

the resources available to them. The most important of these resources is water. All of us who live in the region will fight any attempts to turn back the clock of progress.

While I believe the Endangered Species Act is important, I believe as written it is flawed because of its lack of human compassion. Economic impact and private property rights must be taken into account in future draftings of the act.

Many of my colleagues know, there is a strong push in the early days of the 104th Congress to put a moratorium on any future endangered species listings until the act is reauthorized. I support this effort wholeheartedly and have sponsored both the Farm, Ranch and Homestead Protection Act of 1995 by Mr. SMITH and the Endangered Species Moratorium Act by Mr. BONILLA. I would urge my colleagues to do the same.

Beware, there is probably a little minnow lurking somewhere in your district too.

INCREASE IN MINIMUM WAGE LONG OVERDUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from New York [Mr. HINCHEY] is recognized during morning business for 2 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Clinton administration for taking action on behalf of working Americans today and raising the minimum wage.

The administration's action is long overdue and I hope this wage increase will help the working families of my district—and the Nation—to share in the economic recovery that we read so much about.

According to the Labor Department, the Employment Cost Index, which measures the wages, salaries and benefits paid to American workers, rose by only three-tenths of 1 percent during the past 12 months—the smallest annual increase on record.

This means that wages and benefits have failed to rise in response to economic growth and lower unemployment.

This is not a normal economic recovery in which wages rise as the economy picks up steam.

The Federal Government has few opportunities to improve the wages and benefits of America's labor force and subsequently improve the quality of life of working Americans. Adjusting the minimum wage is one method available.

Today, I applaud President Clinton for attempting to deal directly with the declining standard of living for working Americans.

An increase in the minimum wage is long overdue and I support President Clinton's effort to strengthen the economic outlook for working families.

THE CAN DO CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOKE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, what we have seen in the past 30 days is a stark contrast between the can-do Congress and the me-too White House.

Let us just review a little bit about what this can-do Congress has done. By the way, the can-do Congress is something that is being said about our U.S. Congress in international reports. If you pick up the Herald Tribune in Europe or if you pick up any of the London papers, you find out there is tremendous celebration and rather a fair amount of amazement that the U.S. Congress can get so much legislation accomplished in so little time, in such a short time.

What exactly have we done? Well, first of all, we reformed the process. We required Members of Congress would actually have to be present at committee meetings to vote on the bills that are being marked up at those meetings. It means no more proxy voting. It requires our presence at those meetings. We cut staff by a third. We cut the budget for the Congress itself, and we have cut two standing committees, the first time since the 1940's, as well as 27 subcommittees.

So we have reformed this process to make it more efficient, more streamlined, more workable.

And we passed the Congressional Accountability Act. It seems like a very simple concept. We had not even been able to get it to the floor of the Congress for a vote before this session.

We passed the balanced budget amendment for the very first time. We voted on that many times on this floor. We actually passed it. We passed an unfunded mandates bill that requires analysis before we go putting mandates on the States. We have to know exactly what it is going to cost on a State or a local community.

And last night we passed a very important piece of legislation, the line-item veto. The line-item veto is something President Clinton asked for in the 1992 campaign. He did not talk about that very much in the 103d session of Congress, the last session of Congress.

I might go through a few of these things, too, that Mr. Clinton campaigned for in 1992. He campaigned for unfunded mandates reform both as a Presidential candidate and as the Governor of the State of Arkansas. He campaigned for reforming the process, and he campaigned for a middle-class tax cut, all of which are in our Contract With America, and yet last fall what did he do, he called this not a Contract With America but a contract on America. Now, he is back to being me too, but so that he will say, "Well, me, too, we want to do this as well with some exceptions or some provisions or some considerations."

What did he present to us yesterday? He presented to us his version of the 1996 budget for the United States of America for the Federal Government, and without overreacting to that budget, because in a way you have to remember, you have to remind yourself this is not that important an event since he does not have the votes in the Congress to pass the budget anyway, but let us look at what he did do and, in my view, what he did is he went through the motions. He is treading water. He produced a document that he has to produce because of a law that says that he has to send a document to the U.S. Congress.

But it essentially does not make any real changes. What it does do is it continues \$200 billion deficits all the way through to the 21st century. What it does do is it adds in the next 5 years, it adds \$1 trillion to the national debt. What it does do it makes the interest payments projected for the year 2000 to be \$310 billion, when we spent \$204 billion on interest in 1994, in other words, a 50-percent increase in interest payments alone in this budget.

And it is clear that there is no will for bringing us to a balanced budget. It is clear from testimony that the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, OMB, Alice Rivlin, gave several weeks ago to my Judiciary Subcommittee, that not only is there no plan for it, but there is no real desire to balance the budget in the White House.

What we have got is we have got a can-do Congress that is actually keeping the promises that it made to the American public. It is re-instilling a sense of confidence in the integrity of this institution. It is re-instilling a sense of confidence in the American people's own ability to elect officials who will do what they said they would do, that this is an institution which can accomplish things, which can get things done, instead of pretending to get things done all the while obfuscating and making every attempt to only create the appearance of activity when, in fact, the real issue is to keep things under wraps.

So here we have got the can-do Congress versus the me-too White House. Keep your eyes posted on what happens in the next month.

IN SUPPORT OF RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE

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

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I am here to commend President Clinton for initiating the minimum wage increase, 45 cents for this next year and 45 cents for the next.

It is interesting to note that this morning in USA Today, America's newspaper, 77 percent of all Americans approve of this measure. We cannot

allow hard-working Americans to work full-time and not make enough money to pull themselves out of poverty. Eleven million Americans in this country rely on the minimum wage to support themselves and their families. Sixty-four percent of all minimum wage workers are adults with families to feed and rent payments to make.

