

other forces throughout the Nation to ensure that our children can safely prepare for their promising futures. As someone once said, our children are the living messages we send to a future we will never see. Congratulations, Chief Hamm, and congratulations to the Baltimore City School Police Force.

CONCERN REGARDING RELIGIOUS DEBATE IN OUR COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHERWOOD). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my very deep concern about the character of the debate in our country today with regards to religion.

For the past 5 years, I have been very involved in the Irish peace process, and at the root of the hatred and the mistrust in northern Ireland is the differences in religion. We can see what damage and the trouble that it has caused to that country. Indeed, our own troops have been involved in Kosovo separating warring religious and national groups.

We are witnessing a war in Russia that has a great deal also to do with religion between Christians and Muslims. To continue this debate in our country with elected leaders criticizing religious leaders and religious leaders criticizing political leaders and political leaders criticizing other political leaders for taking sides with other religious leaders, I thought we had put that behind us. I thought that that sort of debate in this country was over, but obviously it is not.

Hubert Humphrey said a long time ago, the great happy warrior Democrat, he who throws mud loses ground. Unfortunately, there is a lot of mud being thrown around today, and a lot of it regarding this issue of religion.

I would like to address my comments to the choice by Speaker HASTERT of our chaplain. I do not understand why anyone, anyone would be critical of the Speaker's choice. It is a very personal decision. He made a choice and now he is being accused of being anti-Catholic.

I cannot fathom why anyone would raise that issue. He is an honorable man. He is a decent and honest man, and he made an honest decision. And we should respect that decision.

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But it seems that people will reach at anything to get political gain, and it is a downward spiral. If this debate continues, we are headed nowhere but down with a very difficult situation ahead of us and no way to get out of it.

Let me just give my colleagues a little history regarding the choice of chaplain in the Congress. For the first 100 years of this country, we had 50

chaplains. Basically, one chaplain for each Congress. For the last 105 years, since around 1895, we have had five chaplains. Five. So the duration of their term in this position has become much, much longer. It is a different position than it was. And I am not so sure that the original Congresses did not have it right, one chaplain per Congress, one Congress per chaplain.

But to make the political points here, the Democratic party, the modern Democratic party, which began in the middle of the 18th century, has appointed 20 chaplains in its time. Republicans, the modern Republican Party, beginning around the same time, has appointed eight chaplains. In none of those cases, those 28 chaplains that were appointed, was there a Catholic priest appointed. There has never been an outcry before. Never been an outcry.

There are Members of this Congress currently criticizing Speaker HASTERT for his choice of a Protestant minister, a Presbyterian, criticizing him for that choice when they were seated in this House when other speakers appointed Protestant chaplains. Where was the outcry then? Where was the Democratic party, the criticism then? Why is it coming now to Speaker HASTERT? I think he made a wise decision. I think he made a wise choice, and I think we owe him the respect and the honor of making that decision.

The Speaker tried to open this process up. He appointed a committee to help him to make the choice. The committee came back, it was a bipartisan committee, with three names. Three individuals. No rank, no unanimous support for one, but they gave the Speaker three choices. He made a choice among those three, and he picked Reverend Wright. Maybe it was a mistake to open it up to a so-called democratic process.

Obviously, I could talk a lot longer about this, but suffice to say that we owe the Speaker the respect that he is due. We owe the choice that he has made the respect that that is due. And I would urge people to stop throwing mud and to stop this downward spiral of anti-religious talk in our country.

ALLEGATIONS OF RELIGIOUS BIAS AMONG REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP IS PURE BUNK

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHERWOOD). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to follow along with the words echoed by my colleague from New York.

I am a Roman Catholic as well, and I do not understand this all of a sudden finger pointing over choices of chaplains or questioning people's beliefs. I personally work very closely with the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT)

as Speaker of this House. In fact, he was the one that nominated me to be on the Committee on Ways and Means, considerably one of the most important committees of this Congress. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), another fine gentleman who I work with every single day as majority leader, and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), and others who occupy the office of majority whip. I am a deputy whip. So I can assure every American that is interested in listening that none of these leaders indicates any bias towards anybody of any faith.

Now, I have a disagreement on at least the position of chaplain, and I long ago advocated we not have a chaplain; that we allow visiting chaplains from around the country so we would have the opportunity to have a Rabbi and have a Protestant minister or a Baptist minister and a Catholic priest. I personally go to my own church for salvation, and I do not choose to use the services of the chaplain.

At times I question having one, inasmuch as we do not allow kids to pray in school yet we start every day with a prayer. So I find it a little complicated. But at the same time I do not doubt for one minute that the choice made by the Speaker was a valid, genuine choice on that gentleman's part to serve this entire body, not to single out and not to ratchet up the debate.

It is amazing. I hear the other side of the aisle all of a sudden acting as if they are for all Catholics. If we look at the voting records of most of the Members, we would probably have to question considerably whether they maintain the very principles and edicts that the Catholic churches espouse. There is a complete virtual disagreement on virtually every issue the Catholic church uses and would be measured on a scorecard if you had to have one on that basis.

I ask the Members to please stop this finger pointing. Stop the finger pointing and questioning people's values and beliefs. When Spike Lee made the comment about going to shoot Charleton Heston, I did not see any long-standing parade of speakers urging the rejection of this kind of thought. They sat quietly by and allowed that to be part of the mainstream dialogue.

When I hear Louis Farakhan on the mall marching against people and calling people names, I do not hear this outrage from Members on the other side of the body screaming about how intolerant people are. No, they are silent. But they can use something like this as a wedge issue.

