passed the Year 2000 Readiness and Responsibility Act, setting limits on lawsuits against businesses and individuals for Y2K failures. But, Madam Speaker, my concerns are whether the rest of the world is ready.

Hearings within the last several weeks held in both the House and the Senate have raised some serious concerns. Many nations have done little, if anything, to combat the Y2K bug. These nations lack both the expertise and the funds to upgrade and convert their computer systems. Take, for example, the government of Indonesia, which is preparing for the possible Y2K malfunctions. Their National Electricity Board strategy is to watch what happens at midnight on January 1 in Australia and New Zealand, to use those 6 hours to develop and implement suddenly their Y2K plans. Now, this would be comical if it were not so serious and disturbing.

The worldwide ramifications of Y2K disturbances, of course, can have a domino effect. It is just not enough that the United States is prepared. Potential disruptions abroad caused by Y2K problems would impact millions of Americans who are living abroad, or who are traveling overseas. Though the Central Intelligence Agency is confident that the Y2K computer failures overseas will not lead to accidental launch of ballistic missiles by any country, according to the testimony by the Central Intelligence Agency before the House Committee on International Affairs last week, nuclear power plants in nations such as Russia and the Ukraine could be susceptible to year 2000 malfunctions resulting from power grid failures.

Now, this is according to testimony presented by Lawrence Gershwin, National Intelligence Officer for Science and Technology for the CIA, and this is what he said, ''In the worst case this could cause a meltdown and in some cases an accompanying release of radioactive fission gases.'' Furthermore, according to the CIA, Soviet power plants cannot even be tested for Y2K compliancy ''given the age of the computer system and the fact that many of the original manufacturers have all gone out of business.''

If the threat of another Chernobyl-like meltdown is not disturbing enough according to the CIA, there still remains the potential for Russia to misinterpret early warning data of ballistic missile launches resulting from the Y2K problem. That means during an international political crisis where tensions are already heightened, the Russians may misinterpret their missile data, leading them to believe and possibly to respond.

As a result, I am pleased to say the United States and Russia have set up a joint program to share information on their missile and space launches to prevent any misunderstanding resulting from any Y2K malfunctions.

I will not even begin in this short amount of time, Madam Speaker, to discuss all the possible problems with other countries not bringing their Y2K problem into compliance dealing with foreign energy and of course financial markets. I encourage other nations to expedite their conversions and look to the United States for leadership.

Madam Speaker, I encourage other nations to expedite their Y2K conversions before time runs out. Our Y2K compliance and success is not only contingent on the fact that this nation's computer and information systems function properly and smoothly, but also on the fact that we not feel side effects from disruptions in other countries.

REPUBLICAN CONGRESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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

Mr. WELLER. Madam Speaker, I have the privilege of representing one of America's most diverse Congressional districts, representing the South Side of Chicago and the South Bushes, Cook and Will Counties, bedroom communities as well as farm towns and corn fields. When you represent such a diverse district as city and suburbs and country, you learn to listen. You listen to the common message. One common message that we are hearing from back home is that we should be working together to solve the challenges that we face. As I look back as one of those who was elected in 1994 to come to Washington to change how Washington works, I am proud to say we have listened to that message and we have held together and we have held firm even those who said that we should not be doing what we are doing, those who opposed our efforts to balance the budget and cut taxes for the middle class, to reform the welfare system and also to restructure the IRS.

I am proud to say in the last 4½ years, this Republican Congress has made a big difference. Balancing the budget for the first time in 28 years, cutting taxes for the middle class for the first time in 16 years, reforming our welfare system for the first time in a generation, and for the first time ever, taming the tax collector by restructuring the IRS. Those are big accomplishments and much appreciated by the folks back home in Illinois but they tell me that's history now, what are you going to do next? They ask us to respond to the questions, the common concerns that we are often asked.

While Republicans are committed to strengthening our schools and strengthening Medicare and Social Security and paying down the national debt and, of course, lowering the tax burden, we also want to respond to some of those big concerns and big questions that I hear, whether at the union hall or the VFW, the Chamber of Commerce or down at a coffee shop on Main Street or a local grain elevator. That is one of those questions that the first question I often hear is a pretty basic one and, that is, when are you folks in Washington going to stop raiding the Social Security trust fund, when are you going to stop dipping into Social Security and spending Social Security on other things?

I am proud to say, Madam Speaker, that the Republicans in this Congress have made a commitment that for the first time since the 1960s when LBJ, President Johnson, began a bad habit that is hard to break in Washington, we are walling off the Social Security trust fund. This year is the first year that our budget has been balanced without dipping into Social Security. We want to continue that. That is why I am proud to say the Congressional Budget Office on September 30 of this year stated in a letter to Speaker HASTERT that the Republican balanced budget does not spend one dime of the Social Security trust fund. We are committed to stopping the raid on the Social Security trust fund.

