

percent of working women provide half or more of their family's income, according to a 1997 study by the AFL-CIO. And the wage gap costs the average American family approximately \$4,000 each year.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about giving their money back to them, the taxpayers. That is an appropriate subject for us to discuss. But it is also clear that paying equal wages to our women workers would be a better benefit for them. So despite the fact that equal pay has been the law since the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, we still have a long way to go.

That is why I have cosponsored, Mr. Speaker, and urge my colleagues to support, H.R. 781, the bipartisan Paycheck Fairness Act. This legislation would toughen the Equal Pay Act, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

ENVIRONMENTALISTS ARE HURTING POOR AND WORKING PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, a few days ago it was announced that California utility rates were going up 50 percent on top of an earlier 10 percent increase. Is this a sign of things to come for the rest of the Nation? Already people all over the country have seen their utility bills go up significantly in recent months.

Also, a few days ago it was reported that OPEC has voted to cut oil production by a million barrels a day, and that our gas prices are going to greatly increase this summer. The Air Transport Association told me a few months ago that each 1 cent increase in jet fuel costs the aviation industry \$200 million. Thus, if oil goes up even just a little more, airline tickets will have to go up, forcing huge numbers more onto our highways, which are hundreds of times more dangerous than flying.

Who is responsible for all this? We can thank environmental extremists, who almost always seem to come from wealthy families, and who are not really hurt if prices go up on everything. In California they have protested and have kept any new power plants from being built for many years despite greatly increased demand produced by the Internet and population growth.

All over this country, though, we have groups of environmentalists protesting any time anyone wants to dig for any coal, drill for any oil, cut any trees, or produce any natural gas. This has driven up prices for everything and has destroyed jobs and has hurt the poor and those on fixed incomes the most. It has hurt truckers and farmers, and has driven many of our manufacturing jobs to other countries.

The current issue of Consumers' Research Magazine has an article entitled, "Why Natural Gas Problems Loom," by an editorial writer for USA Today. Listen to parts of this article. "The problem is that the same government pushing natural gas demand is also keeping vast stocks of it essentially bottled up underground through tight and sometimes absolute restrictions on what can be done on the land and sea above. Two hundred thirteen trillion cubic feet of natural gas are off limits to drillers, thanks to a vast web of regulations and moratoria on drilling. The reason for all this is simple," the article says. It says, "Environmentalists and preservationists have long pressured government to restrict or ban drillers. President Clinton, shortly before leaving office, took still more supplies away through his national monument declarations."

Some of these environmental groups, Sierra Club, Earth First, and others, have gone so far to the left that they make even Socialists look conservative. They are really hurting the working people by destroying so many good jobs and driving up prices at the same time. They tell former loggers and coal miners and others not to worry, that they can retrain them for jobs in the tourist industry; ecotourism. But who in his right mind wants to give up a \$15- or \$20-an-hour job for one paying barely above minimum wage, which is what most tourism jobs pay.

These radicals hurt most the very people they claim to help, and help most the big corporations they claim to be against. In the late 1970s, we had 157 small coal companies in east Tennessee. Now we have five. What happened? Well, we had an office of the Federal Government, OSM, open up in Knoxville. First, they drove all the small companies out, then the medium-sized companies were next. Federal rules, regulations, and red tape hurt small businesses and small farms the most. Big government really helps only extremely big business and the bureaucrats who work for the government.

Mr. Speaker, I chaired the Subcommittee on Aviation for 6 years. Environmental rules and regulations have caused runway and other airport projects to take sometimes 10 or even 20 years to complete, projects that could have been done in 2 or 3 years. This has caused the cost of air travel to be much higher than it would have been, and has caused many of the delayed flights we have today.

When I talk about the higher utility bills and all the lost jobs that environmental extremists have caused, nothing could potentially cause more harm to working people and lower-income families than the Kyoto agreement. There are not words adequate enough to thank President Bush for his cour-

age in stopping this economic disaster from hitting this Nation. Our economy started slowing dramatically last June, according to the Christian Science Monitor, a liberal newspaper. This was 7 months before President Bush took office. To enforce this Kyoto agreement at a time of economic slowdown would run the risk of putting us in near depression conditions.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, when people see their utility bills shoot up, when gas prices go higher, when homes and every other product made from trees cost twice what they should, they can thank the environmentalists.

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We have made great progress over the last 25 or 30 years with our air and water, but some of these groups do not want people to hear good things about the environment because their contributions would dry up.

The really sad thing, Mr. Speaker, is that this is all about big money. Poor and working people are being hurt so environmentalists can scare people and get more contributions. And companies which benefit if we import more oil, OPEC countries, shipping companies and others, contribute to these groups so we will have to import more products which are made from natural resources. It is really sad what environmentalists are doing to the poor and working people in this country.

A NEW DECLARATION OF ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, America needs a new declaration of economic independence: Freedom, justice, opportunity. These are the values that our parents, grandparents, and forebears lived and died for. These are the values that prompt young men and women to give themselves to military and public service. These are the values that reflect the highest ideals of our country and what America has historically offered to the world.

Thus, last week's debate on taxes, the first major economic debate of the 21st century and of the new Presidency, disappointed me greatly. The debate should have centered on what is the wisest economic course of action for the sustenance of our republic. But the debate basically boiled down to what every American can take for himself or herself. The President went around the country divisively and derisively saying, "It's not the government's money; it's your money." Except for one thing: We, the American people, are the government. His rhetoric appealed to the most selfish instincts imaginable; and his proposals are proving he is headed towards government of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich.

