

that kind of waste at that level? The answer is we are not until we get at it, and the hard work of pinning down the specifics has got to start somewhere. That is why we submit our list of what could be cut.

Mr. Speaker, an administration official was quoted in Sunday's Washington Post as saying that "While the deficit is not optimal, it is not out of control." Let me tell my colleagues, the national debt is \$4½ trillion. The debt service on that is about \$250 billion every year, every year, \$250 billion, so that is a trillion every 4 years just in interest payments. Put simply, this empty rhetoric does not put, in my view, the administration in a very good light. I wonder what an optimal debt situation would be.

The White House has consistently ignored the tremendous waste and duplicative spending in the Federal budget and our Federal Government. We have seen that in the budget that they sent up. Instead of opting to try to reduce the deficit through tax hikes and on the backs of senior citizens, they should be looking at cuts, not raising taxes.

Mr. Speaker, the American people sent a powerful message to this Congress that was loud and clear, and it was cut spending, and do it now, get rid of the waste, the redundancy, the out of date, the off-target, the things we do not need anymore. The American people did not say trim a little here or trim a little there. The American people did not say move with caution and go slow. The American people told this Congress to look for any and all wasteful spending and get rid of it, take it out.

The Vice President complained yesterday that "Republicans haven't put any cuts on the table." Well, they cannot say that anymore, because the cuts are out there for all to see, a list of 75 totaling \$275 billion over the next 5 years. I stand before this Congress with most of the same cuts I introduced in the past two terms, and some of them which we have made some progress on, but most of them have gone untouched. So we are still able to come forward with a list of waste of 75 items.

I invite the administration to debate us on the specifics. Tell us why we need to be spending \$140 million on grants to prepare youths and adults to be homemakers. Explain to the American people why when 99 percent of America's farmers have electricity and 98 percent have phones we need to be spending billions of dollars in assistance to rural electric and telephone utilities.

The American people deserve better. They need answers. They deserve full debate on these and other programs that serve narrow special interests rather than the collective good of our country and all taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, we must strive to move beyond the rhetoric, to achieve the fundamental change that we talk about here with real action and with specifics. It is time to debate real spending

cuts and real fiscal reform, and I am confident if we do we actually will have taken a very important step toward restoring fiscal responsibility and, perhaps even more than that, retaining, restoring some of the credit that this institution needs to build with the American people.

We have done the balanced budget program in the House. We have passed it. We have done that unfunded mandates program in the House. We have passed it. We did the line item veto. We did it yesterday, we passed it. We are going to be talking about and going to introduce a supermajority to raise taxes. Those are all critically important tools to get a handle on spending, to make sure we do the right thing.

But the proof will come. Do we have the courage, do we have the wisdom to pick out the things that are true waste and start chopping them? That is actually the easiest part of the job. If it is not doing much for very many Americans, then why are we spending a lot of money on it? Usually the answer is political. "Well, it's in my district," or "I hate to do something to that program to cut it." That is something we cannot be doing anymore. We cannot afford it, and it is not good expenditure of money.

Accountability time has come, and we welcome accountability time, and I welcome the American people to take a look at our list of 75 cuts.

COMMONSENSE DEFENSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. SKELTON] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. speaker, we are at a crossroads in American military preparedness. Since the Iron Curtain collapsed in 1989, the quantity and extent of U.S. military commitments abroad have stretched our forces thin. Today, there are signs of a serious weakening in troop training readiness. The Pentagon reports that key modernization programs have been interrupted to pay for current operations and an ailing base infrastructure.

We have reduced our military too far and too fast. If we continue, by the end of the decade we won't have the military power to shape a peaceful and prosperous world. Without security, peace, and free trade, all Americans lose.

The erosion in military preparedness disturbs many of our Nation's leaders. President Clinton recognized the shortfall in December when he added \$2 billion to this year's defense budget. Several Members of Congress proposed staying at the fiscal year 1995 budget level, adjusted for inflation. That amount, about a \$14 billion increase, would be a major step toward bolstering American military preparedness.

