

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to strongly urge the Republican leadership to expedite consideration of two bills which will provide vital consumer protections for medical and genetic information.

The first bill, H.R. 4585, medical privacy legislation, was recently approved by the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services. During consideration of the bill, it would essentially offer an amendment which would for the first time provide real consumer protection for genetic information.

I also urge the House leadership to bring to the floor H.R. 2457, sponsored by our colleague, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), that would prohibit discrimination based upon genetic information.

With the recent announcement of the completion of the detailed map of the 24 pairs of the human chromosomes of the human genome project, it is vitally important that the Congress act now to protect genetic information.

As a representative of the Texas Medical Center, including the Baylor College of Medicine, where much of this breakthrough work is being done, I believe there is great promise in knowing this information. However, without sufficient protections, we risk that Americans will not agree to participate in gene therapy treatments to cure disease.

The real danger will be the potential to discriminate against individuals in their health insurance, their employment, and in their financial products. I urge the House to act on these important measures today.

#### MEDICARE-PLUS CHOICE PLANS DROPPED IN MANY PARTS OF RURAL AMERICA

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

Mr. SHERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to direct the attention of the House to an alarming trend, denying benefit options to Medicare beneficiaries on the basis of where they live.

The Medicare-plus choice program passed by Congress was intended to offer real health care options under Medicare. However, Americans in rural and smaller urban areas are being dropped from plans at an alarming rate. Many beneficiaries in my district have been notified they no longer have the option of enrolling in the Medicare HMO. It is an outrage that many of the disabled Americans and seniors can no longer enroll in a Medicare HMO because of discriminatory payment rates.

How can HCFA justify a monthly payment rate in my area of \$400, and yet in larger cities of \$700 to \$800? This discrepancy is not justifiable, it offends my basic sense of fairness, and we

must work, Congress and the administration must work together to reverse this trend, and restore the availability of the Medicare-plus choice payment program to all beneficiaries.

#### CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4810, MARRIAGE TAX RELIEF RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2000

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 559 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

##### H. RES. 559

*Resolved*, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 4810) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 103(a)(1) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2001. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

Sec. 2. House Resolution 556 is laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR of Georgia). The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the distinguished ranking member of the Committee on Rules, my friend, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of the resolution, all time yielded is for purposes of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 559 provides for the consideration of the conference report on H.R. 4810, the Marriage Tax Penalty Elimination Reconciliation Act of 2000. The rule waives all points of order against the conference report and its consideration, and it provides that the conference report shall be considered as read.

Mr. Speaker, we have certainly heard a lot of debate about the marriage penalty over the past week. Actually, the Republican majority has been working to address this inequity in our Tax Code for the past couple of years, and today's vote marks the fifth time that the House will vote to provide marriage penalty relief during the 106th Congress.

Let us hope that this oft-repeated debate has resonated at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, because it is time once again to put the ball in the President's court. Today's vote will send a stand-alone marriage tax penalty elimination bill to the President's desk for his signature.

We have heard some excuses as to why the President cannot sign this bill. Some argue that this tax relief favors only the rich, but that is just not true. The fact is that this bill helps anyone

who is married, regardless of income, and the people who suffer most under the marriage penalty tax are the middle class.

That is right, the adverse effects of the marriage penalty are concentrated on families with income between \$20,000 and \$75,000. I am sure these folks would be surprised to learn that they are considered as rich. So let us get past the tired old "tax cuts for the rich" rhetoric. Let us do something novel and focus on the policy of the marriage penalty and debate its merits.

The marriage tax penalty is pretty simple to understand. It forces married individuals to pay more in taxes than they would have to pay if they stayed single. So we should ask ourselves, is there any merit to taxing marriage? Is there an acceptable rationale to increasing taxes on individuals based solely on their marital status? Do we want the government to send a message that "You will pay a steep fee to get married, but you can avoid this financial burden if you just stay single and live with that significant other?"

If the answer to these questions is no, then why the resistance to elimination of this punitive tax? And if we can agree that the policy has no merit, then how can we give relief to only some married people and not to others? Is it possible to be too fair?

In my mind, if it is wrong to increase taxes on one couple because they are married, then we should not apply a tax penalty to any couple based on their marital status. Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that our only option in the face of this perverse discriminatory tax is to eliminate it entirely.

There are other arguments against passing this legislation. Some of my colleagues claim that the Republicans do not have their priorities straight because we are putting tax cuts above all else. But again, these accusations ignore the facts. I am pleased to remind my colleagues, Congress has already, already passed legislation to wall off both the social security and Medicare trust funds, already provided affordable, voluntary prescription drug coverage to seniors through Medicare, and already has paid down the national debt. We have also passed appropriation bills that invest more in education, biomedical research, veterans' health care, among many other priority programs.

In fact, while we would never know it from listening to some of the rhetoric, spending on discretionary programs will actually be increased this year. So it is just not true to say that tax cuts are gobbling up resources or stealing funds from needed programs.

The problem is that most of my Democratic colleagues just cannot stand the thought of loosening their grip on Americans' money. I do not know how big the surplus has to be for

all of us to feel that it is safe to give some of it back to the American people.

Let me put what we are doing into context. The Clinton administration has been making great hay in the last week about "the Republicans' reckless attempts to provide relief from the marriage penalty and death tax."

□ 1030

Earlier this week, the Congressional Budget Office announced that next year's surplus will be \$268 billion. Of this \$268 billion, only 2 percent will be used to correct the marriage penalty and the death tax, only 2 percent, while 83 percent will be devoted to debt reduction under the Republican proposal. Is it really so reckless to give 2 percent of the surplus back to the people who earned it?

Mr. Speaker, marriage is a sacred fundamental institution in our society that teaches our children about love, family, commitment, and honor. It should not be used as another cheap excuse to nickel and dime the American people.

Today we have an opportunity to set a wrong right and eliminate the marriage tax penalty. I urge my colleagues to do the right thing, support this rule and the conference report so we can give 25 million American families a little bit of their financial freedom back.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) for yielding me the customary time; and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, my Republican colleagues are at it again. They have taken a perfectly good idea to cut marriage taxes and twisted it into another convoluted program to help the rich and do very little for the rest.

This conference report, Mr. Speaker, could have made a real difference in the lives of millions and millions of working Americans, especially working Americans with children. But this conference report could have also included Democratic proposals to cut their taxes by enough to help them in their struggle to raise their children. But, Mr. Speaker, it did not.

This conference report includes the Republican version of the marriage relief. The Republican version does a lot more for the rich people than it does for everyone else, and all one has to do is really look at the bill to discover that.

Some of these richest people who will get the benefits in this bill do not even pay a marriage penalty in the first place. As has become the norm, the Republican bills and now the Republican conference report do far more for those in the upper classes in our economy than they do for anyone else, and all in order to have something to talk about

in Philadelphia at the Republican convention.

Mr. Speaker, this issue affects millions of Americans and should be decided carefully, should be decided deliberately, not rushed to a vote in order to be finished in time so they can parade it out in the Republican convention.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, it is a fiscal disaster. My Republican colleagues may say this bill is less expensive than before, but that is not true. By moving the effective date of the 15 percent bracket change, this conference report is dramatically more expensive. It will cost \$89 billion over 5 years; and unless my Republican colleagues plan to end the tax cuts by the year 2004, it will cost \$250 billion over the next 10 years.

This enormous cost, Mr. Speaker, to benefit primarily rich families, will be born on the backs of the baby boomers while hoping that Medicare and Social Security will not fall apart just when they need it.

To make matters worse, Mr. Speaker, this bill does a great disservice to working families who make up to \$30,000 a year. Those people, despite all their hard work, will not see much of a change in their EITC benefits because the Republican leadership decided against it.

This conference report is irresponsible. This conference report is shortsighted. It is very politically motivated. It could have given help to a lot of people, a lot of people who really need it. But it did not do so.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report does nearly nothing to help the middle- and lower-income working families to take care of their children. It is yet another expensive Republican scheme to help the richest American families. Mr. Speaker, it really should be in the trash can and not on the stage at the Republican convention.

This process is a sham. The report is a sham. The American people deserve better. I urge my colleagues to oppose this rule.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER), who has worked so hard to champion the cause to bring this legislation to fruition.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this rule and in strong support of our efforts to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. Many of us over the last several years have asked a very basic, fundamental question, that is, is it right, is it fair that, under our Tax Code, a married working couple, where both a husband and wife are in the workforce, that they pay higher taxes just because they are married? Is it right that 25 million married working couples, 50 million taxpayers pay on average \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married?

We call that \$1,400 the marriage tax penalty. It affects married couples who, because they have two incomes, they are forced to file jointly, they are pushed into a higher tax bracket, and they pay higher taxes. It is a marriage tax penalty, and it is wrong.

Let me introduce to the House some constituents of mine, Michelle and Shad Hallihan, two public school teachers from a community of Manhattan, just south of Joliet, Illinois. Shad is a teacher at Joliet High School, Michelle at Manhattan Junior High. Their combined income is about \$62,000. They are middle-class teachers. They are homeowners. Of course, since they were married, they have since had a child, little Ben. Remember their family. Someone new in their lives, and they are so proud of little Ben here who is growing very quickly.

Their marriage tax penalty is about \$1,000 a year that they pay just because they are married. I think it is a fair question, is it right, is it fair that Shad and Michelle Hallihan, two public school teachers who work very hard every day, have a new little boy in their lives, have to pay higher taxes, send money to Washington just because they are married?

I am proud to say this conference report before it eliminates the marriage tax penalty that good people, hard-working middle-class people like Shad and Michelle Hallihan, pay every year because they are married.