Contrast his base appeal with that of President John F. Kennedy who once summoned Americans to ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country, and what we together can do for the freedom of humankind.

Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues in the other body to choose a wiser economic course than the House and the President, a prudent course, a responsible course for our Nation's future. We should not imperil our Nation's economic growth through reckless tax cuts. America should first pay its bills.

The facts are that the interest payments alone on America's \$5.5 trillion debt account for an ever-increasing percentage of the annual budget.

Look at this chart. This shows since 1975, interest payments on our national debt have grown every year. This is the year 2000 right here, highest ever, and projected this year, over \$434 billion of interest payments alone on the debt. So what is all this talk about this magic surplus? And think about how these interest payments crowd out other important national investments we could be making, in Social Security and Medicare, where we must pay those bills, in defense and education, in veterans benefits, in transportation, in the environment and certainly in agriculture.

In the 1990s, due to unparalleled economic growth and strong budget discipline by Members of this House, we began to turn our ship of state around in the proper direction by finally beginning to get our bills paid. But I urge anyone to go to the U.S. Department of Treasury Web site and see for yourselves what America still owes. Here is the Web site number right up here, <http://publicdebt.treas.gov>.

Let me point out also that the percentage of foreign holders of the Federal debt has tripled since I was a freshman on the Banking Committee, going from 12 percent of what is being bought by others today to a resounding 41 percent. The largest investor in the U.S. Federal debt is now Japan, holding over \$340 billion. Do you have any question in your mind why our products cannot gain fair access to Japan's markets when she is holding the purse strings?

Something has gone terribly, terribly wrong with our economic policies. In fact, interest on our debt now exceeds more than we pay in an annual year for the defense of this Nation. It is double what we spend annually on Medicaid and Medicare. And it dwarfs critical spending in other nondefense areas like education, transportation, veterans, agriculture, all put together into one.

I wanted to add to that our trade deficit. Every single year over the last 20 years, America's trade deficit with the world has deepened to historically all-time levels. Almost \$500 billion more imports coming into this country on an

annual basis than our exports going out. And you ask yourself who is now the largest holder of these private dollars related to goods trade with America? I can tell you it is the People's Republic of China, which is far from my definition of a republic, with over \$80 billion of holdings in U.S. dollar reserves.

So what is wrong with the Bush plan? Tomorrow night I am going to continue on that, but let me first say that the President's tax and budget plan ought to lead to paying down our debt and ushering in a new era of economic independence for our country.

IN MEMORIAM: MRS. NOLA BRIGHT, IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT, WESTSIDE BRANCH NAACP

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, today is equal pay day for women. I take this time to stop and pay tribute to a woman who spent practically all of her adult life fighting in behalf of women, minorities and any others whom she felt may have been oppressed and at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, Mrs. Nola Bright, immediate past president of the Westside Branch NAACP.

Nola Bright was born and reared in the city of Chicago and spent the major portion of her life living in, defending and working to improve what is commonly and affectionately known as the West Side of Chicago, in the Lawndale community.

Nola Bright was a family-oriented person. She grew up in a warm family, married John Bright at an early age, and had four children. She was a fiercely dedicated mother and grandmother and was indeed a surrogate mother, mentor and role model for many younger men, women and children who looked to her for guidance and direction.

Nola Bright became a school and community activist at an early age. As she saw her children off to school, she started to work with the Chicago Youth Centers as a way of making sure that children had after-school recreation and leisure-time activities. Mrs. Bright came into her own during the mid-1960s which was a period of great civil unrest, social change and the establishment of new structures. She was intimately immersed in all of these activities and often rose to leadership status within the groups with whom she worked.

She worked most directly with the Chicago Youth Centers, Better Boys Foundation, District 8 Education Council, Greater Lawndale Conservation Commission, Sears, YMCA, Martin Luther King Neighborhood Health Center,

Lawndale Urban Progress Center and the Model Cities Program.

Nola Bright was a champion of the underdog and spent much of her life working with and on behalf of individuals and causes often considered to be the least popular. Rarely did Nola Bright separate her compensated work from her causes. You generally could not distinguish between her job and her volunteer activity. Over the years, she held a variety of jobs, Chicago Youth Centers, Martin Luther King Neighborhood Health Center, Westside Association for Community Action's Sickle Cell Project. She even worked for me when I was a member of the Chicago City Council and president pro tem. Finally, she worked for Habilitative Systems Social Service Agency from which she retired.

For the past 20 years or more of her life, Nola Bright was totally committed to keeping the Westside Branch of the NAACP alive and functioning. She served as president, secretary, treasurer, membership chairman and held every other office. She performed any and all tasks that she could not get someone else to do. Nola Bright was stubbornly principled and would much rather give out than give in. In actuality, she gave her life to the service of others.

She will be memorialized at the Carey Tercentenary AME Church on Saturday, April 6, 2001, 10 a.m., still looking for equal pay, for equal justice and equal opportunity.

REGARDING THE MIDDLE EAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, before I make my formal remarks, let me indicate that today I filed H.R. 1336, to give citizenship to the held Chinese citizen, legal resident of the United States, professor in the United States, mother of a 5-year-old and now husband to a United States citizen held in China for now almost 2 months.

I am very pleased that this private citizenship bill is cosponsored by myself, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY), and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF).

It is a tragedy when families are separated. If we can do anything to enhance the role of the United States of America to promote peace and democracy and to ease the pain of a family that has now been separated, distressed