

who work so hard to feed their families, need to know that today marks the day, 170-plus days into the calendar year, when Americans can finally go to work for their families instead of paying the cost of our bloated bureaucracy and government.

What does it mean to working families, Madam Speaker? What does it mean to every American? Well, simply this: According to Americans for Tax Reform, Madam Speaker, Federal regulations during 1998 cost American taxpayers over \$1 trillion. That translates to over \$3,800 for every man, woman and child this year. Americans for Tax Reform estimates that working American will work in excess of 1 month, almost 40 days, in excess of 38 days, to pay for regulatory costs.

Madam Speaker, that is why today I am pleased to come to the floor to announce that I will reintroduce on this, the Cost of Government Day, the Congressional Responsibility Act. It is being sponsored in the other body by my good friend, the senior Senator from Kansas Mr. BROWNBACK. The Congressional Responsibility Act requires that new Federal regulations cannot take effect until Congress approves them and the President signs them, or until his veto is overridden.

Madam Speaker, in the weight of this compelling, overwhelming evidence that our government has grown too large and costs working Americans too much, I say it is important to restore what our Constitution said and our Founders, following the beautiful Preamble which serves as more than just a mission statement for our United States; in our Constitution, the very blueprint of our Republic, says this: Article I, section 1. All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States.

In other words, Madam Speaker, all lawmaking authority. But as historians look back upon the 20th century, Madam Speaker, they will talk about the unintended rise of, in essence, a fourth branch of government, the regulatory branch, because to deal with emerging industries, to deal with trying to control so many sectors of our economy, the Congress ceded, delegated its authority to an alphabet soup of acronymed agencies in the executive branch, where, Madam Speaker, unelected, unaccountable Washington bureaucrats, in essence, make law.

Madam Speaker, a personal indulgence. J.D. in my name does not stand for juris doctor. I am not a lawyer; I never played one on TV. That is considered an asset in Arizona. But one need not be a lawyer to recognize that when Washington bureaucrats make law, the unelected, the unaccountable suddenly have great power in our society, to the point now where we work 170-plus days every year just to pay for the cost of government; where all Americans work in excess of 1 month, in excess of 38 days to pay for regulations.

What we say with the Congressional Responsibility Act is quite simple. Those regulatory agencies can continue to promulgate and formulate regulations, but, Madam Speaker, men and women of goodwill from both sides of the aisle, constitutionally elected by their constituents, are sent to Washington to make tough choices, and what the Congressional Responsibility Act would simply do would be to say this: Once a regulation is promulgated, have it sent to the Congress for an up or down vote. That way, Madam Speaker, accountability, responsibility, authority is restored where our Founders wanted it to be: with those elected to the Congress of the United States, with those who are accountable to the people.

Madam Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join Senator BROWNBACK, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) and me in sponsoring and voting for the Congressional Responsibility Act.

AMERICANS' RIGHT TO ORGANIZE: GOOD FOR AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 3 minutes.

Mr. TIERNEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) and others who have come before us to talk about the right of American men and women to organize; certainly, the right to decide whether or not they choose to organize to be represented in the workplace to determine what their wages might be, what benefits they might get, what the safety factors at work might be, what hours they might work, all of those things that many of us have become used to understanding as a valid exercise in the workplace.

Madam Speaker, 74 percent of the American people believe that workers should be able to decide whether they want to join a union, and they should be able to make that decision without interference by management. People support a fair and open process that allows for equal access and equal time, for any discussion of what it means to join a union. And, they support a decision-making process that reaches a timely conclusion on that issue. That means that when workers vote freely to join a union, that decision is honored and accepted by management.

The reality, unfortunately, is far different. Threats, intimidation and harassment are all too commonly used against those who seek to form a union. In nearly one-third of all organizing drives, one or more workers are fired illegally. If workers are able to overcome those obstacles and form a union, the system allows for endless legal challenges and stonewalling by

employers. The laws designed to protect the freedom to form a union are failing, and the penalties for ignoring them are too small to be a deterrent.

This is not a level playing field, and it is well past the time that we restore some measure of balance to the system.

Madam Speaker, we talk a good deal in this Chamber about how we might improve the lives of American families. I suggest that one specific way in which we can do that is to allow for American workers who so choose to join a union. It can make a significant difference in the ability of those workers to provide for their families.

Recently in my district, 24 employees of a small enterprise that made parts for engines being produced by the General Electric facility in Lynn signed cards to join a union. An overwhelming majority wanted that right. They had been earning \$6.10 an hour, and unionized employees doing the same work were making \$14 to \$18 an hour.

Segments of the community, including me, contacted the owner of that company, Metal Improvements, and urged that it respect the desires of the workers and sit down at the bargaining table in good faith. I am happy to report that that was done. Unfortunately, in too many other instances, management mounts an endless series of challenges to the workers' rights to organize. The results can be bitterness and divisiveness that undermine productivity.

Madam Speaker, unions not only serve their members well, they serve the broader interests of our society. When social service workers who care for the elderly and the mentally ill and the mentally retarded earn only \$7 or \$8 or \$9 with little or no pension or health care, as many do in my district, they are often forced to work two or three jobs a day just to make ends meet. Their ability to do just one job well suffers. Turnover is high, and the quality of care is diminished.

Madam Speaker, by joining a union, these workers can raise their standard of living, and they ought to be able to have that right to make that decision.