Under our conference report, we help those who itemize their taxes as well as those who do not.

Now, my friends on the other side of the aisle say that, if one is middle class and one itemizes one's taxes usually because one is a homeowner or one gives money to one's institutions of faith or church or synagogue or charity, one is rich and one does not deserve marriage tax relief.

Well, Republicans and, fortunately, 48 Democrats believe we should help the middle-class homeowners who give money to charity. They are not rich; they work hard. Shad and Michelle Hallihan make \$62,000 a year. They itemize their taxes.

Now, we help those who do not itemize their taxes in this conference by doubling the standard deduction. That is used by those who do not itemize their taxes. We double that for joint filers to twice that as singles.

For those who are itemizers, like Michelle and Shad Hallihan and little Ben who are homeowners, so they are forced to itemize, we widen the 15 percent bracket. That is the basic tax bracket that affects everybody. We widen that so joint filers, married couples like Shad and Michelle with two incomes can earn twice as much as a single filer and be in the same tax bracket, the same 15 percent tax bracket.

What I think is most exciting about this bill, not only do we help middle-

class families who are homeowners and give money to church and charity who itemize those taxes as well as those who do not is that it is effective this year.

When we pass this legislation and put it on the President's desk today, the President will have an opportunity if he signs it into law to help married couples, 25 million married working couples this year. Because I would point out that doubling the standard deduction, which helps those who do not itemize, and widening the 15 percent tax bracket, which helps those who do itemize, such as homeowners and those that give money to church and charity, that they will receive marriage tax relief this year, because this legislation is effective January 1 of 2000.

Think about that when my friends on the other side of the aisle and Bill Clinton and AL GORE raised taxes in 1993. They made their tax increase retroactive, which meant they went back in the tax year and took one's money. Well, this year we have an opportunity to give marriage tax relief this year, which means we go back to January 1 of this year.

If one is married, one of 25 million married working couples who suffer the marriage tax penalty, one is going to see marriage tax relief this year in tax year 2000. That is a great opportunity. If one believes in fairness in the Tax Code as we do, it is time to make the Tax Code more fair and more simple. We want to eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

Now, my friends on the other side of the aisle have been making lots of excuses. They really do not want to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, because they would much rather spend Shad and Michelle's money. They believe it is better spent here in Washington than Shad and Michelle Hallihan can spend it back in Joliet, Illinois.

Think about it. The average marriage tax penalty for good, hard-working middle-class married couples like Shad and Michelle Hallihan, \$1,400. \$1,400 is 1 year's tuition at Joliet Community College, our local community college. It is 3 months of day care for little Ben at a local child care center in Joliet, Illinois. It is a washer and dryer for their home. It is 3,000 diapers for little Ben.

The marriage tax penalty of \$1,400 is really money for real people. Let us do the right thing. Let us pass this rule. Let us pass this legislation. Let us wipe out the marriage tax penalty for 25 million married working couples.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like a wallet-sized picture of Shad and Michelle and Ben, because I am going to miss them on my August vacation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we will miss Shad and Michelle. But, Mr. Speaker, this is a customary rule for the consideration of a conference report, and I hope my colleagues will support it.

The conference report on the Marriage Tax Penalty Elimination Act has been crafted in the true spirit of compromise, not just between the House and Senate negotiators, but also in an effort to accommodate the President's views.

We have heard the White House's message. They want a smaller tax cut. So we have pared back this legislation. What Republicans hope is that the White House now hears our message and that of the American people who are clamoring for a fair, simpler Tax Code.

The inequities and illogical provisions in our Tax Code are too numerous to count. But today we have a chance to provide some fairness by eliminating one of its most egregious provisions. We can do it in a fiscally responsible manner. There is no excuse why at this time of peace, prosperity, and budget surpluses that we cannot give a little bit back to the American people who are doing the work to keep this economy going and feeding the Government's coffers with their own hard-earned cash.

We in Washington love to take credit for the booming economy and the budget surplus, but the kudos should go to the American people who are driving the success. It is time to temper the Government's greed, and what better place to start than by supporting America's families. Let us end the marriage tax.

I urge a yes vote on the resolution and the conference report.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT).

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the distinguished gentlewoman for yielding me this time, because this is a very important subject; and I want to give a perspective that comes from my district in beautiful upstate New York.

Shortly, on August 4, a young man that I am very familiar with, Jake Smith, who just graduated from Syracuse University's School of Architecture, fulfilled his dream and got a degree and will be getting married. He is marrying a young lady, Kristin Elmer, who is a teacher. The two of them have fallen in love, are getting married. One of the things they did not want to factor in was the possibility that their tax obligation would increase simply because they are getting married.

This is designed to correct and eliminate that inequity. That story is replicated thousands of times over, not just in my home county of Oneida, but

in my 23rd Congressional District of New York where there are 55,000 people who are in similar situations.

Then one multiplies that by 435 and go across the country, and one can see this really has a significant impact. We are talking about providing meaningful tax relief to 25 million Americans. More than that, it expands those who are eligible for the lowest rate of taxation, the 15 percent bracket. I think that is very important.

□ 1045

So I am, for all the right reasons, very enthusiastic in my support of this bill. It does the right thing for the right reasons. In America we should be encouraging those who decide to take the vows and not providing disincentives for getting married.

So as I extend greetings to young Mr. Smith and young Miss Elmer upon their impending wedding, I will be able to do so and to tell them in very meaningful terms that we are cognizant of their needs and we are trying to address them.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank once again the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) for yielding me this time, and I thank my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY), a Boston Red Sox fan, for his indulgence to this New York Yankee fan. This is very special.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR of Georgia). The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. MOAKLEY. 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. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 279, nays 140, not voting 15, as follows:

[Roll No. 417]

YEAS—279

Abercrombie	Berkley	Boucher
Aderholt	Berman	Brady (TX)
Archer	Biggert	Brown (FL)
Armey	Billbray	Bryant
Bachus	Bilirakis	Burr
Baker	Bishop	Buyer
Ballenger	Blagojevich	Callahan
Barcia	Bliley	Calvert
Barr	Blunt	Camp
Barrett (NE)	Boehrlert	Canady
Bartlett	Boehner	Cannon
Bass	Bonilla	Capps
Bateman	Bono	Carson
Bereuter	Boswell	Castle

Chabot	Houghton	Porter
Chambliss	Hulshof	Portman
Chenoweth-Hage	Hunter	Pryce (OH)
Clayton	Hutchinson	Quinn
Clement	Hyde	Ramstad
Clyburn	Inslee	Regula
Coble	Isakson	Reynolds
Coburn	Istook	Riley
Collins	Jackson-Lee	Rodriguez
Combest	(TX)	Rogan
Condit	Jenkins	Rogers
Cook	John	Rohrabacher
Costello	Johnson (CT)	Ros-Lehtinen
Cox	Johnson, Sam	Roukema
Cramer	Jones (NC)	Royce
Crane	Kasich	Ryan (WI)
Cubin	Kelly	Ryun (KS)
Cummings	Kildee	Salmon
Cunningham	King (NY)	Sandlin
Danner	Kingston	Sanford
Davis (VA)	Kleczka	Sawyer
Deal	Knollenberg	Saxton
DeLay	Kolbe	Scarborough
DeMint	Kuykendall	Schaffer
Diaz-Balart	LaHood	Sensenbrenner
Dickey	Largent	Sessions
Doolittle	Latham	Shadegg
Doyle	LaTourrette	Shaw
Dreier	Lazio	Shays
Duncan	Leach	Sherwood
Dunn	Levin	Shimkus
Ehlers	Lewis (CA)	Shows
Ehrlich	Lewis (KY)	Shuster
Emerson	Linder	Simpson
Engel	LoBiondo	Sisisky
English	Lucas (KY)	Skeen
Eshoo	Lucas (OK)	Skelton
Everett	Maloney (CT)	Smith (MI)
Ewing	Manzullo	Smith (NJ)
Fletcher	Martinez	Smith (TX)
Foley	Mascara	Souder
Forbes	McCarthy (NY)	Spence
Fossella	McCollum	Spratt
Fowler	McCrery	Stabenow
Franks (NJ)	McHugh	Stearns
Frelinghuysen	McInnis	Stump
Galleghy	McIntosh	Stupak
Ganske	McIntyre	Sununu
Gekas	McKeon	Sweeney
Gibbons	McKinney	Talent
Gilchrest	Metcalf	Tancredo
Gillmor	Mica	Tauscher
Gilman	Miller (FL)	Tauzin
Gonzalez	Miller, Gary	Taylor (NC)
Goode	Mink	Terry
Goodlatte	Mollohan	Thomas
Goodling	Moore	Thornberry
Gordon	Moran (KS)	Thune
Goss	Morella	Tiahrt
Graham	Murtha	Toomey
Granger	Myrick	Traficant
Green (WI)	Nethercutt	Turner
Greenwood	Ney	Upton
Gutknecht	Northup	Vitter
Hall (TX)	Norwood	Walden
Hansen	Nussle	Walsh
Hastings (WA)	Ortiz	Wamp
Hayes	Ose	Watkins
Hayworth	Oxley	Watts (OK)
Hefley	Packard	Weldon (FL)
Herger	Pascrell	Weller
Hill (MT)	Paul	Whitfield
Hilleary	Pease	Wicker
Hobson	Peterson (PA)	Wilson
Hoekstra	Petri	Wise
Holden	Phelps	Wolf
Holt	Pickering	Young (AK)
Hooley	Pickett	Young (FL)
Horn	Pitts	
Hostettler	Pombo	

