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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ISSA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 25, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DARRELL E. ISSA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today I rise on behalf of millions of American working men and women who are in desperate need of a raise. It has been a disgraceful 8 years since Congress last voted to raise the national minimum wage which is stuck today at only \$5.15 an hour. A person making the minimum wage today would have to work for the better part of an hour just to afford a single gallon of milk or a gallon of gasoline. It was recently announced by the Kaiser Fam-

ily Foundation that the average cost of health insurance premiums for a family of four has for the first time surpassed the annual income of a minimum wage earner. That means that if you work all year long at the minimum wage and you pay your health insurance premiums, you have no money left over for anything else.

Last week, Democrats in the House and Senate sought to raise the minimum wage, but the Republican leadership in Congress defeated our efforts. Instead, Congress continues to deny America's most vulnerable workers the very basic wage necessary to help them support their families. Where is Congress' sense of decency and fairness towards those Americans who simply want, and need, to see work pay?

Now, a major player in the world economy has said that it agrees that the national minimum wage must be increased. We welcome Wal-Mart to this debate. Wal-Mart's CEO said today that the minimum wage should be raised. Here is what he said:

"The U.S. minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour has not been raised in nearly a decade and we believe it is out of date with the times. We can see firsthand at Wal-Mart how many of our customers are struggling to get by. Our customers simply don't have the money to buy basic necessities between paychecks."

Wal-Mart recognizes what most Americans have known, and Democrats in Congress have been saying, for years, that millions of Americans cannot afford even the most basic necessities of life on today's minimum wage. I don't see eye to eye with Wal-Mart on many important issues, but the company is right about the minimum wage and it deserves praise for taking this position and it deserves to be listened to in this case.

I have introduced legislation to increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 in three increments over a little more than 2 years. This legisla-

tion is sorely needed. People who work full time all year at \$5.15 an hour earn just \$10,700 a year, putting them \$5,000 below the official poverty line for a family of three. Raising the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour would add another \$4,370 to their income.

An increase in the minimum wage would directly benefit 7.5 million workers. Of those 7.5 million workers, three-quarters are 20 years old or older. Roughly 44 percent of minimum wage workers work full time. Nearly two-thirds of them are women. They end up at the end of the year poor and below poverty.

I welcome Wal-Mart to the table. I urge them to use the considerable power and influence it has to press hard for Congress to raise the minimum wage. Americans need a raise. Democrats know it. Most Americans know it. And now Wal-Mart knows it. When will the Republican leadership and President Bush finally get the message that it is time to treat these workers with some decency and to provide for an increase in the minimum wage?

I include in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an article from today about Wal-Mart's CEO calling for a hike in the minimum wage.

WAL-MART CALLS FOR MINIMUM WAGE HIKE
[From CNN/Money, Oct. 25, 2005]

Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott said he's urging Congress to consider raising the minimum wage so that Wal-Mart customers don't have to struggle paycheck to paycheck.

Scott told Wal-Mart (Research) directors and executives in a speech Monday that he believes "it is time for Congress to take a look at the minimum wage and other legislation that can help working families."

"The U.S. minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour has not been raised in nearly a decade and we believe it is out of date with the times," Scott said. "We can see first-hand at Wal-Mart how many of our customers are struggling to get by. Our customers simply don't have the money to buy basic necessities between pay checks."

Given increasing gas prices and other economic pressures on Wal-Mart customers,

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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