

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Thursday, March 9, 2000

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 9, 2000.

I hereby appoint the Honorable RAY LAHOOD to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

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

We are privileged and thankful, O God, that we can begin a new day with these words of prayer. With gratefulness for the wonder and beauty and glory of Your creation; with appreciation for friends who care for us and support us in our every need; with enthusiasm for the honor of being called to serve the people of our Nation; with joy for the opportunities to live and breathe the meaning of faith and hope and love, we offer these words of thanksgiving and praise. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Chair's approval of the Journal.

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PITTS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate agreed to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1000) "An Act to amend title 49, United States Code, to reauthorize programs of the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes."

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces that there will be 10 one-minute speeches on each side.

BABY BODY PARTS

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, there is a doctor in Illinois who produced the following advertisement. It reads, "Fresh fetal tissue harvested and shipped to your specifications, where and when you need it."

It also reads: "Liver, spleen, pancreas, intestines, kidney, brain, lungs," and I will not read them all, "with appropriate discounts that apply if specimen is significantly fragmented."

And at the bottom it says, "All that you need to initiate service is a purchase order number, payment type, and your billing address."

Mr. Speaker, this is horrific. These are body parts of babies sold on the open market like toys or collectibles. This is a violation of law. Selling body parts of babies is wrong, it is unethical, it is illegal, it is dangerous to the women from whom these body parts are taken and it must stop. The administration must enforce the law. We do not live in Nazi Germany. There is a hearing at 2 o'clock before the Committee on Commerce. I hope, Mr.

Speaker, this practice will be stopped in America.

INCREASE THE MINIMUM WAGE

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am appalled today that there is going to be real debate on whether or not we are going to raise the minimum wage by one dollar over 2 years or 3 years. We are talking about present minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour. Can we imagine that in the greatest economy that we have ever known? Persons who are heads of these companies are making multi-million-dollar salaries per year and the ones who make them get there cannot even get a dollar raise in minimum wage. These are working mothers who have to pay child care, shelter, food, transportation. Most do not even have health care, so we have to pay that as taxpayers. I cannot believe this Nation ought to be outraged that we are debating whether or not we are going to raise minimum wage by one dollar, just one dollar, over a 2-year or a 3-year period. That is unconscionable. I do not know anyone in any State that can live on minimum wage and take care of all of their responsibilities. Their responsibilities become ours.

AID FOR COLOMBIA

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, there are those who compare providing aid to Colombia to providing aid to Vietnam. This is an expected but faulty comparison.

Unlike Vietnam, the consequences for failure in Colombia will not be another fallen domino in a far-off land. It will be more drug-related deaths in our own streets among our own children. Without immediate action on the proposed aid package to Colombia, the drug lords will continue, largely unimpeded, to produce and distribute their deadly drugs which kill almost as many American kids and young adults each year as died in Vietnam. That, Mr. Speaker, should be a wake-up call.

Because Colombia is right here in our own hemisphere and not halfway around the world, what happens there will affect us more profoundly than what happened in Vietnam. The fact

☐ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., ☐ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

that Colombia is only 4 hours away by plane and can be reached by a car or truck, it becomes that much more important for us to help the country fight the narco-terrorists. The drugs which enter the United States each day from Colombia are far more of a threat to our national security than any Communist regime in Southeast Asia.

MINIMUM WAGE

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last week the Republican majority and the Democratic minority passed with no negative votes the removal of caps on the Social Security earnings. But it seems the Republican majority did not learn how to pass legislation on a bipartisan basis. Today we have a Frankenstein piece of legislation. None of the parts fit together. Even the names do not fit. Bipartisan legislation should be what is on this floor, but instead we have a budget-busting tax cut that does not even help small business.

I support a minimum-wage increase. The Republican proposal falls short of meeting the needs of the American family. The Republican leadership is more willing to push a budget-busting, debt-increasing \$123 billion tax cut that will go to the top 1 percent than to help American small business with a reasonable tax cut.

We are presently enjoying one of the strongest economies ever, but the benefits are not flowing fairly to both the working people but also to the small business. We need to bring legislation to this floor that provides a real pay increase and a tax package that is sensible and responsible, not one that is just going to increase our debt. Hopefully, we will see the error of our ways and reject this Frankenstein piece of legislation.