NAYS—140

Ackerman	Boyd	Dicks
Allen	Brady (PA)	Dingell
Andrews	Brown (OH)	Dixon
Baird	Capuano	Doggett
Baldacci	Cardin	Dooley
Baldwin	Clay	Edwards
Barrett (WI)	Conyers	Etheridge
Becerra	Crowley	Evans
Bentsen	Davis (FL)	Farr
Berry	DeFazio	Fattah
Blumenauer	Delahunt	Filner
Bonior	DeLauro	Ford
Borski	Deutsch	Frank (MA)

Frost	Markey	Roybal-Allard
Gejdenson	McCarthy (MO)	Rush
Gephardt	McDermott	Sabo
Green (TX)	McGovern	Sanchez
Gutierrez	McNulty	Sanders
Hall (OH)	Meehan	Schakowsky
Hastings (FL)	Meek (FL)	Scott
Hill (IN)	Meeks (NY)	Serrano
Hilliard	Menendez	Sherman
Hinchey	Millender-	Slaughter
Hinojosa	McDonald	Snyder
Hoefel	Miller, George	Stark
Hoyer	Minge	Stenholm
Jackson (IL)	Moakley	Strickland
Jefferson	Moran (VA)	Tanner
Johnson, E. B.	Nadler	Taylor (MS)
Jones (OH)	Napolitano	Thompson (CA)
Kanjorski	Neal	Thompson (MS)
Kaptur	Oberstar	Thurman
Kennedy	Obey	Tierney
Kind (WI)	Olver	Towns
Klink	Owens	Udall (CO)
Kucinich	Pallone	Udall (NM)
LaFalce	Pastor	Velazquez
Lampson	Payne	Visclosky
Lantos	Pelosi	Waters
Larson	Peterson (MN)	Watt (NC)
Lee	Pomeroy	Waxman
Lewis (GA)	Price (NC)	Weiner
Lipinski	Rahall	Wexler
Lofgren	Rangel	Weygand
Lowey	Reyes	Woolsey
Luther	Rivers	Wu
Maloney (NY)	Rothman	Wynn

NOT VOTING—15

Baca	Coyne	Radanovich
Barton	Davis (IL)	Roemer
Burton	DeGette	Smith (WA)
Campbell	Kilpatrick	Vento
Cooksey	Matsui	Weldon (PA)

□ 1110

Messrs. DEUTSCH, CROWLEY, ETHERIDGE, LARSON and MORAN of Virginia changed their vote from "yea" to "nay."

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 417, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 559, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 4810) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 103(a)(1) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2001.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR of Georgia). Pursuant to House Resolution 559, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of July 19, 2000 at page H6582.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER).

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. RANGEL. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will State his inquiry.

Mr. RANGEL. My parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker, is, when you have

a conference report reported to the House, is it necessary to have a conference?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair is aware that the conference report was signed by a majority of the managers. That makes it appropriate to bring the conference report forward.

Mr. RANGEL. Further parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman may state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, if a Member of the House of Representatives was appointed by the Speaker as a conferee, is it necessary that that conferee be invited to the conference?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All conferees are certainly invited to participate in the deliberations of the conference. All points of order have been waived, and it is now appropriate at this time to proceed with the conference.

Mr. RANGEL. Further parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

When a Member of the House of Representatives is appointed by the Speaker to a conference, is it necessary that that conferee be notified where and when the conference is being held?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All persons appointed to the conference committee are entitled to attend. It is not within the power of the Chair to order anybody to attend or not attend or be invited to a particular meeting or not to be invited to a particular meeting.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I do not think I framed my question correctly. I will try again.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman have further parliamentary inquiry?

Mr. RANGEL. Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman shall state it.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, when the Speaker of the House of Representatives appoints a Member of the House of Representatives to attend a conference between the Members of the House and the Senate, is it necessary or should it be that that Member that is appointed be notified as to the time and place of the conference in which the Speaker appointed him?

□ 1115

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR of Georgia). That Member would be entitled to be notified.

Mr. RANGEL. Now, further parliamentary inquiry.

If a bill is being reported out of a conference and a Member appointed to that conference had not received any notice at all of the conference, and, therefore, had no opportunity to discuss the differences between the House and the Senate bill and certainly no opportunity to sign the conference report and did not even know there was a conference being held, can you have a

report being made to the House floor under those circumstances?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. At this point the Chair cannot look beyond the signatures themselves which were on the conference report. A majority of the signatures of the conferees were on the report. The Chair cannot look beyond that. Furthermore, all points of order have been waived against consideration.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I have no further inquiries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the conference report on H.R. 4810.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today, we take the final step toward ending the marriage penalty for 25 million married couples. That is 50 million Americans. Once again, this can-do Congress is sending common sense legislation to the President so we can help America's working families make ends meet. And once again, this Congress is bringing fairness to the Tax Code.

I am proud to say that this marriage penalty relief bill is very close to the version the House passed with strong bipartisan support twice this year. In fact, it is better because we have accelerated the tax relief to married couples so that they can begin to realize a benefit this year, the year 2000, rather than having to wait under the original House bill until the year 2003.

The doubling of the standard deduction, the first step in doubling the 15 percent income tax bracket, and the expansion of the earned income credit limits will all be effective retroactive to January 1 of this year. That means that when President Clinton signs this bill, millions of couples will be helped this year when they file their estimated taxes and next year during tax time when they report their tax return for this year. I honestly hope President Clinton will sign this bill because it meets what he has signaled are his primary concerns.

First, it is fiscally responsible. The bill's tax relief of \$89 billion is less than one-half of 1 percent of the \$2.2 trillion non-Social Security surplus. Less than one-half of 1 percent. Is that too much to create fairness for families? And it is 64 percent, almost two-thirds, less than the amount of marriage penalty relief he said he could support.

Second, it gives the most help to those middle- and lower-income Ameri-

cans who are hit hardest by the marriage tax penalty. By doubling the 15 percent bracket and the EIC income thresholds, we erase the marriage tax penalty for millions of lower- and middle-income workers. This is especially important to working women whose incomes are often taxed at extremely high marginal rates, some as high as 50 percent, by this penalty.

Finally, this bill is part of an overall budget framework that protects Social Security and Medicare, pays down the debt by 2013 or sooner, and maintains fiscal discipline and our balanced budget.

Because of these actions, the President should see he now has every reason to sign this bill. If only for a brief moment, I hope he can and will put politics aside and place the needs of 25 million married couples above the needs of politicians and political campaigns. This is a kitchen table issue for families trying to make ends meet. The American people overwhelmingly support this bill, and we can do this right now. There no longer can be any delay in the other body. This is a conference report. It is an up or down vote. I hope every Member will vote "aye" overwhelmingly.

In his January State of the Union, President Clinton stood in this Chamber and asked Congress to work with him to fix the marriage tax penalty. There were no preconditions. There was no quid pro quo, no wink, no nod, no demand for a trade; and I believe the American people do not want to see a Congress operate where if you scratch my back, I will scratch yours whether it is right or wrong. There should be no linkage or trade on an issue this important to the families in this country. It stands alone. In fact, there was only boisterous applause and cheers from both sides of the aisle when the President spoke in this Chamber and said he wanted to fix the marriage penalty. So today we fulfill our responsibility and we finish the job, and we ask that he fulfill his. Indeed, 25 million married couples should not be punished any longer just because they got married.

I urge strong support for this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), the minority leader.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this conference report. I am for doing something about the marriage penalty, and I very much want us in this Congress to get rid of the marriage penalty. The problem with this conference report is that it does a lot of other things that do not attack the marriage penalty and in its overall it spends too much revenue that could be needed and is needed for

other priorities like a Medicare prescription drug program or shoring up Medicare and Social Security.

I want to say first that this conference bill is larger than either the House version of this bill or the Senate version and that, worse than that, it is as unfair as these earlier measures were. And we believe, because we cannot get the official estimates, that it is as much as \$280 billion over 10 years. This bill is poorly targeted. It is tilted in favor of wealthier couples, and it neglects those Americans who need marriage tax penalty relief the most.

Under this bill, about two-thirds of the tax cuts go to couples in the top 30 percent of the income scale while the vast majority of couples, about 70 percent, would receive only one-third of the total tax cuts. This bill gives half of the tax cut to couples who do not even suffer from a marriage penalty. Let me say it again. Half the benefit of this tax cut goes to couples who do not even suffer from a marriage penalty. Now, that is a serious flaw. It is mislabeling. It is misbranding what we are doing.

I think this bill is symptomatic, though, of a larger flaw in all of the tax cuts that are being brought through the Congress. I have here a chart, a chart that shows clearly the contrast between the Republican distribution of tax cuts and the alternative proposals that have been offered by Democrats. The contrast between the two plans is stark. If all of the Republican cuts were to become law, Americans in the middle-income range, those making an average of \$31,000 a year, would get an average tax cut of \$131, because of all the tax cuts that you want to pass. For the top 1 percent, they would get a tax cut of about \$23,000. So somebody making \$31,000, they get \$131 in total tax cuts. Somebody at the top, the top 1 percent, they would get \$23,000. Now, if you take our tax cuts and put them together, that person making \$31,000 would get \$371 and the person in the top 1 percent would get \$133. We think we ought to have these tax cuts going to the people who really need them.