FREEDOM TO CHOOSE A VOICE AT WORK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BONIOR. Madam Speaker, earlier this year a number of us heard some powerful, real-life stories and experiences of workers from North Carolina and Las Vegas, Nevada, who were trying to organize. Their stories are the stories of millions of working men and women who want a stronger voice in our workplace. Their stories are about

improving lives and building better communities. They are stories that need to be told across this country. All of us need to hear the challenges workers face when they choose to organize.

When the American public learns about the tactics that employers use, threats of losing their job, verbal and sexual harassment and mandatory antiunion meetings, they overwhelmingly, overwhelmingly support the freedom to choose a voice at work. That is why the AFL-CIO has launched the "Seven Days In June," a week-long series of community forums and rallies and demonstrations all across this country.

From the June 19 to June 25, we will hear more and more of these stories. There will be more than 120 activities in 36 States, activities which started last Saturday with our colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ) holding a community forum in Orange County, California.

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Bringing dignity to the workplace is not easy, but it can and is being done. In fact, on the 27th of February of this year, 75,000 home care workers in Los Angeles won the largest organizing victory in 60 years when they voted to join the Service Employees International Union. This was a tremendous victory, but it did not happen overnight. It was the culmination of 10 years of hard work, of building a broad-based coalition, of gaining the support of home care consumers and political leaders.

In the end, it was about bringing the community together, uniting families behind the notion that those who take care of our parents and our grandparents ought to have some basic worker rights: A decent wage, not \$5 an hour, \$6 an hour, \$7 an hour like they are making today; safe working conditions, and adequate benefits.

These kinds of victories are occurring more and more. The doctors in our country are starting to organize unions because of their frustration with the health care system that will not let them practice what they have learned and took so long to learn in their studies.

The graduate assistants teaching at universities and colleges all over the country are now organizing, with great victories recently occurring at the University of California.

Workers are holding and winning more union elections than in the previous year, winning 51 percent of the time in 1998. That figure is particularly remarkable when we look at the tactics that employers use to squelch organizing drives: Firing pro union employees, using intimidating and verbal harassment at the workplace, holding closed-door one-on-one shakedown sessions with workers, and spending millions on anti-union consultants.

With all these cards that are stacked against the workers, how do they win? First and foremost, it comes from deep down. It comes from a resolve and a commitment to be treated with dignity and with respect.

It also comes from raising awareness, from building coalitions with the religious community, the civic communities, with political leaders, and from building a stronger community in general.

For those of us who care deeply about working families and strengthening our community, we have a responsibility and indeed an obligation to lend our voices to workers who have chosen to organize. I know some who have joined the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PALLONE) and myself recently in sending a letter to A&P food-stores simply to allow strawberry workers the choice to organize. I thank Members for that.

For those who are unaware of the situation, the California strawberry industry is booming with the annual sales of \$650 million. Yet, workers stoop to pick the berries for at least 12 hours a day and earn only \$8,500 a season. Last spring the Wall Street Journal reported shocking sanitation conditions at these farms, where workers have insufficient drinking water, squalid restrooms, where workers have not been paid for overtime for 4 years, and where there is widespread sexual harassment against female employees.

To bring some semblance of dignity to their workplace, the strawberry workers simply want the ability to choose their own representation, but they have repeatedly faced attacks by the industry, including plowing under the fields, and flying in sham workers to vote in union elections, just to break the union. They would plow the fields under and import workers from other parts of the country, or other countries.

This is the exact type of situation that deserves the support from elected leaders, and there are many more situations just like that going on throughout this country.

So raising our voices and standing with the strawberry workers is one thing we can do to be helpful, but there are many more. During these 7 days in June, there are opportunities for all of us to participate in activities which will help our families have the freedom to choose a voice at work.

I invite all of my colleagues to stand together with workers, clergy, community leaders to highlight the hopes and dreams of families who are seeking to bring basic human compassion to their workplace, because when we do that, we not only build a better workplace for workers who are unionized, but for workers who are nonunionized. We set the floor, we set the standard for them. But beyond all of that, we build better communities.

I thank my colleagues who have come to speak on this and who have spoken. I ask my other colleagues to join us in these 7 days in June.

SEVEN DAYS IN JUNE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. MYRICK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 3 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for organizing this discussion in support of Seven Days in June, June 7 to 25. This is a week celebrating union organizing victories, and recognizing the importance of giving workers the freedom to choose a voice at work.

I am a proud member of UNITE, the needle trades union. I am proud of the accomplishments the union movement has won. Unions brought us the 40-hour work week, workers compensation, overtime compensation, and the end of child labor in this country.

Union members on average earn 32 percent more than other workers. They are more likely to receive health insurance and pension benefits from their employers.

More importantly, they have provided an organized voice for workers who have used that voice to make improvements in productivity, workplace safety, and environmental conditions.

Today there is perhaps no greater evidence of the need for workers to organize than the health care industry. The power of the for-profit health care industry has led to unwise cost-cutting that threatens not only the health and financial security of health care workers, but the patients they serve.

Several years ago, two nurses in New Jersey raised concerns about the effect of drive-through deliveries on mothers and infants, moms and babies being sent home the same day of delivery. One nurse, a union member, was threatened with retaliation, but was protected by her union. The other, an unorganized worker, had no one to intervene on her behalf.

Since then, Congress has passed a prohibition on drive-through deliveries, but without protection against retaliation, how many health care workers will be willing to talk about dangerous conditions? We need to pass whistle-blower protections, but we also need to give health care workers the opportunity to join a union if they want to.

Health care workers all over the country are looking to unions to protect them when they report problems. They are looking to unions to ensure they have safe working conditions.

This week in Chicago the AMA, the American Medical Association, is meeting to talk about unionization so