George W. Bush goes to Bob Jones University certainly not to espouse or advocate positions held by one man that leads that church. There were thousands and thousands of students that wanted to hear the nominee, potentially, of the Republican Party address the issues that are important to

them, as if any of us are invited. Daily we are invited to places. I was invited to a synagogue. Of course, I went to speak to my constituents about issues important to them at a synagogue. I am a Catholic. Should I have not gone simply because it was not a house of worship in my own faith?

So I denounce this and ask people to be a little more civil and a little bit more respectful of the differences that we have as Americans on fundamental beliefs and principles. We should all agree that the nice thing about the United States of America is that we can worship in the way we so choose. We can go to the places of worship we recognize as those that lead our faith. But we do not cast aspersion nor do we criticize people.

So this commentary that somehow the Speaker is biased and the majority leader is biased is pure bunk. And, again, I say to my colleagues that if they are compassionate, if they are one of faith, if they are one that deeply believes Catholicism is an important religion, those who seem to be defending it today and saying that Republicans are anti-Catholic, I can clearly assure them, clearly assure them from the bottom of my heart, that that is not the premise of the Republican Party and it is certainly not that of our leadership.

SENIOR CITIZENS' FREEDOM TO WORK ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand here with my fellow Republican, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW), who was instrumental in helping us get the Social Security earnings limit off today.

I introduced this bill 1 year ago, after hearing from many folks around the Dallas area and surrounding cities who are over 65 who want to continue to work. One of them is named Tony Santos. That is his picture right there. Tony is a part-time operator of a television camera now at Channel 4 in Dallas. He started there in 1951, when he was just 18 years old, and he retired in 1992. I first met him when I got back from being a POW in Vietnam; and he helped cover that return back to Dallas, which was really emotional for me.

Not just anyone can operate a television camera. It is a technical job and it requires specialized skills. So when folks take a vacation or get sick, Channel 4 finds itself in a bind and they call on Tony. Tony is over 65 and, after all, has a lot of experience, and he is happy to fill in. But the station needs him more than he is able to work due to the

Social Security earnings penalty, which says that if he works more and earns more than \$17,000 in this year he starts losing his Social Security benefits. He worked for and paid for those benefits, and it is not Washington's money. It is his money.

Tony's beautiful grandchildren, over here, are also shown: Daniel, Emily, Jacob, Jason, and Stephanie. She is just 8. Tony wants to be able to help them buy school books and get the best education possible, but he is penalized by the government just for working to support his grandchildren. Mr. Speaker, that is un-American. It is not right that Tony should not be able to work all he wants to, he is in great health, and still receive his Social Security benefits which he worked so hard for.

I wonder sometimes why we try to punish other Americans with the laws we pass. I want America to know that Tony Santos, here in this picture, heeds the words of Thomas Edison: "There is no substitute for hard work." And I think the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) and I both have heard workers in America say that to us; that when they get to be 65, they are not necessarily ready to retire. But they have worked and put into the Social Security fund and they would like that little extra benefit that it provides.

This morning, believe it or not, the Democrats, some of them, said this bill only helps the rich. Well, I am sure it will come as news to Tony Santos that he is rich, because he is not. And why we always hear this class warfare created is beyond me. This bill provides relief for all hard-working seniors. And today we took the first step in making sure that Tony Santos and the other close to a million seniors just like him can work and be rewarded and not be penalized.

I was pleasantly surprised President Clinton has decided to endorse the bill, the Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act, to eliminate the Social Security earnings penalty. One day earlier the President's chief spokesman spoke out against it. The gentleman from Florida may remember that. But today at least I am thankful the President has changed his mind and decided to support the repeal of the Social Security earnings limit without any strings attached. And that is exactly what happened today on the floor of this House. We passed a clean bill with no strings attached. Just a bill to eliminate the Social Security earnings limit.

Our Republican leadership has always understood the importance of this issue, and they made it a top-10 item for this Congress. For the past three sessions I have introduced repealing the Social Security earnings penalty, but by no means was I the first sponsor of this legislation. My colleagues will remember Barry Goldwater and his efforts in 1964. Repealing the penalty on

seniors was his initiative way back then, and I am elated to finally be standing here so close to the repeal of the penalty that we can finally give every American the freedom to work.

I must confess, though, that I have a feeling that the close to 65,000 seniors affected by this penalty in Texas, and the close to a million seniors affected nationwide will be more thrilled than I am to see it passed.

Would the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) care to comment on that? I know the gentleman has been the chairman of the Subcommittee on Social Security in the Committee on Ways and Means, and he has been an interested person in this issue. And not only this issue but, as my colleagues know, he has been a supporter of the Shaw-Archer Social Security reform bill, which I consider this step one toward addressing that problem.

Mr. SHAW. Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) first of all, for being so persistent. The fact that that bill is named H.R. 5 shows that that was one of the first filed here, and those first numbers are usually set aside by the leadership to show that these are bills that we really plan to move. The gentleman's having filed that over a year ago to have gotten that number I think really speaks very well of his foresight and his faith in this Congress, and his persistence, in that he filed several of these bills in the past.

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We had hoped that this H.R. 5 was going to be folded into the Archer-Shaw bill, which was going to be a much larger bill that would have saved Social Security for all time. But when you get into presidential election years, sometimes it is hard to really bring people together and pass good, common sense legislation, as the Archer-Shaw bill is; and it is one that would save Social Security for all time without privatizing Social Security.

This is one of the things that really concerns me more than anything else. And I was very concerned to hear the President's last proposal in which he was going to take the money coming into Social Security and play the stock market with it.

I think Americans do not want that. That is something that we on the Republican side are going to oppose. And my guess is that the majority of the Democrats will also oppose it.

But we do have to change the way that we view Social Security, but we can do it without increasing the FICA tax, no more burden upon the American worker; and we can do it, too, without in any way, any way, changing the benefits so that the cost-of-living increases stay in the Social Security system.

The example that my colleague has pointed out with his constituent reminds me of a call that came into our