Now, I have said on all these debates, we still have a chance in this Congress to reach a compromise, a consensus, on not only the tax cuts that we can do but on the other issues that exist within this budget. What are we going to do about a Medicare prescription medicine program? What are we going to do about shoring up Medicare and Social Security so that they have longer life out into the future? What are we going to do about education, trying to make sure that every child in this country gets a strong education and training so they can be productive, law-abiding citizens?

The President sent a budget when we did the reestimates. He put about \$50 billion aside to be decided by the next

Congress and the Congress after that. He put aside a substantial amount for targeted tax cuts, \$263 billion. If you agree to that budget, and I am not saying you do, but if we come to an agreement on a budget, the question becomes, where does this piece, the marriage penalty piece, fit into that overall budget? We are proceeding with the pieces of the budget rather than coming to a consensus on the overall budget. And I say to you at the end of the day, I believe all of these tax cut measures are going to be vetoed, because we do not have that consensus.

And then at the end of the day, the taxpayer, the citizen out in the field, in the country, is going to say, what has this Congress done for me? Where is my marriage penalty relief? Where is my estate tax relief? Where is my education incentive? Where is my long-term care incentive? Where is my child care incentive? These are the issues that people will ask. It is not enough for us to do a weekly tax bill. It is not enough for us to do two tax bills a week. What matters is not what we pass here. It is what the President will sign that can actually be experienced in the lives of America's families.

I plead with my friends in the Republican Party, I respect your views of what you want to do in this budget. I do not know that all of my views are right. But let us sit down in the name of common sense, let us figure out a budget, let us get some of these things done this year. If you are having a marriage tax penalty problem, you want a solution this year. A veto does you no good. So I ask Members to vote down this conference report, let us sit down at a table with everybody at the table, let us work out a budget, let us work out tax cuts that are fair and equitable and make sense in terms of not only the budget but make sense in terms of Medicare, Social Security, a Medicare prescription medicine program, and yes, ending the marriage penalty for America's taxpayers.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. As I listen to the presentation by those from the other side of the aisle, it is always the same siren song. There is always a higher priority than helping families, giving families tax relief, so that they will have more in their pockets to take care of their immediate needs. And there are always priorities that are ahead of creating fairness in the Tax Code. They have not met a tax relief bill to let working Americans keep more in their pockets that they liked. They always have some reason to be against it over and over and over again.

□ 1130

They shout out the President will veto this. We heard that in our last debate. We heard it over and over again from their side. The President will veto

this bill; therefore, we cannot embrace it. That was on the pension, retirement security bill. There were 25 votes against that bill.

Are we to believe it is credible when they say the President is going to veto these bills? I do not think so. That should not be an argument. We should do the right thing, and that is what we are doing today.

Mr. Speaker, in the distribution tables, those charts were based on the Treasury's distribution tables as to who gets the benefit and who does not. They have been totally discredited, the whole basis on which they make their determinations has been discredited over and over again.

The nonpartisan Joint Tax Committee, that serves both Houses of this Congress and both Democrats and Republicans, does not support that distribution table. The American people are smart enough to know that when we double the standard deduction, we help those people at the lower-income end. When we double the 15 percent bracket, we help the lower-income people, not doubling 28 percent, 31 percent, 36 percent, 39.6 percent brackets. Their arguments are so shallow that surely the American people can see through them.

Finally, they say but wait a minute, they give part of their tax relief to those who get a marriage bonus. Look at their own proposal, half of their tax relief goes to people who are enjoying the marriage bonus. They do not talk about that. This is a good bill. It provides for the needs of American families and lets them keep more of what they work for and creates fairness in the code.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it just seems to me if we really want to give relief that we have to recognize that there is no Republican or Democratic party way to do this. The only way that we can give tax relief in an effective way is to be working together and not to test the President as to what he would veto, but to work with him.

The partisanship just drips in the rhetoric, and we hear a lot of it today. We find that the U.S. Treasury figures are not credible, and they represent Democrats, Republicans, our citizens. They are being challenged.

The statistical data that supports that this is targeted for wealthy people, instead of coming from a nonpartisan government agency, it comes from the Joint Taxation Committee, where the Republicans appoints every employee that works for the Joint Tax Committee. But even worse than that, it just seems to me that when we start adding up all of the tax cuts that the Republican leadership has advocated on a weekly basis on the way to the

Philadelphia convention, if we include the Federal debt, it comes close to a trillion dollars.

In a sense, the Republicans are depending on a veto in order to come up with their next tax cut, because the figures just do not add up. They do not mean what they are saying. They are depending on a veto for some of these things, and to constantly talk about a surplus at a time when the Nation has a national debt of close to \$6 trillion, and we include a mandate that that be reduced and that we do have affordable prescription drugs and to put together a package that the President would sign, I do not see how we can say that is scratching somebody's back.

That is protecting our old folks' back to be able to say that if we have access to health care, we should be at least able to buy the prescriptions that the doctor has prescribed for us.

I think it is courageous for the President to say that if we are so concerned about rewarding our constituents that are wealthy, we do it, but do not forget those people that need some political power in order to get an affordable prescription drug out of this House.

I conclude by saying, too, we have to find some way to start being able to work together in a civil way. I have been in this House close to 30 years; and I have been privileged, absolutely privileged, to be appointed to many conferences to try to work out differences between the House and the Senate. I think it goes beyond bad manners.

I think it goes to a question of testing the rules of this House when those people in the majority can have the arrogance to have a conference and not to have the minority represented. It is not a threat to me. I am not a lonely guy, but it is a threat to what this institution stands for, no matter what party has the majority.

It is a question of equity and fair play. It is a question of the minority having an opportunity to express its views. It is a question as to whether or not a conference between the House and the Senate just means a conference between Republican leadership and excluding those of us who are not.

I hope that no matter what happens in the next election, that my party, if it is in the majority, will never stoop as low as to exclude those people, just because they differ from the majority party, from attending a conference so that the people, yes, indeed the people, which the House is supposed to represent, can work its will and bring a conference here.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of the time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR of Georgia). Does the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) claim the time of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER)?

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, yes, I do.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) will control the time of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER).

There was no objection.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH), one of the members of the Committee on Ways and Means

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) for yielding me the time, and I would be remiss at the outset, Mr. Speaker, if I did not acknowledge someone who will follow me in this well in just a few minutes, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER), my good friend and seat mate who worked so hard on this legislation, along with the gentleman from Indiana on achieving marriage penalty relief for hard-working Americans.

It is sad, but I guess not totally unexpected, that our friends on the left again would be involved in political speeches that really, sadly have more to do with ego than results. It is also curious to see this almost Orwellian definition of bipartisanship.

In Arizona, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, the rest of America, bipartisanship means understanding that there are sometimes are philosophical differences but focusing on results, and the most profound results, Mr. Speaker, the most profound results, my colleagues, is making sure that American couples get to keep in their pockets up to 1,200 a year.

I would suggest to all my friends, Mr. Speaker, that that is real money, and with a compromised solution, stepping back bipartisan in nature, we are inviting not only our colleagues on the left, but, indeed, Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States to join us in truly a civil, bipartisan approach to help that married couple in Payson, Arizona making \$36,000 a year penalized because they are married.

We are saying to that couple, whether the couple lives in Payson, Arizona or Peoria, Illinois or in Harlem in New York City that they can keep that money in their pocket; that they will not be penalized for being married. That is what we are focusing on today.

Friends, bipartisanship, Mr. Speaker, bipartisanship is not the majority party twisting and bending its good name and ideas to the will of the minority. It is working together. So in that sense, Mr. Speaker, I ask our colleagues on the left to join with us in providing true marriage penalty relief.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker I yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), a Member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I support a reduction in the marriage tax, and we Democrats voted for that. But under

this bill of the Republicans, half of the cuts, as the minority leader said, would go to those who pay no marriage penalty at all.

I want to say a bit about the distribution. I am sorry that the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER) is not here. Look, take the chart my colleague distributed from the so-called bipartisan Joint Tax Committee. Here is what it says. What it says is that those earning over \$200,000, in terms of the billions of tax cuts, would receive as much as all taxpayers who have income \$50,000 and less. That is fair?

Those who are earning \$75,000 to \$200,000 would have a reduction in their effective tax rate between seven or eight-tenths of 1 percent while everybody under \$50,000 would have no reduction in their effective tax rate or at the most two-tenths of 1 percent. Take your own figures. That is fair?

Let me emphasize a critical point. When this bill is in full effect, and forget about the sunset which will never go away, if this bill is passed, it would cost \$280 billion over 10 years.

The total tax cuts embraced by the Republican majority in the House and Senate come to \$874 billion over 10 years. And my Republican colleagues could not sell the \$792 billion, the public said no, they want fiscal responsibility. The Republican majority leaves no room for prescription drugs. They leave no room for long-term care.

In the Democratic alternative, we have embraced a targeted marriage penalty relief proposal and targeted estate tax relief. It is fiscally responsible. Theirs is irresponsible. It is not conservative. It is reckless. It is not compassionate. It is callous.

Their fiscal irresponsibility is bad policy. I think once again it is going to prove to be bad politics. The bill penalizes, in the name of removing this penalty on marriage, it penalizes fiscal responsibility. There is no plan. They come here willy nilly. All they have is a political plot for Philadelphia. We can do better, if we will sit down, not in a so-called conference without any Democrats and without the administration, and seriously talk about a fiscally responsible tax-cut package. We can have it.

