

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Monday, May 22, 2000

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. KUYKENDALL).

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,  
May 22, 2000.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

### MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for 5 minutes.

### NEW ECONOMY IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERY AMERICAN

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate so much this opportunity to take a few minutes today to talk about something many of us call the new economy, some call the digital economy, the high-tech economy. But let me begin by just sharing some statistics, statistics that really illustrate how important the new economy is for every American.

Today over 100 million United States adults are using the Internet. In fact, seven new people are on the Internet every second. As elected officials, we should note that 78 percent of Internet users almost always vote in national, State, and local elections, compared with only 64 percent of non-Internet users.

It took just 5 years for the Internet to reach 50 million users. It took 38 years for the radio to reach that same audience, 13 years for television. In 1998, the Internet economy employed 4.8 million workers, more workers than steel and auto and petrochemical industries combined.

I would note that, with the economic growth we are enjoying today, the average high-tech wage is 77 percent higher than the average U.S. private sector wage and that Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, indicates that one-third of the economic growth that we have enjoyed today is resulting from the high-tech, new economy.

I am proud to be from a State that is a high-tech State. Illinois is a State which ranks fourth today in high-technology employment. We also rank third in high-technology exports. So clearly, this new economy, this technology economy that we are enjoying today is providing tremendous opportunity for every American family.

We often wonder who is really taking advantage of the opportunities that are there, how is the Internet and digital or new economy available to the average American. Statistics also show that if a family makes \$75,000 or more, they are 20 times more likely than families with less income to have Internet access at home.

And when you think about it, our educators, our school teachers, the school board members, and school administrators back home in Illinois and Chicago and the south suburbs that I represent have told me they notice a difference in the classroom between those students who have a computer and Internet access at home and students who do not.

Children with computers and Internet access at home have an advantage when it comes to doing their homework as well as using the Internet to contact the Library of Congress to do research on school papers.

If my colleagues talk with lower-income families who do not have computer and Internet access, they tell us that the main reason is the cost; the cost of Internet access is really the barrier to digital opportunities for that family.

As Republicans, of course, our goal is to reduce that cost. We believe in a tax-free, regulation-free trade barrier, free new economy; and we want to ensure that the information superhighway is a freeway and not a tollway. We are looking for ways to remove those toll booths and make sure the Internet is free or at minimal cost to families.

I am proud of what we have been accomplishing. Just over the last few weeks, we passed legislation which says no new taxes on e-commerce, extending for 5 years the current Internet

tax moratorium on e-commerce. I am proud to say that we passed legislation just 2 weeks ago which prohibits the Federal Communications Commission from using the authority they have had for a long time to impose new fees and taxes on Internet access.

This week the House is going to vote on legislation to eliminate the 3 percent excise tax on telephone calls, which really is a 3 percent excise tax on Internet access, because 96 percent of Americans who use the Internet and go on-line use their telephone service. So clearly, when this House votes this week to eliminate that 3 percent tax on telephone calls, we will be removing one more toll on the information superhighway.

Clearly, as Republicans, our goal is simple. We want the information superhighway to be a freeway and not a tollway.

I also want to mention two other proposals I am proud to sponsor, legislation which is designed to ensure the information highway is a freeway not a tollway. I talked earlier about lower-income families not having computer and Internet access at home. I am proud to say that major employers in the State that I represent in Illinois have stepped forward, the private sector stepping forward to provide Internet and computer access as an employee benefit so the children of their janitors and laborers and assembly line workers of companies like Ford, Intel, American Airlines, and Delta Airlines have those computers.

Well, those computers should be tax free. Right now the IRS would like to tax them. That act would ensure they are treated the same as an employee benefit, such as pensions and retirement, as well as health care. I ask bipartisan support, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on these proposals.

### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 37 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida) at 2 p.m.

□ 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.