourage local phone monopolies to open their local networks to competition, the Bells would be permitted to enter the long-distance market, but only when their local markets were open and competitive. Four years after its passage, there is substantial evidence that the 1996 act is working. But the local phone market is still not as competitive as we would like. There are competitive local carriers growing rapidly, both in terms of revenue and market capitalization; but they still compromise only 5 percent of the market. And worse still, the Bells even refuse to provide competitors with the necessary network access.

JOIN CONGRESSIONAL LIFE FORUM WEDNESDAY TO HEAR DR. JOSEPH BRUNER

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I direct the Members' attention to this photograph of the little hand of Samuel Armas and the larger hand of his surgeon, Dr. Joseph Bruner.

Samuel Armas was still unborn when this was taken. He suffered from spina bifida, a disabling illness that affects one or two of every thousand babies.

Look at Samuel as Dr. Bruner finishes this prenatal operation procedure that will help Samuel after he is born. While still in the womb, before the doctor sews up his mother's womb, he sticks out his arm and his little hand grasps the finger of the surgeon, Dr. Bruner.

When this picture was taken, Samuel was 21 weeks old. What an example of the humanity of the little unborn child, as if he is saying thank you, I am okay.

Samuel was born on December 2, a healthy little baby boy. Thanks to Dr. Bruner, he has a chance to live a full and productive life. Mr. Speaker, life is precious.

The man who showed us this picture a couple of years ago, Dr. Bernard Nathanson, is coming back tomorrow at noon to speak to the Congressional Life Forum and Cannon Caucus. Everyone is welcome to attend.

INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY SHOULD BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR IRS

(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, in 1997, the IRS seized 10,000 properties. After Congress changed the law and shifted the burden of proof to the IRS, last year, the IRS seized only 161 properties; 161 from 10,000. But guess what, the IRS wants the law changed back. They say it is too costly. Unbelievable.

If the IRS had their way, last year 9,840 American families would have lost their homes and their businesses. Beam me up.

Listen. If innocent until proven guilty is good enough for mass murderers, it is good enough for Mom and Dad, and it is good enough for the IRS.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the tears and whining over the IRS.

MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

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

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. Speaker, I think my colleagues on both sides of the aisle would agree that we may never have a perfect tax code, but it should at least be fair. That is the essence of any voluntary tax system.

How can we in this body make our tax system more fair? We can start by passing the marriage tax relief bill. Last year, nearly 50 million Americans, including more than 200,000 of my fellow Arkansans, paid extra taxes just because they were married. These folks do not pay just a little bit more in taxes; they paid an average of $1,400 apiece.

Our government is discriminating against married couples by forcing them to pay an extra fine of more than $1,000. This is not fair, and it should end.

Whether it is in a church or in a courtroom, couples have to usually pay some type of a fee for the marriage ceremony. But while it may cost money to get married, it should not cost money to be married.

I hope all of my colleagues will join me in standing up for married couples and in voting yes on the Marriage Tax Penalty Relief Act.