KILL THE DEATH TAX

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, we have all experienced the loss of a loved one. It is a time when family and friends come together to console each other in an effort to ease the sorrow. Unfortunately, it is also a time when the callous Federal tax collector comes knocking. Today when someone dies, the Federal Government assesses a tax of up to 55 percent on the value of their estate. As a result, approximately 70 percent of family-owned businesses and small farms are not passed on to the next generation, another loss that the grieving family and American society as a whole must endure.

But today, Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity to ease this unfair burden.

The Wage and Employment Growth Act reduces the top estate tax from 55 percent down to 50 by 2002 and will further reduce all rates by 1 percent in the years 2003 and 2004. Mr. Speaker, 77 percent of the American public believes the death tax is unfair and should be repealed. This will be one loss that the American family will not grieve for.

LEAVE "TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL" ON TELEVISION

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, hundreds of thousands of Americans signed petitions to have the popular TV show "Touched by an Angel" removed from television. They want it canceled. They said, quote-unquote, "It refers too much to God." Unbelievable. But just turn on the TV. Murder, rape, terrorism, graphic depiction of sex. Beam me up, Mr. Speaker. Mass murder is okay, but God is offensive? I think it is time, ladies and gentlemen, for Congress to tell these petitioners to leave God and "Touched by an Angel" alone. Leave it on TV.

I yield back all the sex, drugs, and murder on television.

RELIEF FROM THE DEATH TAX

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

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, when someone in a family dies, the whole family necessarily goes through a very painful experience. Losing a loved one is difficult enough, but unfortunately the Government makes it even tougher. This is because of the death tax. Today when someone dies, the Federal Government assesses a tax of up to 55 percent on the value of his or her estate. This makes it nearly impossible for farmers to pass on the family farm to their children or for a small business owners to pass on their life's work to their children. This is ridiculous. Mr. Speaker, Americans should not have to visit both the IRS and the undertaker on the same day. We need to give Americans relief from the death tax. This week we are voting on the Small Business Tax Fairness Act which would lessen the tax bite families feel when a loved one passes away. This is the right thing to do. I hope my colleagues will join me in helping give the American people relief from the death tax.

SKYROCKETING FUEL PRICES

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, fuel prices are skyrocketing through the

roof while Congress and the administration sit and twiddle their thumbs mumbling platitudes about waiting for the free market to work. I have got a news flash for the President, the Secretary of Energy and my colleagues that do not want to do anything.

There is no free market in oil. The huge oil conglomerates secretly conspire against consumers to drive up oil prices and the OPEC countries openly collude to reduce production and create an artificial shortage. The Justice Department should vigorously investigate and prosecute the price fixing and anti-competitive actions by the major oil companies. And the President as a big supporter of the WTO and rules-based trade should file a complaint against the OPEC nations.

The WTO charter, article 11, says that they cannot do this. They cannot artificially depress production. We should file a complaint and collect hundreds of millions of dollars in damages levied through the WTO organization. If the administration is willing to use the full force and credibility of the Government on behalf of a single banana exporter with no export production in the United States, then they should certainly act on behalf of U.S. consumers who are being gouged by OPEC and other oil-producing nations.

ADDRESSING THE DEATH TAX

(Mr. CHABOT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, with the economy strong and our government taking in budget surpluses, the time has come to address some nagging fairness issues in our Tax Code. The House has already done that twice this year by passing relief from the marriage tax penalty and voting to end the Social Security earnings limit.

Now the time has come to address another unfair provision in our Tax Code, the death tax. Today, when a person dies, the Federal Government assesses a tax of up to 55 percent on the value of his or her estate. Thus, many Americans, small business owners and farmers, are unable to pass on their life's work to their children. This is totally unfair. Today, the House will be voting on the Small Business Tax Fairness Act which will deliver relief from the death tax. This commonsense legislation will make it easier for Americans to pass on a small business to the next generation. We should all support this bill that will help restore the American dream to American families. In fact, we ought to get rid of the unfair death tax altogether.

TIME TO INCREASE MINIMUM WAGE

(Mr. WISE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)