Mr. Speaker, as long as the Republican majority goes this way, we are going to get vetoes, and we are going to get deadlock. They think they will have a political issue. It did not work before, and it will not work now.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER), who has been responsible for bringing this very important piece of legislation to the Congress.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, over the last several years, we have asked a pretty fundamental question and that is, is it right, is it fair under our Tax Code a married working couple, where both the husband and wife are both in

the workforce, a married working couple with a two-income household pay higher taxes under our Tax Code than an identical couple with identical income who choose to live together outside of marriage? Is it right? Is it fair? Is it fair that under our Tax Code that 25 million married working couples pay on average 1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married? Of course not.

The goal of this legislation, I am proud to say, is to wipe out the marriage tax penalty almost entirely for 25 million married working couples. I think it is pretty fiscally responsible to take one-half of 1 percent of a \$2.2 trillion surplus to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. To listen to my friends on the other side of the aisle, you think we would be breaking their piggy bank to take one-half of 1 percent of a \$2.2 trillion surplus to help 25 million married working couples who pay higher taxes just because they are married.

□ 1145

I, for one, and I am pleased to say that 222 Republicans and we were joined by 48 Democrats who broke with their leadership, who believe it is time to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, that this House has voted to send to the Senate today, we are voting on the agreement between the House and the Senate. We hope the President will join with us to eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

Let me introduce a couple of constituents from the south suburbs of Chicago which I represent, Shad and Michelle Hallihan. They are public school teachers. Shad is at Joliet High School and Michelle is at Manhattan Junior High School. Their combined incomes are about \$62,000. They pay just around \$1,000 in marriage tax penalty just because they are married under our Tax Code.

Now this photo was taken when they were married. It was about the time we introduced our legislation about 2 years ago. Since then Shad and Michelle have had a little boy, little Ben; and little Ben, of course, is this little guy. We hope some day he does not have to pay the marriage tax penalty. Our hope is for his parents we can eliminate it this year.

I would point out under this legislation we provide middle-class tax relief for middle-class couples like Shad and Michelle Hallihan this year because our legislation is effective January 1 of 2000. So if the President would join with us to eliminate the marriage tax penalty for 25 million married working couples, Shad and Michelle Hallihan would see their marriage tax penalty eliminated this year.

Now under our legislation, we do several things. We double the standard deduction for those who do not itemize to \$8,800, twice that for single filers. We

also widen the 15 percent bracket to help those who do itemize. Shad and Michelle Hallihan are also homeowners and because they are homeowners they itemize their taxes; and the only way to help people, middle-class families who own a home or give to church or charity or their synagogue, is to widen the 15 percent bracket so that they too can receive marriage tax relief.

Under our proposal, we eliminate the marriage tax penalty suffered by Shad and Michelle Hallihan. Think about it. In Joliet, Illinois, the marriage tax penalty of \$1,400, the average marriage tax penalty, is one year's tuition at our local community college. It is 3 months of day care for little Ben at a local child care center in Joliet. It is 3,000 diapers for little Ben. But it is also, if we also think about it, if Shad and Michelle had that money that they currently pay in the marriage tax penalty, were able to set it aside in an education savings account for little Ben, by the time Ben is 18 they would have been able to set aside almost \$20,000 that they currently send to Uncle Sam, they could put in little Ben's college fund. That is what marriage tax relief means for the Hallihans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of excuses from our good friends on the other side: let us do just a little bit so we can say we have done something; we have other priorities we want to spend it on, but think about this. One half of 1 percent of a \$2.2 trillion surplus is being given back to middle-class working married couples like Shad and Michelle Hallihan so they can take that marriage tax penalty that currently goes to Washington, gets spent on other things, and use it to take care of their families' needs, little Ben in particular.

So, Mr. Speaker, let us do the fiscally responsible thing. Let us help middle-class working married couples who suffer the marriage tax penalty. There are 25 million of them. That is almost 50 million taxpayers who pay higher taxes just because they made the choice of getting married.

My hope is the President will join with us and sign this legislation. The President joined with us when he changed his mind on IRS reform. He was opposed to it, decided to support it. He was opposed to balancing the budget. Now he takes credit for it. He was opposed to welfare reform. Now he takes credit for it. My hope is the President will join with us and sign the elimination of the marriage tax penalty, the legislation we are going to hopefully pass today. We will certainly share the credit with him because it is the right thing to do.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote. I invite every Democrat to join with Republicans. Let us vote to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. I ask for an "aye" vote.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Mary-

land (Mr. CARDIN), a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, let me point out to my friends on both sides of the aisle, I think some good points have been made here. I think there are some facts that we should at least get on the table as to where we are.

There is a marriage penalty. Married couples pay some more taxes than they would if they were not married. That is wrong and we should correct it.

Fact number two, the conference report that is before us will spend a lot of money that will not go to people who are presently paying a penalty for being married. Let us acknowledge that. The Joint Committee on Taxation has scored the conference report before us. It spends \$292 billion over the next 10 years. Half of that relief, \$145 billion, goes to taxpayers who presently pay less taxes because they are married rather than more taxes.

Fact number three, when \$292 billion is added to the other tax bills that have been passed by this body, we are now up to \$874 billion in tax bills that we have passed.

Now let us put that to the economic conditions in a budget that we are trying to deal with. We have projected surpluses. We have not realized those surpluses yet. We had demographic changes in this country that are going to put real pressure on our Social Security and Medicare system. We all understand that. So passing an \$874 billion tax bill is reckless. It is wrong. It jeopardizes the economic progress that everybody is proud of in this body. Democrats and Republicans are proud of the progress that we have made in strengthening our economy, but our top priority should be to pay down the national debt, to make sure that we can meet our obligations in Social Security and in Medicare. That should be our top priority, but instead we are passing tax bill after tax bill that in total is irresponsible.

The sad tragedy of the bill before us is that we acknowledge there is a problem that we should deal with, but we could deal with it for one half the cost of what we are spending in this bill. We are spending \$150 billion more than we need to spend. That \$150 billion, if we could use that we could have a prescription drug plan in Medicare that really makes some sense, that will really help our seniors deal with the high cost of medicines. \$150 billion will help us reduce the deficit faster, which pays off big dividends to everyone.

The national debt is a tax on all of us, every one of our constituents, whether they are married or not married, whether they have a marriage penalty, do not have a marriage penalty. Yes, those that pay a penalty

want relief, but all taxpayers want to see our national debt retired. All of our citizens want to make sure that we live up to our obligations in Social Security and Medicare.

I have heard both Democrats and Republicans talk about strengthening Medicare with a prescription drug benefit. So let us have a budget. Let us follow regular order. Let us have a budget that makes sense. Yes, it should provide tax relief, but it should make sure that we are going to pay down the debt. It should make sure that we can comply with the other obligations, and it should target the relief that deals with the people that really have a marriage penalty. This bill does not do it.

We can do better. We can work in a true bipartisan way so that we can get relief to those who need it this year. There is still time that remains. I urge my colleagues to reject this conference report and work in a bipartisan way to produce a bill that will help those who pay the penalty.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN), a member of the Committee on Ways and Means, a very responsible Member.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS), for yielding me this time; and I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the legislation today.

Mr. Speaker, our Tax Code has gotten so complex and so Byzantine, so difficult to figure out, that it rewards and penalizes behavior in very unusual ways. For example, at a time when I think this Congress, I think everyone in this Congress, is concerned about promoting family values, strengthening families, our Tax Code actually penalizes people just because they choose to get married. That is what we are trying to address here today. That is what the debate is all about.

The penalty is really a quirk in the tax law. It affects 25 million couples nationally. In my own district I represent in Ohio it affects 62,000 couples. They pay more just because they are married. Nationally, the average is \$1,400. Now that may not seem like much by Washington standards; but that \$1,400 could go to a 401(k) contribution, an IRA contribution, help for retirement security, help for education. Regardless of what someone might do with it, the principle here is that the Federal Government should not be keeping that \$1,400 just because people choose to get married.

At a time when our country is suffering high divorce rates, Congress should be doing just the opposite. We should be encouraging marriage, not slapping a penalty on it; and, of course, our tax laws should never be written in a way to discourage people from playing by the rules. That is what this debate is about today.

Now, we have heard some discussion about how one might address the marriage penalty. I like the approach we have before us today. I like it for two reasons. One, it is simple. It is very simple because what it does is double the standard deduction. It doubles the 15 percent income tax bracket, and it expands the earned income tax credit. All of these are relatively simple as compared to a more complicated approach one could take to avoid any possibility that somebody who was not now penalized was getting some tax relief.

What would one have to do? They would probably have to have the taxpayer make three calculations in terms of their income tax liability.

Now, again, my friends on the other side who have expressed concern that some stay-at-home moms may get some tax relief from this, and we can talk about whether or not that is appropriate or not, but I would just ask them to look at how complicated it would be. We already talked about the complexity of our Tax Code. If there was not some spill-over to help some of those folks who may be stay-at-home moms who do not get a tax penalty now.

I would also make the obvious point that the Democrat alternative also provides tax relief to some people who do not have a marriage penalty. I would love to hear a response to that.

The other reason I like this legislation is because by doubling the 15 percent bracket and expanding EITC, it is going to help, despite what we have heard today and the charts we have seen about the overall so-called Republican tax proposals, and I am not sure what proposals are included or not and I am not sure what analysis it is, but because it doubles the bracket and because it expands the EITC, it will provide relief to millions of low-income and middle-income Americans.

So my hope today is that all of us who are opposed to the marriage penalty will come together, will vote for this legislation, send a message down to the White House, get the President to sign it, and provide this year relief to those millions of couples in this country who currently bear the burden of an unfair penalty.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA), a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, what we are hearing from my Republican colleagues today is true, because what they are talking about is resolving the marriage penalty, and so half the bill does that. What my Republican colleagues are not telling us about is the other half of the bill. Fifty percent of the cost of this bill goes to the people that were referred to before, Shad and his family from Illinois; and that is the part that all of us agree with. If the

bill before us did that and solely did that, 435 Members of Congress would vote yes today; and the President would sign the bill this evening.

