

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall votes Nos. 12 and 13 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been here I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 12 and "yea" on rollcall vote No. 13.

JOINT SESSION OF THE CONGRESS—STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I offer a privileged concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 28) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The Clerk will report the concurrent resolution.

The Clerk read the concurrent resolution, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 28

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the two Houses of Congress assemble in the Hall of the House of Representatives on Tuesday, February 27, 2001, at 9 p.m., for the purpose of receiving such communication as the President of the United States shall be pleased to make to them.

The concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES AND COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I offer a resolution (H. Res. 37) and ask unanimous consent for its immediate consideration in the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the resolution.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 37

Resolved, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

Committee on Financial Services: Mr. Sanders of Vermont;

Committee on Government Reform: Mr. Sanders of Vermont.

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

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MAKING IN ORDER ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2001 A MOTION TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order at any time on the legislative day of Wednesday, February 14, 2001, for the Speaker to entertain a motion that the House suspend the rules relating to H.R. 524.

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

There was no objection.

MAKING IN ORDER ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2001 CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 559, JOHN JOSEPH MOAKLEY UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order at any time on the legislative day of Wednesday, February 14, 2001, without intervention of any point of order, to consider in the House H.R. 559; that the bill be considered as read for amendment; and that the previous question be considered as ordered on the bill to final passage without intervening motion except for 1 hour of debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and one motion to recommit.

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

There was no objection.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

INTRODUCTION OF FEDERAL JUDICIAL FAIRNESS ACT OF 2001

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Federal Judicial Fairness Act of 2001.

This morning, the American Bar Association and the Federal Bar Association released a report detailing a fundamental problem that has been escalating over the past decade, the erosion of fair and adequate compensation for the Federal judiciary.

These two well-respected groups found that the current salaries of Federal judges have reached such a level of inadequacy and quality that the independence of the third branch of our Federal Government is threatened. I agree with these findings.

Since 1993, Congress has granted Federal judges only three of a possible nine cost-of-living adjustments, leaving our judges with a 13.4 percent decline in purchasing power. Not coincidentally, 54 Federal District Court and Circuit Court judges have left the bench in the 1990s, compared to only three during the entire 1960s.

Yes, the salaries of Federal judges are higher than the average salary in many occupations. But, yes, the salaries that our Federal judges could earn in the private sector could be exponen-

tially higher than what they earn as judges.

No individual agrees to serve in the Federal judiciary because of the pay. Individuals seek and accept nominations to the bench because they want to serve their country. But this does not mean that they should forego fair compensation for their critical work. It should be Congress' goal to ensure that the judges can afford to commit to public service and make certain that the judiciary is not open only to those with the financial means to do so.

Absent a change in the way we compensate these judges, I fear that the superior quality of our Federal judicial system may deteriorate over time.

This is why I am introducing the Federal Judiciary Fairness Act. The bill restores the six cost-of-living adjustments that Congress failed to grant the Federal judiciary in the 1990s, amounting to an immediate 9.6 percent salary increase.

My bill also fixes the annual pay adjustment problems for Federal judges. Unlike other Federal employees, Members of Congress and the President's Cabinet, Federal judges receive a COLA only if Congress specifically authorizes it. Under the Federal Judiciary Fairness Act, Federal judges will receive an annual COLA not subject to the approval of Congress. The size of the COLA would be determined by the Employment Cost Index, but it would not be larger than one received by other Federal employees under the General Schedule pay rate.

Together, these provisions will do much to remedy a problem, disparity in pay between the private and public sectors, that plagues one of the three branches of the Federal Government. But, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is about more than just fairly compensating the individuals who sit on the Federal bench. We must ensure that our Federal judiciary can attract and retain the best and the brightest. Passing the Federal Judicial Fairness Act is a small but important step in achieving this goal.

I want to thank my colleagues, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS), for agreeing to be original cosponsors of this legislation; and I urge all my colleagues to support the Federal Judicial Fairness Act.

THE ECONOMY

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, many government and Federal Reserve officials have repeatedly argued that we have no inflation to fear; yet those who claim this define inflation as rising consumer and producer prices. Although inflation frequently leads to