

the United States now pay more in the Social Security tax than they do in the income tax. Let us not increase taxes.

It repeals the Social Security earnings test so senior citizens, if they want to work, do not have their Social Security check reduced for the amount they work. That needs to be changed to allow seniors to work if they want to.

It gives workers the choice to retire as early as 59½ years old and start taking their personal retirement savings account out.

We also have a provision that encourages individuals, if they want to wait until they are 70, it substantially increases their benefits by 8 percentage points for every year that they delay taking their Social Security check. In other words, if they delay 3 years, it is a 24 percent increase in what they would otherwise get. One year would be 8 percent; 2 years 16 percent.

It gives each spouse equal shares of the personal retirement savings account and increases widow and widower benefits up to 110 percent.

As I met with widows and widowers, they said, look, you are dramatically taking so much of the Social Security check away when one of the spouses die that we cannot afford to live in our home anymore.

So we increased that up to 110 percent of the maximum benefit they were getting.

It reinforces the safety net for low income and disabled workers. It passes the Social Security Administration's 75-year solvency test. In fact, the economists suggest that if we were able to put this bill into law, it would keep Social Security solvent forever. It is not going to reduce the existing benefits for current retirees or near-term retirees. It is something we need to look at if we are serious about saving Social Security.

The time has passed for just talking and rhetoric. Let us do something about it. Mr. Speaker, I hope that every American voting next year will be asking their candidates for the President and the Congress what their plan is to save Social Security and really put it first.

THE MESSAGE IS, WE WANT TO CHANGE HOW WASHINGTON WORKS

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. Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of representing one of America's most diverse districts, representing the south side of Chicago, the south suburbs in Cook and Will Counties, bedroom communities like Morris and a lot of cornfields and farm towns, too. When one represents such a diverse district, they learn to listen. I

find even though I represent city and suburbs and country, that there is a common message and that message is we want to change how Washington works. They want us to work together to find solutions and meet the challenges that we face.

Now, a question is often asked from a historical perspective: Has this Congress in the last 5 years of the Republican majority responded to that call to change how Washington works and, of course, look for solutions and enact solutions to the challenges that we face?

I am proud to say that in the last 5 years, we have. I was told when I was first elected to Congress there is no way we can balance the budget. They failed to do it for 28 years. There is no way we can cut taxes and balance the budget at the same time. They told us that the welfare system which had put more children in poverty than ever before had failed for a long time so nobody can fix that either, but I am proud to say that we did.

We balanced the budget for the first time in 28 years and now we are debating what to do with the projected \$3 trillion surplus. We cut taxes for the middle class and, in my home State, that first middle class tax cut in 16 years now means that 3 million Illinois children qualify for the \$500 per child tax credit. That is \$1.5 billion a year that stays home in Illinois, helping Illinois families, rather than being spent here in Washington.

We enacted the first real welfare reform in over a generation, emphasizing work and family and responsibility. As a result of that, Illinois' welfare rolls have been cut in half.

Those are successes, accomplishments that I am proud of and proud to be part of. That is pretty good. People often say the budget was balanced, taxes for the middle class were cut, welfare reform was enacted, but that is history. What is going to be done next?

Our agenda here in the Republican majority is a simple agenda. We want to strengthen our local schools. We want to pay down the national debt. We want to lower taxes for middle class families. We also want to strengthen our retirement security system of Medicare and Social Security. Our agenda responds to the concerns that I often hear. Whether in the union halls, the steel working union halls in the 10th Ward of Chicago or the VFW or Legions in Joliet or the grain elevators in Tonica or Ottawa, I am often asked several questions. One of the most basic questions I am asked time and time again is, when are the folks in Washington going to stop spending the Social Security surplus? When are the folks in Washington going to break that bad habit that has gone on for 30 years, where Washington has dipped into the Social Security trust fund, raided the Social Security trust fund to spend on other things?

I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that our goal as Republicans is to stop the raid on Social Security.

I am proud to say that the White House has recognized this. At the beginning of the year, of course, the President called for spending 62 percent of the Social Security surplus on Social Security and then the other 38 percent on other priorities. Well, we said no; it is time to stop the raid on Social Security.

I was pleased to see this quote here from the chief of staff of the President when they finally recognized that Republicans were serious about stopping the raid on Social Security. Let me quote John Podesta, chief of staff to the President. The Republican's key goal is not to spend the Social Security surplus. Republicans want to stop the raid on Social Security.

I am pleased to say that just a few weeks ago that the Congressional Budget Office, nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, issued a letter saying that the budget that we have enacted, the budget that we have passed even though the President vetoed part of it, did not spend one dime of the Social Security trust fund.

The other question I am often asked by folks back home is no one ever talks about paying down the national debt. Washington spent beyond its means for 28 years, running up a \$3.4 trillion national debt. Is it not time to start paying that off?

I am proud to say that over the last 2 years we have made a down payment on paying down the national debt. We paid down \$150 billion of the public debt over the last 2 years; \$50 billion 2 years ago, \$100 billion this past year. This coming year we expect to pay down \$150 billion and over the next 10 years we should pay down two-thirds of the national debt, \$2.2 trillion. It is an important step as we work to pay down the debt which is so important if we consider our future for America's children.

The third question I am often asked is, and folks get frustrated, they are frustrated that our Nation's tax burden is so high, that only in time of war, in World War II, at the end of World War II, was the tax burden higher than it is today. Forty percent of the average Illinois' income goes to Washington and Springfield.

