

means in effect that more and more people cannot afford to be on the Internet.

In fact, the Progress and Freedom Foundation estimates that well over 20 percent of America will not access the Internet because of the high level of telephone taxation. Now, what is ironic about that is that we live in a country that prides itself on free speech. In fact, the first amendment to our Constitution is an amendment that protects American's right to free speech, in effect protects our right to free speech against the Government infringing upon it.

I want you to think about that for a second. In this wonderful free speech society that prides itself and in fact brags about free speech around the world, we in America tax speech in many jurisdictions of our country more than we do tobacco. In other words, the taxes on telephones in many jurisdictions of America are higher than the taxes on tobacco, which is supposed to be a sin product. Speech is supposed to be honored and respected in America. In this great House we honor and respect the right of free speech in our wonderful debates on the great issues of the day.

Yet our government taxes talking on a telephone so high that it amounts to more than the taxes on tobacco in many parts of America. You would think we would honor speech by getting rid of those taxes, lowering those taxes; and so this House began today that process. By eliminating the 3 percent excise tax on talking on telephones, we hopefully have begun the process to honor and respect free speech again in our society. Eliminating this tax is going to save millions of Americans many millions of dollars over the years that unfortunately has been taken from them as they use their telephones or connect to the Internet.

More importantly, as we repeal this 3 percent telephone tax, we will be making access to the Internet more affordable for many people in this country. Think about telephone taxes another way. It is one of the most regressive forms of taxation you can possibly imagine, because we all use the telephone. We use it to keep in touch with our loved ones; we use it constantly in our businesses. Everyone uses the telephone. And in a real sense, when you talk about taxes being progressive or regressive, this is the most regressive tax that I can possibly imagine. Everybody pays it. The poorest of Americans who use the telephone pay a higher percentage of taxes with telephone taxes than they do in any other form.

So this House really has done America a great favor. I am proud tell you that it was in 1998 that the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DUNN) and I filed the first bill to repeal the Spanish American 3 percent telephone

tax. It has taken a few years, but this House today agreed with us. We are delighted in fact that the House has now sent to the Senate a bill to end this 100-year-old Spanish American War tax. I want you to know the Spanish can breathe easy tonight. The war is over. We have ended collecting a tax that ran that war. We should be very proud in fact that we are finally taking the right path in making both telephone and Internet service more affordable for people and getting rid of some of this heavy burden of excessive and regressive taxation on the folks in America who use the telephone.

We have only just begun. As we go through the process of trying to make sure that the Internet is free and accessible for more and more people, free of these heavy taxation burdens, our committee and the Committee on Ways and Means will continue to see whether or not we can hopefully give Americans even more relief from taxation. In that regard, Mr. Speaker, our efforts will continue. We are going to look seriously at possibly putting some kind of limitation on the FCC's ability to constantly raise taxes', and one day just hopefully one day we will honor and respect free speech in America the way our forefathers intended.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 336. Concurrent resolution providing for a conditional adjournment of the House of Representatives and a conditional recess or adjournment of the Senate.

The message also announced that the Senate agrees 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. 2559) "An Act to amend the Federal Crop Insurance Act to strengthen the safety net for agricultural producers by providing greater access to more affordable risk management tools and improved protection from production and income loss, to improve the efficiency and integrity of the Federal crop insurance program, and for other purposes."

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. MINGE (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of medical reasons.

Mr. WEINER (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for before 1:00 p.m. May 24 and today on account of personal business.

Mr. BATEMAN (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today on account of attending a funeral.

Mr. MCINNIS (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today on account of his daughter's high school graduation.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mrs. CAPPS) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mrs. CAPPS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. RUSH, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. UNDERWOOD, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mrs. BIGGERT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mrs. BIGGERT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GUTKNECHT, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at their own request) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. HORN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. TAUZIN, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE BILL AND CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REFERRED

A bill and a concurrent resolution of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 484. An act to provide for the granting of refugee status in the United States to nationals of certain foreign countries in which American Vietnam War POW/MIAs or American Korean War POW/MIAs may be present, if those nationals assist in the return to the United States of those POW/MIAs alive; to the Committee on the Judiciary in addition to the Committee on International Relations for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S. Con. Res. 110. Concurrent resolution congratulating the Republic of Latvia on the tenth anniversary of the reestablishment of its independence from the rule of the former Soviet Union; to the Committee on International Relations.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Concurrent Resolution 336, 106th Congress, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Pursuant to House Concurrent Resolution 336, 106th Congress, the House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, June 6, 2000, for morning hour debates.