Some critics argue that defense increases are not needed because today's world is less dangerous. They fail to re-

member that in 1994 the United States came close to armed conflict three times. In June, we deployed additional forces toward Korea to halt the production of nuclear weapons. In September, we sent 22,000 troops to Haiti to restore democracy and stop the flow of refugees to our shores. Then, in October, we responded to Saddam Hussein's move to imperil the world's oil supply. These occurred during ongoing American military commitments in the Sinai, Rwanda, Macedonia, Cuba, Bosnia, Turkey, Panama, Okinawa, and Western Europe.

In 1993, the administration outlined our national security strategy in the Bottom-Up Review. It reasonably concluded America needed enough military forces to fight and win two major regional conflicts, nearly simultaneously. Our recent trials with North Korea, Haiti, and Iraq affirm this two-war strategy.

But our experience under the Bottom-Up Review, now approaching 2 years, suggests that we cannot take our force structure any lower. Indeed, modest increases are needed.

Events in 1994 revealed our military is on the verge of being over-committed. Our experience in the new security environment also teaches that the Bottom-Up Review incorrectly assumed we can withdraw troops from peacekeeping and humanitarian relief commitments to fight a major regional conflict. Disengagement inflicts high cost.

Some critics, observing defense officials juggle resources among competing demands, suggest we've sacrificed modernization for readiness and quality of life. They've got it wrong. A serious imbalance does exist, but it's because all three are underfunded. Simply put, we are not adequately funding our strategy that ensures American security. The shortfall is not large, but it is big enough to create disturbing imbalances in our current military posture. We cannot allow troop morale, training readiness, and force modernization get out of balance. Common sense says we should eliminate this strategy-resource mismatch to restore our overall military preparedness.

My defense plan for fiscal years 1995-99 which I propose today, provides a \$44 billion increase to add force structure; pay for peacekeeping obligations; and correct the imbalance in readiness, modernization, and quality of life. With this prudent investment, we can eliminate an over-committed force structure. We can meet our military commitments abroad. We can restore a high level of readiness. We can provide an adequate quality of life for our deserving service personnel. And we can continue to modernize our forces to be prepared for future threats. It is right and it is affordable.

The choice is clear—continued decline or prudent restoration of our military preparedness. Will the history books say that American service men and women who performed unselfishly

in our Armed Forces had the strong support of the Congress of the United States? Or, will the record show that the Congress chose to leave them unprepared for the difficult trials asked of them? Common sense says that a secure and prosperous America can afford adequate, fully trained, properly equipped, and highly prepared military forces.

HISTORIC CHANGE IN THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise to talk about what I feel is a historic change in the Congress of the United States.

When I was running for Congress last year and I received the Contract With America in the mail, I was very, very pleasantly surprised, because when I read through the contract I felt like I was reading my own campaign platform. For months I had been campaigning on how we need to reform the Congress itself and how the Congress does business, how we needed to shrink the size of Government, and how we needed to start in the Congress itself by reducing the number of committees and the number of committee staff.

One of the most important things that I ran on was how strongly I felt that the Congress needed to make all of the laws that they exempted themselves from apply to themselves. Indeed, I was very impressed when I read in the Federalist papers No. 37 written by Madison, how he described in that paper how the Congress should not be allowed to pass laws that did not apply to themselves and their friends.

Mr. Speaker, I am so delighted to actually be here and to see us fulfilling our commitment to the American people, how on that historic day on January 4 we passed all of those congressional reforms reducing the staff, reducing the number of committees, and then how we went on to pass legislation making all of the laws the Congress had exempted themselves from applying to the Congress itself.

Then in recent weeks we have seen historic vote after vote, the passage of a balanced budget amendment, the passage of legislation stopping the practice of passing unfunded mandates on to our cities and on to our counties. I heard over and over again in my campaign from local legislators, local politicians how the burden of unfunded mandates and regulations was killing them.