What they fail to tell us about is the other half of the bill, which has nothing to do with marriage penalty. Mr. Speaker, understand that 50 percent of the benefits of this bill go to couples who do not pay a marriage penalty at all. So let's not call it a marriage penalty relief bill if they are getting it and they are not paying it. Call it a tax relief bill for the upper income, because if we look at the cost of the bill, almost 80 percent goes to the highest income wage earners in this country.

□ 1200

I have no problem with them doing it that way, but then call it that and sell it that way. But do we know why they do not? Because that bill would not garner support of even Members on their side of the aisle, because at that point, what we would do, Mr. Speaker, is put that proposal here, weigh it against resolving and reducing the Federal debt; if we looked at the two, we would say, no, the debt is more important, get it off the backs of our children and our grandchildren. Then we would put in the next column a drug benefit for those seniors in our country who cannot afford it, so we would weigh a drug benefit or a tax break for the wealthiest, and it would fail on that score. So that is why they have tucked it into this bill and called it marriage penalty relief.

My friends, this is only half true. The other half has nothing to do with marriage penalty.

Why did they not invite the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) to the conference? Because he might make that point and they would have to think about it. Why did they not involve the President and this administration in those negotiations? Because they might have eked out a deal that the President would buy and a bill he would sign. But that would totally destroy the reason we are here today.

Mr. Speaker, we are here today, the number one reason: pass this bill to the President, he will veto it within the next 10 days, and they are going to use this as a prop at their Republican convention in Philadelphia. If the bill would be signed through negotiation and inclusion of the minority party, that prop would be gone. There would be a gaping hole in George Bush's acceptance speech.

So know what we are doing here? Yes, they are half right, but like Paul Harvey says, let us tell the rest of the story.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY), a responsible member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. MCCRERY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

In response to the previous speaker, let me just say that those on this side of the aisle are aware that a great deal of the benefits of this tax bill, this tax cut go to married couples that do not incur the marriage penalty. We think that is swell. We think that married couples with kids that are trying to make it need a tax cut. We think married couples without kids that are struggling to get a new car or get enough toward a down payment on a house need a tax cut.

Look, we have passed several tax cuts since the Republicans have been in the majority in this House, since January of 1995. The President has signed those, even with all of those tax cuts that we have passed and the President has signed, the American people are still paying more in taxes to the Federal Government as a percent of our national income than they ever have. Our total tax burden in this country is as high as it has ever been. We would like to reduce that, my colleagues on the other side are right, not only for couples that are incurring a marriage penalty, which we all admit is wrong in the Tax Code, but yes, even for those married couples that are not incurring the marriage penalty. I do not make any apology for that.

Let us talk about this marriage penalty. Let me just explain it real quickly so everybody knows what it is in the Tax Code. A marriage tax penalty occurs when a married couple pays more taxes by filing jointly than they would if each spouse could file as a single person. In other words, they pay more in taxes as a married couple than they would if they were not married and just living together. Now, is that the kind of social policy we should encourage through the Tax Code? Surely, we do not think so.

The most common marriage tax penalty happens because the standard deduction for couples is \$1,450, less than double the standard deduction for singles. For example, an individual earning \$25,500 would be taxed at 15 percent, while a married couple with incomes of \$25,500 each are taxed at 28 percent on a portion of their income. That is wrong, and this bill fixes that.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from northern California (Mr. HERGER), another responsible member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, it is projected that the Federal Government will take in more than \$2 trillion in taxpayer overpayments over the next decade, excluding Social Security dollars. Should we not use a small part of this surplus to correct one of the most onerous provisions of the U.S. Tax Code, the totally unfair marriage penalty?

The bill we are considering today will provide real tax relief for 25 million married couples, 47,000 of which are in

my district in northern California. This legislation will save taxpayers almost \$90 billion over the next 5 years. It is important to remember that these are dollars that married taxpayers currently pay to the government for no other reason except that they are married.

The Clinton-Gore administration claims that we cannot afford to give back to the taxpayers a small portion of their tax overpayment. Mr. Speaker, if we cannot afford to give the taxpayers back some of their own money when we have record budget surpluses, when will we be able to? When a couple stands at an altar and says, "I do," they are not agreeing to higher taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I hope that the President and the Vice President, AL GORE, would drop their opposition and sign this much-needed measure into law.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP), another responsible member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for yielding me this time.

I obviously rise in support of this conference report. I think once again, this Congress is sending common sense legislation to the President that will help America's working families make ends meet.

This Congress is doing its work and bringing fairness to the Tax Code and helping families.

This marriage penalty relief bill is very close to the version that the House passed twice this year with strong bipartisan support. In fact, it is even better than the version we had earlier, because we have accelerated the tax relief to married couples so that they can get tax relief from the marriage penalty burden in the year 2000 this year. The doubling of the standard deduction and the doubling of the 15 percent income tax bracket, the expansion of the earned income tax credit limits, those will all be effective retroactive to January of this year. That means if President Clinton signs this bill, millions of couples will be helped next year during tax time.

Mr. Speaker, I think this bill is fiscally responsible, because it is less than one-half of 1 percent of the \$2.2 trillion non-Social Security surplus, less than one-half of 1 percent. Second, it gives the most help to those middle- and lower-income Americans who are hit hardest by the marriage tax penalty, by doubling the 15 percent bracket and the IC income thresholds.

Finally, this bill is part of an overall budget framework. For the first time, this Congress this year passed a budget that would totally eliminate the national debt by the year 2013, and this is part of that budget framework that not

only eliminates the debt, but also protects Social Security and Medicare. So this maintains fiscal discipline and balances our budget.

Because of these actions, I am hopeful the President will now see that he has every reason to sign this bill. I hope that we can put politics aside and help the needs of the 25 million couples, married couples that would get relief under this bill. I urge support of this conference report.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LARGENT).

Mr. LARGENT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for yielding me this time.

This is a great day. This is a great day when we have an opportunity to vote on marriage penalty relief. Finally, 25 million couples in this country that have been penalized simply for the fact that they have been married will see some tax relief. This is a great day in this country, that this Congress is sending a message to Americans that we think you, as couples, know how to spend your money better than we know how to spend it here in Washington, D.C. That is a great day, that is a great thing. I fully anticipate that we will see a very significant bipartisan vote on this bill later this afternoon, as soon as we finish the debate on this measure. I look forward to that, to joining with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in passing this marriage penalty relief bill today.

Mr. Speaker, there is really more good news, and it has been trumpeted in Washington here quite a bit, and that is the fact that the CBO has announced that the projected surplus, non-Social Security surplus is going crazy. They first anticipated a \$15 billion surplus, non-Social Security surplus. This Republican Congress has pledged not to touch the Social Security surplus, so we are talking about everything else, non-Social Security surplus is now going to be not \$15 billion but \$128 billion in the year 2001 alone.

So we hear a lot of complaints from Members on the other side of the aisle that this tax bill spends too much money. Now, I have to step back just for a second and just remind myself that it is only in Washington that we talk about giving taxpayers their money back as spending money, as if that money really belongs to Washington and not to the American taxpayers. But do not forget, the money is yours. It does not belong to us, it does not belong to Democrats or Republicans, it does not belong to the House or to the Senate. It belongs to you. You worked long and hard to earn that money, and then you send it to Washington, D.C. and now you are sending so much we do not need it all. We want to send it back to you in the form of marriage penalty relief.

Mr. Speaker, I am here today to support the actions of this committee and this Congress, and I urge all of my colleagues to join with me in sending tax relief to 25 million married couples in this country.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as we conclude this discussion, we do it in an atmosphere of partisanship, which is shameful. It is such an important issue to the American people, and especially to married people. Had I been invited to the conference, that is after the Speaker appointed me, I would have been able to bring to that conference a message from the President of the United States. Because I was authorized to say that even though the President thought that there was a better way to target the relief for married couples, he recognized that those in the majority had this overwhelming compulsion to reward those people that God has already rewarded with additional wealth. But he had authorized me to tell the conferees, had I been told where the meeting was, that he was willing to go along in the spirit of bipartisanship with the Republican majority marriage penalty bill if only they would consider and attach to that some relief for the older folks that cannot afford to purchase their prescription drugs.

The Chairman said, that is wrong, that we should not participate in "you-scratch-my-back-and-I-scratch-yours." Well, we are politicians, and if my Republican colleagues have such an overwhelming concern for the taxpayers that they are talking about giving back close to \$1 trillion, let us be honest with the taxpayers.

The Republican majority is not giving them back anything, not 1 red cent. What they are doing, and they should be doing with us, is revising the tax system to give them some relief. They are not sending Americans a refundable tax check, as every one of the speakers implied, they are just reducing their tax burdens, and we would want to join in that effort.

We cannot have bipartisan bills by closing up the conference and having it from room to room so that the minority cannot participate. We cannot have bipartisan legislation, unless my Republican colleagues reach out and ask the White House, what can be accommodated; unless they talk with the Democratic members on the committee and the leadership, and then reach an agreement. That is the beautiful thing about this great country and what used to be this great House of Representatives, is that no one comes here with all of the answers. Just being in the majority does not mean that they are brighter than the rest of us.

□ 1215

Just being elected does not mean they have all of the answers. It means

that they reach out, they discuss the problems together, and they come up with not what is best for their convention in Philadelphia but what is best for the people of the United States of America.

