

20 years earlier under President Bush's plan.

Mr. Speaker, for 70 years, Social Security has improved the lives of millions of Americans. Nearly 47 million people receive Social Security benefits, including more than 32 million retired workers. Of those, two-thirds receive more than half of their retirement income from Social Security, meaning that without the guaranteed benefit of Social Security, more than two-thirds of today's seniors would be living in extreme poverty.

Social Security gave our parents and our grandparents independence. Democrats, Mr. Speaker, are willing to work with the President in a bipartisan fashion to address Social Security's future, but we simply refuse to support the President's privatization proposal because it dismantles the independent Social Security program. Our seniors now have a guaranteed benefit. They would not have one if we adopt the President's plan. And it does nothing to solve the Social Security solvency problem, again, in 2052.

I think our seniors deserve better. We deserve a President that tells us the truth about what is going on. There is no crisis. Let us sit down together on a bipartisan basis and see what we can do to come up with a solution other than privatization.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 8 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. BOOZMAN) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Reverend E. Terri LaVelle, Program Director, The Faith & Politics Institute, Washington, D.C., offered the following prayer:

God of compassion, grace, mercy, reconciliation, we are coming boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need. Thank You for these, my brothers and sisters elected to serve the common good of all humanity. Give divine guidance and wisdom individually and collectively as they carry out their sworn duties.

Give them ears to hear, and hearts to discern what the needs are, and boldly meet the challenges even when it involves making hard and uncomfortable choices.

God, Your word states that You have not given us a spirit of fear but of love, power, and a sound mind. Empower this congressional body to operate in love, Godly power, and with sound minds. Your word says that we have been given the word and ministry of reconciliation.

Let these, Your servants called Congresswomen and Congressmen, be servants of reconciliation domestically and globally. In the name that is above every name, 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. PRICE of Georgia. 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 Speaker's approval of the Journal.

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. 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 Texas (Mr. BURGESS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BURGESS 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.

SOCIAL SECURITY IS NOT SECURE

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, you know Social Security is quickly becoming social insecurity for millions of Americans approaching retirement. Let us take a step back for a moment and take the politics and the pundits and rhetoric out of the debate, and let us examine the most overlooked aspect of what has been discussed thus far, the facts.

Fact: Social Security is safe for today's seniors, but is in serious danger

for our children and our grandchildren. Fact: since the 1950s, the number of retirees has been rising faster than the number of workers. And fact: without reforms, Social Security is not sustainable in the long run.

Mr. Speaker, the system is not in crisis; the system is not in limbo. The system which worked well for many, many years is now broken.

Payroll taxes have been raised 20 times since the 1930s to keep the system functioning, and that is no longer an option. Soon Social Security will be paying out more than it takes in. No matter which side of the aisle you are on, if things continue the way they are, there will be no security for our children and our grandchildren.

RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, Republicans in the Senate yesterday showed that they have no interest in helping millions of working families who clock 40 hours a week at their jobs for the minimum wage. Today, millions of hard-working Americans are working harder for less and less money.

Since the minimum wage has not increased in 8 years, these workers' paychecks are simply not increasing as the cost of living increases every year. Because congressional Republicans refuse to act, the real value of the minimum wage is not worth nearly as much as past minimum wages.

Consider that if a minimum wage this year provided the same wage to workers today, including cost-of-living adjustments, as it provided to workers in 1968, the minimum wage today would be \$3.88 per hour, rather than \$5.15 per hour. That is a big difference, and I believe working families living on the minimum wage feel the pinch every day.

Raising the minimum wage also raises the wages of all low-income workers, not just those below the poverty line. Mr. Speaker, Americans who work 40 hours a week should not be living in poverty. It is time congressional Republicans in both Houses join us in supporting an increase in the minimum wage.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY NOW

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in appreciation of President Bush seeking to strengthen our Social Security system.

When Social Security was conceived in the mid-1930s, the average age of life expectancy in the United States was 60.

Today the average American's life expectancy is over 77.

Americans are now receiving benefits over longer periods of time because we are so grateful they are living longer. Our current Social Security system is financially broken, outdated, and unable to meet the retirement needs of our children and grandchildren.

If we fail to act now, we will burden future generations with dramatically higher taxes, massive new borrowing, or sudden and severe cuts to Social Security benefits or other government programs. In 1998, President Bill Clinton said, "My fellow baby boomers, let me say that none of us wants our own retirement to be a burden to our children and to their efforts to raise our grandchildren."

