Reform, however, does not mean change for the sake of change. Reform means change for the sake of improvement.

Improvement in our welfare system is best accomplished by rewarding work—by making work a prize rather than a penalty.

Work is a prize when a full-time worker can earn enough to pay for life's necessities. Work is a penalty when a person cannot earn enough to pay for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, medical care, and other basic needs.

That is why any discussion of welfare reform must also include a discussion of minimum wage reform.

Under the Contract With America, work would be a penalty rather than a prize.

The work slots proposed to be created by the Personal Responsibility Act would pay $2.42 an hour for a mother in a family of three.

That hourly wage is almost $2.00 below the current minimum wage of $4.25. In Mississippi, pay under the Contract With America would equal just seventy-nine cents per hour.

That is a penalty. That is not a prize.

It is noteworthy, Mr. Speaker, that the vast majority of those who will be forced to work at below minimum wage earnings are women.

It is also noteworthy that 6 out of 10 of all minimum wage workers are women.

And, contrary to a popular misconception, most minimum wage earners are adults, not young people.

In addition, many of the minimum wage workers are from rural communities. In fact, it is twice as likely that a minimum wage worker will be from a rural community than from an urban community.

Most disturbingly, far too many minimum wage workers have families, spouses, and children who depend on them.

That is disturbing, Mr. Speaker, because a full-time worker, heading a family of three—the typical size of an American family today—and earning a minimum wage, would fall below the poverty line by close to $2,500 dollars.

In this country, a person can work, every day, full-time, and still be below the poverty level. Work, in that situation, is a penalty.

A review of the history of the minimum wage is revealing. First implemented in 1938, with passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act, the minimum wage covers 90 percent of all workers.

Between 1950 and 1981, the minimum wage was raised 12 times. During the 1980's, however, while prices were rising by almost 50 percent, Congress did not raise the minimum wage.

I spoke yesterday, Mr. Speaker, of the impact of a frozen minimum wage during the decade of the 1980's when income dropped and costs escalated.

While the minimum wage stood at $3.34 an hour, the average cost of a domestic automobile increased from less than $9,000 to more than $16,000.

The average cost of local transit went from thirty cents to seventy cents.

While the poor got poorer and the minimum wage stood stagnant, the average per capita cost of health care more than doubled, from $1,064 per person annually to $2,601.

From 1980 to 1990, the average cost of a half gallon of milk went from ninety-six cents to a dollar and thirty-nine cents.

The average retail cost of bread went from forty-six cents to seventy cents during this period.

And, a dozen of eggs, which cost 85 cents in 1980, cost more than $1 by 1990.

In short, Mr. Speaker, while the bottom 20 percent of America lost income and got poorer, the minimum wage was frozen, and cost climbed.

Low income workers are yet to recover from that period. They are still far behind the cost of living and further behind high income workers.

Most importantly, raising wages does not mean losing jobs. Recent, comprehensive study dramatically demonstrates this conclusion.

In my State of North Carolina, for example, a survey of employment practices after the 1991 minimum wage increase is instructive.

That survey found that there was no significant drop in employment and no measurable increase in food prices.

Indeed, the survey found, workers' wages actually increased by more than the required change. The State of Mississippi was also the subject of that study.

When a person works, he or she feels good about themselves. The contribute to their communities, and they are in a position to help their families. Work gives a person an identity.

Our policies, therefore, should encourage people to work. We discourage them from working when we force them to work at wages that leave them in poverty.

When Congress has the opportunity to raise the minimum wage, let's make rewarding work and wage reform an essential part of welfare reform.

Let's encourage people to work. And, let us insure that they can work at a livable wage.

Mr. Speaker, we support a minimum wage that affords every American a livable wage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. CLYBURN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. CLYBURN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereinafter in the Extension of Remarks.]

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOKE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

REVIEW OF LEGISLATION ALREADY PASSED IN THE 104TH CONGRESS

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, tonight I have asked some of my good friends in the House to join me in a special order where what we are going to do is review some of the legislation that has already been passed in the 104th Congress, and then we are going to continue to talk about some of the things that have not been passed yet but that we are working on. It is all part of the program that we call our Contract With America.

I have asked the gentlewoman from Washington [Mrs. SMITH] the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON], and the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. BYRANT] to join me in this, and what I wanted to do first is I have got a nice chart here that is courtesy of the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON], and I want to use this red pen to talk about some of the things that we have done already.

What we have done is on the very first day of Congress we had promised that a Republican House would, first of all, require Congress to live under the same laws as every other American. We have done that.

We also said that we are going to cut one out of every three congressional committee staffs. We have done that.

And we said that we would cut the congressional budget. We did that as well.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we promised the American people that we are going to pass a balanced budget amendment and a line-item veto, and we said that we would give relief to our States, counties and local cities on unfunded mandates, and we have done that as well.

Now I think one of the things that I want to point out this evening about everything that we have done is because there is so much partisanship that happens on this floor that we see every single day, one would think that there was an open battle going on between the minority and the majority, the Democrats and the Republicans, on a daily basis. Let us review the bidding for just a moment because I think that maybe, Mr. Speaker, you will find these numbers rather surprising:

First of all, the Congressional Accountability Act requiring that every single law of the land also require, be applied, to Congress. Two hundred Democrats joined every single Republican in voting for that.

□ 2120

It was completely unanimous. When it came to the unfunded mandates bill that we passed last Thursday, 130 Democrats joined us to pass that bill. The line-item veto, 71 Democrats joined us. The balanced budget amendment, 72 Democrats joined us. We passed just yesterday and today, three