Unfortunately, the President vetoed our effort to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. My hope is we will come back and do that.

Mr. Speaker, let us stop the raid on Social Security. Let us balance the budget. Let us eliminate the marriage tax penalty. Let us help our schools and let us strengthen Social Security and Medicare.

THE CASE OF LINDA SHENWICK

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, there are times when Congress must act to protect the interests of individuals, in particular Federal civil servants who have been unfairly harmed by the actions of the Federal Government.

Recently, Congress acted to protect Billy Dale and the other employees of the White House Travel Office who were unfairly removed from their jobs and who were illegally targeted for investigation and prosecution. This Congress acted to protect those workers and to pay for their legal expenses.

Another case has presented itself that behooves Congressional action also. The case I speak of is the case of Linda Shenwick. Linda Shenwick has been an exemplary public servant since she started working at the State Department in 1979. The Weekly Standard reported that Ms. Shenwick was driven by a sense of public service and an interest in foreign affairs.

In 1984, Ms. Shenwick was transferred to the U.S. mission to the United Nations where she first was assigned to handle personnel and budget issues. She quickly carved out a reputation for diligence and hard work, which won her three consecutive outstanding ratings, the highest given, between 1987 and July of 1989. Her performance also won her regular promotions and in 1988 she was admitted to the Senior Executive Service, an elite corps of Federal civil servants.

In August 1991 and again in November 1993, representatives of the other U.N. member states elected Shenwick to serve on the influential Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, which recommends how U.N. money and personnel should be allocated. These votes of confidence reflected the respect accorded to her by U.N. officials and her service on the committee helped her acquire a detailed knowledge of the Byzantine U.N. budget process.

In her position, Ms. Shenwick repeatedly found evidence of deliberate waste, fraud and mismanagement in the United Nations. When she began reporting such evidence to her superiors at the start of the Clinton administration, her reports were ignored.

For instance, Ms. Shenwick reported in February 1993 that she had seen pictures of large amounts of U.S. currency stored openly on tables in Somalia. Without any recourse to prevent such budgetary abuse, she began notifying key Members of Congress about what she knew.

It later became public in April of 1994 that \$3.9 million of U.N. cash was reported stolen in Somalia. Ms. Shenwick's work helped Congress force

the U.N. to create an Office of Inspector General to end such fraud and mismanagement that occurred in Somalia.

Mr. Speaker, how has the Clinton administration and the State Department rewarded the stellar career of one of the most valuable civil servants this Nation has known? They began to sabotage her career by threatening her directly with removal from her position, with threats to destroy her financially and by beginning a process of false accusations and unsatisfactory reviews to harm her personnel files.

What they deliberately did to Ms. Shenwick was to set her up so that they could claim a cause for her removal. However, the evidence is abundantly clear that Ms. Shenwick was a remarkable civil servant dedicated to her job.

She has proven to be an invaluable asset for our Nation in confronting U.N. waste, fraud and abuse and mismanagement. She has been unfairly and illegally removed from her Federal position in contradiction to Federal law to protect civil servants, in contradiction to Federal laws to protect whistleblowers.

She should be reinstated to her former position, reimbursed for her personal expenses and have her personal files expunged of any unsatisfactory reviews or other false evidence to justify those reviews.

In fact, I offered an amendment to the State Department reauthorization bill that provided State Department employees such as she who, "in the performance of their duties inform the Congress of pertinent facts concerning their responsibilities should not, as a result, be demoted or removed from their current position or from Federal employment."

That amendment passed handily by a vote of 287-to-136, with 72 Democrat Members' support.

I believe we need to send a strong message by reiterating our belief that such injustices cannot be allowed to continue.

Recently, 52 of my colleagues joined me in sending a letter to Secretary Albright requesting that the Ms. Shenwick matter be resolved.

Mr. Speaker, we must take a stand against the abuse of a Federal civil servant who has done nothing but protect the interests of U.S. taxpayers and our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to let the State Department know that they cannot continue to punish employees who are whistleblowers.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 51 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. OSE) at noon.

PRAYER

The Reverend Dr. Theodore Schneider, Bishop of Washington, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Washington, D.C., offered the following prayer:

A hush has fallen over the House, Lord, and well it should.

You are the creator and You sustain all things. Before You the generations rise and fall, before You, Lord, nations have come and they have gone.

We have been called by our people to manage the things of government. They expect of us integrity, wisdom and vision. They hunger for justice, for good and equal opportunities, so they may be all they are able to become.

We have been called by You, Lord, as stewards of lands, of resources, of human and social opportunities, and of the things that make for peace and foster posterity. You call us to be champions of justice and protectors of the poor.

Watch over us as we continue our debates upon fiscal budgets and the works of our government that initiate, protect and nurture hope and the well-being of our people and our communities. Keep before us the needs of all our people, especially those that would be so easy to forget; the homeless, the sick, the destitute, the aged, and all who have none to care for them.

Let Your Spirit nurture our thirst for the things that make for peace in our land and among the nations of this earth.

Through our people You have called us, Lord, to be stewards of all you have so graciously bestowed upon us. Clear our minds, open our hearts, and extend our vision so that we might be for our people all Your grace enables us to become.

Turn this parliamentary pause, Father, into our perfect prayer. 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 Speaker'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.