Then last night again we had another historic vote where a Republican Congress, with a sitting Democrat President, voted to give the President line-item veto authority. It was doubly ironic, it was sweet that this occurred on the birthday of President Ronald Reagan, a man who had campaigned

over and over again for the need for a line-item veto for our President. He stated over and over again how there were dozens of Governors in our Nation, in our States who have line-item veto authority, and how they exercise that line-item veto authority prudently to pare back pork-barrel spending and to trim State deficits and help State governments to be more efficient.

Last night we had a historic bipartisan vote where we passed a line-item veto.

Mr. Speaker, we have many, many more important votes coming before this body, votes on some real criminal justice reform to lock up violent offenders, some real welfare reform. Mr. Speaker, I am excited and delighted to be here and be part of this historic Congress, restoring to the American people, their body, faith in Government again.

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MINIMUM WAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURTON of Indiana). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Alabama [Mr. HILLIARD] is recognized during morning business for 2 minutes.

Mr. HILLIARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of increasing the minimum wage. Lately I have heard a lot of rhetoric which is both misleading and dead wrong.

Just this Sunday I heard it stated that the only people who work minimum wage jobs are high school and college age kids. Mr. Speaker, this may be true in the wealthier suburban areas of this country, but I wish to tell you that in Appalachia or in the Mississippi Delta or in the Black belt of Alabama or in Watts, in Harlem, this is just not the case, and I wish to inform all of those persons who are misinformed that these are jobs that people work to live, and they are not living the American dream. They are having difficulties just living. They are having difficulties in many ways trying to find a decent place to live, because of the low wages that they receive. These are not people who are on welfare, but these are Americans. They are those who reject welfare. They are those who try to live within the system.

Yes, they have a hard time living the American dream, but these are good Americans. They work minimum wage jobs in many instances, because there are no other jobs available in the communities where they live. These are hard-working Americans.

Some of them have high school diplomas, and some who even went to college; many of them are too proud to take welfare, so they are stuck in these low-paying jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we talk a lot about welfare reform, and getting many of our citizens off of welfare. I believe we owe it to these working Americans, these young adults who work minimum wage

jobs, the working mothers and fathers, the seniors trying to make ends meet. Yes, we owe it to them who are in the job market to raise the minimum wage.

This act may be the finest welfare reform bill which we vote on during this session of Congress.

THE PROPOSAL TO LIST THE ARKANSAS RIVER SHINER AS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. LUCAS] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I say to my colleagues if you are fishing in the Arkansas River Basin, you had better watch what you put on your hook. There is a mighty dangerous little bait fish lurking in the basin's waters when there is water in the basin.

This little bait fish might have the power to stop those in the agriculture industry from irrigating their land, or protecting their crops. This little bait fish might inhibit rural towns from utilizing their primary water sources. This little bait fish might even stop a major metropolitan area from completing its \$250 million downtown restoration project which is crucial to its economic future. Yes my colleagues should know there is a dangerous little bait fish lurking in the river.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is considering whether to put the Arkansas River shiner on the endangered species list. As a new Member of Congress, I am truly underwhelmed by my first dealings with this segment of our Nation's Government. On September 15, 1994, I joined Congressman PAT ROBERTS of Kansas, and Congressman LARRY COMBEST of Texas in sending a letter to Ms. Mollie H. Beattie, the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, expressing our thoughts on the Arkansas River shiner proposal. To date, neither of my colleagues nor I have received a formal reply.

In our letter, we stated that we were concerned that the listing of the Arkansas River shiner could result in land- and water-use restrictions and other prohibitions that preclude full economic use of property, lower property values, and decimate the economies of the communities in the area. We further urged the Fish and Wildlife Service or an appropriate Government agency to conduct an assessment of the economic impact of any proposal to preserve this little bait fish.

In recent history, western Oklahoma, the Texas Panhandle, and western Kansas were the heart of the legendary Dust Bowl. One generation removed from today's watched as their top soil dried up and blew away. The fact that thriving economies have developed on this once barren land is a testament to the drive and fortitude of the people that live there and their ability to use