

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Wednesday, February 10, 1999

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, Reverend James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

Let us pray using the words of Isaac Watts:

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.  
Before the hills in order stood  
Or earth received its frame,  
From everlasting you are God,  
To endless years the same.  
O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Still be our guard while troubles last  
And our eternal home! Amen.

### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. 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.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas 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.

### INTRODUCING THE VETERANS' TOBACCO TRUST FUND ACT

(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, the recent State of the Union Address recognizes the Nation's obligation to our men and women in uniform, but the President was silent about the debt we owe them as veterans. Nevertheless, he disclosed a plan in his speech which could affect them. Specifically, he announced an intention to bring suit against tobacco product manufacturers to recover costs incurred by government health care programs.

Members may not be aware that the VA health care system is spending more than \$3 billion annually caring for veterans' smoking-related illnesses. The administration is certainly aware of that fact, but it has yet to commit to providing any recoveries from this

lawsuit for veterans' health care. Surely any recovery under a suit based at least in part on the veterans' medical system should be used to strengthen that system and improve veterans' care.

For that reason I am introducing the Veterans Tobacco Trust Fund Act of 1999, and I urge all my colleagues to be cosponsors. This bill would set in place a requirement that any tobacco settlement from the lawsuit also include an allocation of funds for veterans' health care. I hope the executive branch will support my bill.

### REPUBLICAN BUDGET OUT OF STEP WITH AMERICA'S NEEDS

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, once again the Republicans are pushing a budget plan that is out of step with what the American people want. The President's budget calls for using the budget surplus to protect Social Security now that times are good. The Republican budget, on the other hand, includes yet another stale proposal to spend the surplus on tax cuts for the wealthy instead of on Social Security.

The New York Times recently noted, and I quote, "Every poll shows that Americans would rather preserve Social Security and Medicare than enjoy a big new tax cut, as Republican leaders want. It is also questionable how much political support there will be for a tax cut that disproportionately benefits the wealthiest Americans."

The Washington Post made a similar observation of the competing budget plans. "On balance," the Post noted, "the President's budget pushes in the right direction, but," the Post added, "the broad alternative, which is to consume in the form of a tax cut that ought to be saved for Social Security and Medicare and other public purposes, is wrong."

Let us use the surplus in a manner that will benefit all Americans, not just the wealthy. Support the Democrats' plan.

### KOSOVO

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

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the President's plan calls for

spending more money and raising taxes. Do Members remember when President Clinton sent U.S. troops to Bosnia? He promised, he promised they would have a well-defined mission with a clear exit strategy. Three years later and more than \$20 billion later, about 6,000 U.S. troops are still in Bosnia. Our own Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, has called it a mess.

Now the President intends to further scatter U.S. troops into Kosovo as part of another peacekeeping mission. It is absolutely imperative that the President give Congress and the Nation a clear mission and a clear exit strategy before committing our troops. Mr. Speaker, our military forces are ready and willing to defend the interests of this great Nation. We cannot undermine their oaths. We must define the mission, the goal, and an exit strategy before sending our troops into yet another mess.

### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADY). The Members are reminded to address the Chair and not the President.

### GUN SHOWS

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

Mr. BLAGOJEVICH. Mr. Speaker, there is no evidence that Timothy McVeigh and cult leader David Koresh ever actually met. But if they had, it is a good bet it might have been at a gun show.

McVeigh financed some of his terrorist activities by selling at gun shows firearms he stole from an Arkansas gun collector. It was at gun shows that Koresh purchased many of the weapons he later stockpiled at his Branch Davidian compound.

The Brady bill has stopped over a quarter of a million handgun sales to criminals, but there is a gaping loophole. Background checks are not required at gun shows. Last year there were nearly 5,000 gun shows in America where anyone can buy as many firearms as they want with no questions asked. That is how a criminal in Florida with 16 felony convictions purchased firearms and killed four people in a one-day shooting spree.

Last weekend in his national radio address, President Clinton announced a

□ 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.