Today the average minimum wage worker brings home about half of his or her household's weekly earnings. Let me tell you about a family who lives in Clovis, NM, who shared their monthly budget with me. They are a married couple with a 4-year-old son. They both work 40 hours a week at minimum wage jobs. They pay \$450 a month for child care, \$70 dollars for utilities, \$435 for a two-bedroom apartment, \$110 for a car payment, \$45 for car insurance.

After fixed costs, they have just under \$300 a month left to pay for gas, clothes, groceries, and health care. If their little boy gets an ear infection and goes to the doctor, they must feed their family on \$35 a week. If their car break down, they feed and clothe their family on \$20 a week.

This family is not alone. Just in my own congressional district, over 30,000 people get up and go to work every morning to earn a wage that, at the end of a full week, will not even bring them above the poverty level and the ranks of the working poor in our country are growing.

The economy is good. The unemployment rate is at its lowest level in years. The help wanted index is climbing. Yet some hard-working Americans are just not making it.

If left unchanged, by next year the minimum wage will be the lowest point in 40 years. If you are tired of seeing the welfare rolls grow, then let us make work pay. If someone cannot earn enough money working 40 hours a week to feed their family, then we are forcing them into the welfare office. We are telling them it is more profitable to collect than to work.

Do not be fooled by the argument that a modest increase in minimum wage eliminates jobs. Over a dozen recent economic studies have found that modest minimum wage has had an insignificant effect on unemployment levels and has boosted total worker income. Nine states currently have minimum wage levels higher than the Federal minimum wage, and in these States, increasing the minimum wage did not eliminate jobs.

A December Wall Street Journal poll found 75 percent of Americans support raising the minimum wage. To my colleagues, I say the message is clear, minimum wage earners can no longer make it on their salaries, 11 million Americans would get a pay raise if the minimum wage is increased to \$5.15 an hour. A 90 cent per hour increase in the minimum wage means an additional \$1,800 for a minimum wage earner who works full-time year around.

This is as much as the average American family spends on groceries over 9 months.

Five years ago this body voted to increase the minimum wage by a vote of 382 to 37. The large majority of Americans support it. It is time to raise the minimum wage.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 104TH CONGRESS IN ITS FOURTH MONTH

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

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, last month a very important event occurred. We passed a bill giving the President line-item veto authority. We hope this will also pass the Senate and be signed into law.

What is remarkable to me is the pace of what we have been doing in this Congress during the past month and the accomplishments we have made.

And those of you who know me well know I am not this sort of person who brags. In fact, I was born in Minnesota, just like Garrison Keillor, I am somewhat shy and humble. As Garrison Keillor does occasionally, I have to talk about what we do.

We are often criticized as being a do-nothing Congress. I would like to announce we now have a do-something Congress, and I have the figures to prove it, and in the words of the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOKE], who spoke a few moments ago, a can-do Congress.

If you look at what this Congress has accomplished in the first month compared to Congresses of the past dozen years, it is striking. The number of hours spent in session, the average for the past 12 years, 28, our Congress, 115, three times as much; number of votes on the House floor, 9.3 is the average of the past dozen years, this year 79, roughly eight times this many; number of committee and subcommittee sessions, average before, 25, this year 155, six times more; number of measures reported out of committee, the average, 1.6, this year, 14, about nine times more.

This Congress is not in the process of reinventing Government, to use that term that is often used. We have a new way of governing. We are getting things done. Not only have we passed a number of important measures such as the balanced budget amendment which Congresses have tried to pass for 40 years or the line-item veto which has been discussed for many years, we have also passed unfunded mandates reform which the States desperately want. We passed the Congressional Accountability Act which applies many of the work place laws to Congress itself. Previous Congresses have exempted themselves.

I think what is even more striking are the internal reforms that we have accomplished, many of which were done the first day of Congress. We have eliminated proxy voting which I felt was an abominable practice. We have

cut committee staff by one-third. We have reduced the number of committees and subcommittees.

And I wish all the people in this land could walk through the basement corridors of the Cannon Building and some of the other buildings and see the dozens and dozens of desks lining the walls in the corridor, the hundreds and hundreds of file cabinets that are there and will be auctioned off because they are no longer needed. The staff that used those desks and those file cabinets are no longer here. Congress truly has cut back, and I hope that trend continues.

I think we have to have many cuts in the budget of this Nation, but we have to start with ourselves first, and we have done that.

We have open committee hearings to the public, and we have made dozens of other changes in reforming the way Congress operates, even on such mundane matters as parking. It was discovered that some lobbyists had been given parking privileges in the parking garages here in our buildings, and that has been stopped. Providing parking for partisan political organizations has been stopped.

What I want all of us to recognize and to appreciate and in fact celebrate, is that we are governing in a different way, and the people of this Nation have responded.

Last year the favorable rating of Congress was about 14 percent. It is now almost 50 percent. We have really made progress in changing things, and the public is responding and saying, "Go on. That is what we like. Keep it up."

Now, I do want to warn the people of this Nation that these cuts we imposed on ourselves, as I said a moment ago, are a precursor of what we will be doing to the entire budget, and no one likes to have their part of the budget cut, but everyone is going to have to share the pain, because the people of this Nation have said, "Enough, we want our budget balanced. We want our taxes to be reasonable. We want our country to go forward and operate the way we have to operate our families and stay within our income."

This Congress has pledged to do that.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION CONCERNING MEXICAN RESCUE PACKAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized during morning business for 3 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, in order for Congress to begin to fulfill our duty under our Constitution regarding the Mexican rescue package, my colleagues and I have introduced a privileged resolution, House Resolution 57. This resolution will be brought up today under special parliamentary procedure after the 1-minute session and the Journal vote this morning.