Seven years later, we still have not solved the problems facing Social Security.

Congress must act soon to provide younger Americans with retirement choices and strengthen benefits for today's retirees. We need to fix the system now, once and for all.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

REFORMING MEDICAL LIABILITY

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, 2 years ago this month, this House passed a meaningful bill to reform medical liability in this country. Since that time, of course, the other body has failed to even have a vote on this important piece of legislation, so now we are going to see this legislation again in this Congress.

But in the 2 years that have intervened, in my home State of Texas, we passed a bill and a constitutional amendment that allowed caps on non-economic damages within the State of Texas. I think it would behoove this House to examine what has happened in the State of Texas since that time.

Since then, medical liability insurers have returned to the State. We had fallen from 17 insurers to two, and now we stand at 14, with several insurers having come back into the State with rates that were flat or, in fact, lower. In fact, Texas Medical Liability Trust, my old insurer of record, has dropped rates from 12 percent right after the constitutional amendment passed and another 5 percent this year, for a total of 17 percent.

But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the Cristus Health Care System in south Texas, a self-insured hospital system, realized a \$12 million savings in the first 9 months of this legislation, money that was put back into nurses' salaries, capital expansion, the types of things that we want hospitals to be doing, not paying for noneconomic damages.

THERE THEY GO AGAIN

(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, Howard Dean, the new duly elected chairman of the Democratic Party, had quite a kick-off tour recently. He started off by making racially insensitive remarks about African Americans and Republicans. Then he said he "hates Republicans and everything they stand for." Next he told a group of activists in Kansas that Republicans are evil. The battle between Democrats and Republicans, he said, is a "struggle between good and evil, and we are the good."

It would be easy to write this off as just another Dean rant. But a woman in the audience, and remember, this is Kansas, hardly a left-wing bastion, said Dean did not go far enough. He was too conservative, she said.

Mr. Dean is the leader of a major political party. Even if his demagoguery is too timid for some activists, he represents the Democratic Party and its views, and his comments are yet further confirmation that the rhetoric of the left is eroding our political discourse.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO SAMUEL FRANCIS, A BRILLIANT AND BRAVE WRITER

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a fellow Tennessean, but a man whom I never had the privilege of meeting. Samuel Francis was a nationally syndicated newspaper columnist and a leading voice of traditional conservatism. He passed away several days ago, just after the Congress had gone into recess, at the too-young age of 57 from complications after heart surgery.

No two people, not even husbands and wives or best friends, agree on everything; and I did not always agree with Sam Francis. But I admired his courage. He was politically incorrect on almost everything, which made him right on most things, but also very controversial. He was a leading critic of neo-conservatives, Big Government conservatives who really are not very conservative at all.

Raised in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Dr. Francis had a bachelor's degree from Johns Hopkins and master's and Ph.D. degrees from the University of North Carolina.

Sam Francis did not believe in world government and multiculturalism. He was a patriotic American who put his own country first and was a brilliant and brave writer.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken after 6:30 p.m. today.

PROVIDING AMOUNTS FOR CONTINUING EXPENSES OF STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE FROM APRIL 1, 2005 THROUGH APRIL 30, 2005

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 133) providing amounts from the applicable accounts of the House of Representatives for continuing expenses of standing and select committees of the House from April 1, 2005, through April 30, 2005, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 133

Resolved, That there shall be available from the applicable accounts of the House of Representatives such amounts as may be necessary for continuing expenses of standing and select committees of the House for the period beginning on April 1, 2005, and ending on April 30, 2005, on the same terms and conditions as amounts were available to such committees for the period beginning at noon on January 3, 2005, and ending at midnight on March 31, 2005, pursuant to clause 7 of rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives (or, in the case of the Committee on Homeland Security, on the same terms and conditions as amounts were available to such Committee for such period pursuant to House Resolution 10, agreed to January 4, 2005).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY).

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 133. It is a pleasure to be here today with the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT); and I also want to mention our ranking member, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD). As we go through the process here, it is going to be a privilege and a pleasure to work with her and all the Democrats and Republicans on the committee to provide for the funding resolution.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of House Resolution 133, which provides interim funding for the standing select committees of the House from April 1, 2005, through April 30, 2005. The rules of the House provide interim funding for committees until March 31 of 2005. This