It is no great genius if they can count that they have 218 votes and that they have some Democrats that will vote with them from time to time to pass bills. They have passed any number of bills knowing that they are not going to become law.

How does that make them a better legislator? How do they go to a convention and say, "I passed it and they did not support it?" Where they really have leadership is if they are able to say, "I had some great ideas. I was able to persuade the House and the President of the United States to buy these ideas, and together, yes, together, we did not just pass bills but we made law."

We want to do it with them. There is not an issue that they brought up that we do not want to cooperate with them, but they just cannot give us slivers of tax relief and forget that we have a responsibility not only to relieve the tax burden of the taxpayers, but also to make certain that the social security system is there when they are eligible for it.

We have a responsibility not just to give access to health care under Medicare, but to make certain that an older person can afford to get their prescriptions when the doctors say they need it. We have to reduce the tax burden on our people, but we also have a responsibility to pay down the Federal debt. That is \$6 trillion. That means that every year we are paying billions of dollars in interest. We ought to relieve the next generation of that burden.

What I am saying is, it is no profile in courage to come here and pass bills, especially when they have been promised a veto. What is courageous is to be able to say, "I want to sit down with these Democrats."

There are enough differences between our parties to fight about in November, but tax relief for the married couples, tax relief for estates, tax relief for couples with minimum wage, relief to be able to get affordable drugs, protection of social security and protection of Medicare, they are not Democratic issues, these are American issues.

We cannot tackle these problems and we cannot bring solutions to those problems by going to Democratic caucuses or going off to our conventions saying, "We fought off those people," and the other side cannot go to Philadelphia and talk about all the bills that they have passed unless they can tell the voters that they have given them relief because they have worked it out with Democrats and with the President.

So, Mr. Speaker, here we are once again. I suspect there will be other

bills on their way to Philadelphia, where they will be there trying to say, if one is appointed to a conference, would they be kind enough, gentle enough, courteous enough to allow the Democrats to attend the conference? It is a part of the House rules.

Are they so afraid of a different opinion? Are they so afraid to engage? Are they so committed not to do anything to provide decent legislation that the President may sign? Are they so embedded with the concept that they do not want to touch prescription drugs that even when the President sends a national message, they want their bill: "Take care of American old folks, take care of our sick," and to make certain that when we leave here, that we can go to California, we can go to Philadelphia, we can go to our conventions and say that we differ, and that is what makes America great, that is what makes this Congress great?

But do not hold the older folks hostage giving them slivers of proposed tax give-backs, when they know that they are not talking about anything that they intend to become law.

It is not too late for us to work together. We have had enough of the fighting. Why can we not go to Philadelphia and say that we do not need a mandate from the Speaker to meet, we do not need a mandate from the leader to meet, we do not need a mandate from our candidates to meet. We have been elected to enact law, to get it signed into law.

Why do we not start today and say that from now on we will be working together, not as Democrats, not as Republicans, but Members and proud Members of this great House of Representatives, and collectively we will be in the Rose Garden seeing that these bills in a bipartisan way are signed into law?

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is pleasing to hear Member after Member, no matter which side of the aisle they are from, standing and saying that we do need to give tax relief to the American taxpayer.

There has been a lot of mention about Philadelphia and what the Republicans will do on their way to Philadelphia, upon arrival in Philadelphia. But I believe both sides of the aisle do have a convention coming up very shortly. I would request that the Democrat side of the aisle join us over here, and many will. They can also go to their convention and talk about how they did give tax relief to the American taxpayer.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT).

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

In America we have rewarded dependency, subsidized illegitimacy, and

bragged about being family-friendly, but basically, we tax the institution of marriage.

I think this is ridiculous. This bill has been moderated some after it has come out of the Senate. This is a good bill. The American people deserve this bill. I stand very strongly in support of the passage of this bill, and urge the Congress to once again incentivize marriage, to reward marriage, reward family life, reward those that pay the bills to get a tax break.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close by commending the gentleman in his fight, and also commending the Democrats who will join forces and pass this bill.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of 144,000 married people in the Third District of Georgia, I am very pleased that we are finally coming to a conclusion on this bill. I am also very pleased that the conference members decided to make the effective date this taxable year so that we can give immediate relief, rather than waiting for the next taxable year, because families need need to be met. The more that we take from that family budget through taxation, the less they have to meet those needs.

Also, there are many families who would like, as the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) said, put funds away for future years for family needs.

There has been a lot said about, "Is this fair?" Mr. Speaker, is it fair to give the same deductions, the same standard deduction, to every eligible taxpayer in this country? I think so. Is it fair to increase the 15 percent bracket for every eligible taxpayer in this country? I say yes. Is it fair to ensure that those who have the opportunity can take advantage of the tax credits that this Congress has passed and the President has signed earlier, such as the child tax credit or the tuition tax credit? When it comes to the alternative minimum tax that they still will be eligible for, I say yes. Is it fair to expand the area of income for the EITC? Yes.

What makes it fair, Mr. Speaker? Because there are other provisions of the Tax Code to take up the slack when it comes to those who say this is only going to the wealthy. Those are progressive tax rates. Thanks, too, to the 103rd Congress, when the majority then was from the other side of the aisle, there was an additional tax bracket added that takes into account the income from those in higher income brackets. Also, many of those in the higher income level lose their itemized deductions, which increases their tax contributions or tax liabilities. It is responsible that we do this bill.

Another area of responsibility is in the area of the budget. By putting a 5-year sunset on this provision, on this measure, it will then revert back and

hold down the actual reduction in the cash flow of the general funds.

Personal responsibility is at play here. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of Congress, when I am interested in a committee or a conference or any activity of the Congress, I feel it is my personal responsibility to inquire when those committees are meeting. Those who complain about not knowing, maybe they did not fulfill their responsibilities.

I urge the Members of this House to pass this measure. I feel very confident that the President will sign it.

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, the issue before us today is a simple one. It is simply unconscionable that the federal government of the United States would impose a tax penalty on the holy state of matrimony. Of the many outrages contained in our federal tax system, and there are a great many such outrages, none is greater than that of imposing an extra tax burden on a man and a woman simply because they live together as man and wife.

In my own 8th District outside of Chicago, over 70,000 families face the marriage tax penalty. Over 70,000 families could enact their very own tax relief by getting a divorce. Our tax code should at the least be neutral with respect to marriage and the marriage penalty relief bill before us would move us at least part way in that direction.

And so I strongly support the conference agreement which will eliminate the marriage penalty for millions of American families and reduce it for millions more. Many of my colleagues may not know this, but a little over 20 years ago, I rose before the American people to decry the tax penalty on marriage when I ran for the highest office in the land. Then, in 1981, I addressed the marriage penalty in part through the Economic Recovery and Tax Act by slashing tax rates and by including in the tax law a provision reducing the taxable income of the second earner in a two-earner family.

Over the past 20 years, however, the severity of the marriage penalty has intensified as the Congress raised tax rates and introduced new complexities in the law such as refundable tax credits. And so it is now critical that we pass this bill and give American families some relief from the marriage tax penalty.

I understand President Clinton may oppose this bill, as do some Members of the House, on the grounds that it reduces taxes too far. This is very disappointing because Republicans have tried to meet the President halfway on this issue, to compromise, to pare back our hopes for more significant marriage penalty relief.

To be honest, I thought the original bill was too conservative. Especially when projections of the federal budget surplus grow by a trillion dollars in just a few months, there can be no better way to apply some of these surpluses than by eliminating an unfair tax penalty on one of America's bedrock institutions—marriage. But, in the interest of compromise, I am willing to support this bill as it has come out of conference.

I understand some of my Democratic colleagues oppose this bill on tax distribution grounds. Apparently, they believe it is appro-

priate for some families to continue to face a marriage tax penalty. I strongly disagree. No American family, irrespective of their level of income, should face a tax penalty for being married. This is a matter of principle, and on this matter I come down on the side of American families. The one shortcoming of this bill is that it still leaves millions of American families paying thousands of dollars a year in marriage tax penalty.

I would also point out to opponents of this bill that the federal income tax is today heavily skewed to taxing upper-income families. If this bill somehow finds favor in the President's eyes and becomes law, the federal income tax will still be heavily skewed to taxing upper-income families. Opposition on distributional grounds compels me to ask my colleagues if there is any level of progressivity in our tax system that they deem to be too steep.

Finally, I would like to address an argument opponents have made against this bill, and against other tax cuts Republicans have advanced in recent weeks. Opponents of the Republican tax cut initiatives like to point out that the sum of the total relief provided through bipartisan pension reform, bi-partisan marriage penalty relief, cutting the excessive tax burden on Social Security benefits, the bi-partisan repeal of the death tax, and other measures rises to a very large figure. They accuse Republicans of being fiscally irresponsible in proposing so much tax relief. They also like to point out, however, that the President has threatened to veto each and every one of these bills. Their claim of fiscal irresponsibility is, therefore, an empty one. Republicans are looking, and will continue, to look for ways to provide tax relief to the overtaxed American people that can escape President Clinton's veto pen. If the President changes his mind and begins to sign some of these bills, perhaps then we can consider whether the amount of cumulative tax relief is something to be concerned about.

And so I urge my colleagues, and I urge the President, when put to the question of whether you support comprehensive marriage penalty relief—just say, I do!