I would also point out that with the Social Security Medicare lockbox that Republicans are proposing, we set aside $200 billion more for Social Security and Medicare than the President's budget alone.

I would also point out, Madam Speaker, that we are responding to another important question that we hear from folks back home in the south side of Chicago and the south suburbs, and that is how come nobody ever talks about the national debt, how come no one ever talks about the need to pay town that national debt that ran up all those years that Washington had deficit spending? I am proud to say that last year we paid down $50 billion of the national debt, this year we are going to pay down a hundred billion dollars, and under the Republican budget plan we paid down almost $2.2 trillion of the national debt, over two-thirds of our national debt over the next 10 years.

Madam Speaker, the third question that I often hear back home is when are we going to do something about taxes. People tell me their taxes are too high, they are too complicated, they are unfair. They are frustrated that our tax burden on American today is at its highest level in peace time history. Forty percent of the average family's income goes to government. In fact, 21 percent of our gross domestic product, 21 percent of our economy, goes to Federal Government and taxes, and that is too high.

We passed earlier this year a measure to address the need to lower taxes, particularly for the middle class, and we had legislation which would have eliminated the marriage tax penalty

for the majority of those who suffer, that would have eliminated the death tax on small businesses and family farmers, that would have rewarded those who save for retirement, those who save for their children's and college education and also would have rewarded providing health care coverage for one's employees as well as their family, and unfortunately President Clinton vetoed that effort to help families by bringing fairness to the Tax Code, and he stated, and he was very blunt; he said he vetoed this tax cut because he wanted to spend that money instead.

That is really what this is all about over the next week or so as we wrap up this legislative session. President Clinton has made it very clear he wants to spend a lot more money than Republicans do, and he says that we can do it if we increase taxes, and the President says we could do it if we raid the Social Security Trust Fund.

Madam Speaker, I very proud last week when this House of Representatives cast a vote 419 to 0, which means that every member who cast a vote voted in opposition to the President's proposal for $238 billion in tax increases. That is a very clear message to the President that we oppose his tax increases, and I also want to point out that this House also went on record in opposition to the President's plan to raid Social Security. We need to oppose his tax increases, we need to stop the raid on Social Security, but we can balance the budget without those.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MORELLA). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 47 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GOODLATTE) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Reverend Dr. Robert Dvorak, The Evangelical Church, Middletown, Connecticut, offered the following prayer:

Let the House be in a spirit of prayer.

Lord, our God, we enter into this week's schedule, mindful again of the duty to work hard and well for others. Many are waiting and hoping; even nations observe. You, the living God, see and hear us, too, taking note of all things.

We pray, then, for ourselves that You will sharpen the focus on responsibilities rightly asked of us, keeping us true to our trust. Grant us firmness in thinking, tempered by allowances for honest, contrary thought. Send a few moments our way wherein we may seek true advantage for ones around us, thereby refreshing them and ourselves.

At day's end, encourage us with a sense that life in Washington and the world is better because of the part we have played in things. Now, for this day, keep in Your protecting hand all Members of this House, its leadership, officers, and staff. Make the spirit of each to prosper with new grace the call of this prayer to You, O God. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Chair's approval of the Journal.

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. GIBBONS. 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 Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. KILDEE 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 CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, October 22, 1999.

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

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted to Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on October 22, 1999 at 9:52 a.m.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 2367.

Appointment: Board of Directors of the Mickey Leland National Urban Air Toxics Research Center

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

JEFF TRANDAHL,
Clerk of the House.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, October 25, 1999.

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

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted to Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on October 22, 1999 at 4:50 p.m.

That the Senate agreed to conference report H.R. 2466.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

JEFF TRANDAHL,
Clerk of the House.

PAIN RELIEF PROMOTION ACT

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Pain Relief Promotion Act. There is a question currently pending in the country of Holland. It is this: Is the Netherlands ready for the killing of sick children?

There is a bill in their parliament that would allow the killing of seriously ill children, as young as between 12 years old, if they are considered terminal.

A spokeswoman for the Royal Dutch Medical Association said, ''The doctor will do his utmost to try to reach an agreement between the patient and parents. But if the parents do not want to cooperate, it is the doctor's duty to respect the wishes of her patient.'' So much for the Hippocratic Oath for civilized medical institutions.

This situation in the Netherlands gives us all the more reason to pass the Pain Relief Promotion Act. This act will provide doctors with the ability to aggressively treat their patients' pain while prohibiting assisted suicides or euthanasia.

We never want to see the day when our young kids or our elderly parents legally and intentionally die at the hands of a so-called doctor.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill to promote pain management and