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, because of the current discussion of the conference report for H.R. 4810, the Marriage Tax Penalty Relief Reconciliation Act of 2000, this Member encourages his colleagues to read the following editorial, which he highly commends, from the July 19, 2000, edition of the Norfolk Daily News. This editorial highlights why the House of Representatives should pass the H.R. 4810 conference report. In particular, this editorial correctly addresses the following weak arguments of those who oppose the H.R. 4810 conference report: the lopsided percentage of relief for one-income couples; the benefits of this tax cut would go to couples who are already well-off; and the projected surplus may not materialize.

MARRIAGE PENALTY NEEDS TO BE AXED: TAX-AND-SPEND PROPONENTS HAVE WEAK ARGUMENTS TO OPPOSE GOP LEGISLATION

(Daily News, July 19, 2000)

The left-of-center, tax-and-spend folks are aghast that the Republican majority in the U.S. Senate has passed legislation to eliminate the so-called marriage penalty. But being largely bereft of solid arguments for

their position, they have taken to leaning on shallow arguments.

Some Democrats, for example, have pointed to an editorial in the Washington Post that said it is no penalty at all if two people with jobs get married and suddenly find themselves paying a higher tax. Of course, neither the editorial nor the Democrats explain why this isn't a penalty; they just say it isn't and point out that two incomes considered as one income make for a higher income and higher taxes under a graduated system.

That's nothing new. The point is that it is, in effect, a penalty to make people pay more when they wed—and it is wrong, especially considering the embattled condition of the crucial institution of marriage today.

But the tax-and-spend proponents aren't through. They note that the Republican legislation would also lower the taxes of a spouse who provides the only income or a lopsided percentage of the income and who already has a tax advantage over a single person.

The legislation does indeed accomplish this, and anyone who has followed this issue knows why. When past bills aimed to eradicate the marriage penalty were considered, opponents inevitably pointed out that two-income families would then have a tax advantage over one-income families. Such an inequity was taken by many as sufficient grounds to keep the penalty intact until, finally, the tax cutters figured out they could kill the penalty and have a degree of equity in different marital situations, too. All that was needed was to simultaneously reduce taxes for one-income couples.

The tax-and-spend folks don't much like it, either, that the benefits of the tax cut would go to people "already quite well off"—a position that should make everyone groan. The fact is that it's people who are "already quite well off" who pay most of the income tax in this country. To oppose giving them a break is to oppose giving any income tax reductions at all, and to make reductions sound unjust is roughly akin to saying that it is unfair to relieve pain in only those who happen to be experiencing it.

A final argument against reducing the penalty does have some validity—namely, that projected budget surpluses may never materialize and are largely spoken for by endangered entitlement programs. The problem is that, in the absence of tax cuts, the money could well be spent on new programs that encroach further on American lives. History shows that while Congress will seldom do away with programs, it is not nearly so reluctant to raise taxes as needed. Given that, the marriage penalty needs to be eliminated.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). All time for debate on the conference report has expired.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. RANGEL. 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. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 271, nays 156, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 418]

YEAS—271

Abercrombie	Gekas	Morella
Aderholt	Gibbons	Myrick
Archer	Gilchrest	Nethercutt
Armey	Gillmor	Ney
Bachus	Gilman	Northup
Baird	Goode	Norwood
Baker	Goodlatte	Nussle
Ballenger	Goodling	Ose
Barcia	Gordon	Oxley
Barr	Goss	Packard
Barrett (NE)	Graham	Pascarell
Bartlett	Granger	Paul
Bass	Green (WI)	Pease
Bateman	Greenwood	Peterson (PA)
Bereuter	Gutknecht	Petri
Berkley	Hall (TX)	Phelps
Biggert	Hansen	Pickering
Bilbray	Hastert	Pickett
Bilirakis	Hastings (WA)	Pitts
Bishop	Hayes	Pombo
Blagojevich	Hayworth	Porter
Biley	Hefley	Portman
Blunt	Herger	Pryce (OH)
Boehert	Hill (MT)	Quinn
Boehner	Hilleary	Radanovich
Bonilla	Hobson	Ramstad
Bono	Hoekstra	Regula
Boswell	Holden	Reynolds
Boucher	Holt	Riley
Brady (TX)	Hooley	Rogan
Bryant	Horn	Rogers
Burr	Hostettler	Rohrabacher
Burton	Houghton	Ros-Lehtinen
Buyer	Hulshof	Roukema
Callahan	Hunter	Royce
Calvert	Hutchinson	Ryan (WI)
Camp	Hyde	Ryun (KS)
Canady	Insee	Salmon
Cannon	Isakson	Sandlin
Capps	Istook	Sanford
Castle	Jenkins	Saxton
Chabot	John	Scarborough
Chambliss	Johnson (CT)	Schaffer
Chenoweth-Hage	Johnson, Sam	Sensenbrenner
Clement	Jones (NC)	Sessions
Clyburn	Kaptur	Shadegg
Coble	Kasich	Shaw
Coburn	Kelly	Shays
Collins	King (NY)	Sherwood
Combest	Kingston	Shimkus
Condit	Knollenberg	Shows
Cook	Kolbe	Shuster
Costello	Kuykendall	Simpson
Cox	LaHood	Sisisky
Cramer	Largent	Skeen
Crane	Latham	Skelton
Cubin	LaTourette	Smith (MI)
Cunningham	Lazio	Smith (NJ)
Danner	Leach	Smith (TX)
Davis (VA)	Lewis (CA)	Souder
Deal	Lewis (KY)	Spence
DeLay	Linder	Spratt
DeMint	Lipinski	Stabenow
Diaz-Balart	LoBiondo	Stearns
Dickey	Lucas (KY)	Stump
Doolittle	Lucas (OK)	Stupak
Doyle	Maloney (CT)	Sununu
Dreier	Manzullo	Sweeney
Duncan	Martinez	Talent
Dunn	Mascara	Tancredo
Ehlers	McCarthy (NY)	Tauscher
Ehrlich	McCollum	Tauzin
Emerson	McCrery	Taylor (NC)
English	McHugh	Terry
Etheridge	McInnis	Thomas
Everett	McIntosh	Thompson (MS)
Ewing	McIntyre	Thornberry
Fletcher	McKeon	Thune
Foley	McKinney	Tiahrt
Forbes	Metcalf	Toomey
Fossella	Mica	Traficant
Fowler	Miller (FL)	Upton
Franks (NJ)	Miller, Gary	Vitter
Frelinghuysen	Mink	Walden
Gallegly	Moore	Walsh
Ganske	Moran (KS)	Wamp

Watkins  
Watts (OK)  
Weldon (FL)  
Weldon (PA)  
Weller

Whitfield  
Wicker  
Wilson  
Wise  
Wolf

Wu  
Young (AK)  
Young (FL)

□ 1339

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE) at 1 o'clock and 39 minutes p.m.

NAYS—156

Ackerman	Hall (OH)	Oberstar
Allen	Hastings (FL)	Obey
Andrews	Hill (IN)	Olver
Baldacci	Hilliard	Ortiz
Baldwin	Hinchee	Owens
Barrett (WI)	Hinojosa	Pallone
Becerra	Hoefel	Pastor
Bentsen	Hoyer	Payne
Berman	Jackson (IL)	Pelosi
Berry	Jackson-Lee	Peterson (MN)
Blumenauer	(TX)	Pomeroy
Bonior	Jefferson	Price (NC)
Borski	Johnson, E. B.	Rahall
Boyd	Jones (OH)	Rangel
Brady (PA)	Kanjorski	Reyes
Brown (FL)	Kennedy	Rivers
Brown (OH)	Kildee	Rodriguez
Capuano	Kind (WI)	Rothman
Cardin	Kleczka	Roybal-Allard
Carson	Klink	Rush
Clay	Kucinich	Sabo
Clayton	LaFalce	Sanchez
Conyers	Lampson	Sanders
Coyne	Lantos	Sawyer
Crowley	Larson	Schakowsky
Cummings	Lee	Scott
Davis (FL)	Levin	Serrano
Davis (IL)	Lewis (GA)	Sherman
DeFazio	Lofgren	Slaughter
DeGette	Lowey	Snyder
DeLahunt	Luther	Stark
DeLauro	Maloney (NY)	Stenholm
Deusch	Markey	Strickland
Dicks	Matsui	Tanner
Dingell	McCarthy (MO)	Taylor (MS)
Dixon	McDermott	Thompson (CA)
Doggett	McGovern	Thurman
Dooley	McNulty	Tierney
Edwards	Meehan	Towns
Engel	Meek (FL)	Turner
Eshoo	Meeks (NY)	Udall (CO)
Evans	Menendez	Udall (NM)
Farr	Millender-	Velazquez
Fattah	McDonald	Visclosky
Filner	Miller, George	Waters
Ford	Minge	Watt (NC)
Frank (MA)	Moakley	Waxman
Frost	Mollohan	Weiner
Gejdenson	Moran (VA)	Wexler
Gephardt	Murtha	Weygand
Gonzalez	Nadler	Woolsey
Green (TX)	Napolitano	Wynn
Gutierrez	Neal	

NOT VOTING—8

Baca	Cooksey	Smith (WA)
Barton	Kilpatrick	Vento
Campbell	Roemer	

□ 1253

Ms. CARSON and Messrs. FARR of California, GEJDENSON, DICKS, THOMPSON of California and MINGE changed their vote from "yea" to "nay."

So the conference report was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 54 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

#### PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4871, TREASURY AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 560 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 560

*Resolved*, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4871) making appropriations for the Treasury Department, the United States Postal Service, the Executive Office of the President, and certain Independent Agencies, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived except as follows: page 62, line 17, through page 63, line 2. During the consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HALL), pending which I