NO MAXIMUM WAGE FOR CONGRESS WITHOUT A NEW MINIMUM WAGE FOR AMERICA ACT OF 1995

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, last week, our President issued a challenge to Members of Congress. He asked that this Congress take a stand for Americans who work and sweat and toil ever day, yet earn only $4.25 an hour.

And how have we responded to that challenge?

The majority of my colleagues—colleagues who make $64.40 an hour—have responded with a simple answer—$4.25 is enough; $5.15—the level the President has asked the minimum wage be increased to—is too much; and $5.15 an hour is too much to pay the millions of Americans who carry lunch pails to work every day, who sweep the floors of our hospitals, who crouch behind assembly lines putting together our appliances.

This decision means that more painful decisions will have to be made.

My legislation says that if we dismiss this increase from $4.25 to $5.15, my colleagues and I will feel a little bit of the pain as well. Just a little bit of pain. It isn't the pain that day laborers feel at the end of long hours of manual labor. It isn't the pain that young mothers feel at the end of a long day on the assembly line. It isn't the pain garment workers feel after a long day of piecing together our clothing. it isn't the pain of not having the means to support your family or feed you kids. Almost five months of sweat and toil in jobs that most people don't even want.

A Member of Congress has to work from January 1 until January 11 to make $3,500. Eleven days of work.

I am not suggesting that many of my colleagues are not dedicated, hard-working and conscientious leaders. However, many of those same conscientious leaders simply dismiss the necessity of paying our people a livable wage.

Well, that belief has real effects on real people. For many of my colleagues saying no to a livable minimum wage is simply a sound bite about economic policy and job creation. But for millions of Americans who work hard every day this decision is much more important than any sound bite.

My legislation calls for Member salaries to decrease by 2.6 percent every year until the minimum wage increases to at least $5.15.

Why 2.6 percent? That is the size of the cost-of-living increase Members of Congress were scheduled to receive in 1995.

If Americans earning $4.25 an hour—less than $9,000 per year—can live where their buying power decreases every time the cost of living goes up—then certainly members of Congress can survive it.

This 2.6 percent pay cut will save the U.S. Treasury almost $2 million. This 2.6 percent decrease comes to about $3,500. The average American earning minimum wage has to work from January 1 until May 18 to earn $3,500.

How easy it is for those of us with salaries that place us in top .5 percent of wage earners in this Nation, to say to millions of Americans who can only dream of someday making our salary—''You earn enough.''

Well, I would like to take my colleagues at their word, and issue a challenge of my own.

That is why, today, I introduced legislation tying the salaries of Members of Congress to the action—or lack of action—we take on minimum wage.

If $4.25—$4.25 that in real earning power is less and less every day—is enough for millions of hard-working Americans, then certainly $133,000 is too much for a Member of Congress.

My legislation is clear.

Until we have the courage to join our President and increase the minimum wage to $5.15, then I think Members of Congress should also see their buying power deteriorate.

Even today, 5 years after the last increase in minimum wage, $4.25 is still enough.

Even though the cost of living has increased by more than 10 percent since the last time the minimum wage was increased, we still believe that $4.25 is enough.

The price of homes has increased. The price of bread and milk and eggs has increased. The price of college tuition has increased. The price of rent has increased. The price of clothes has increased.

But the minimum wage has not increased.

And yet a great many of my $65-an-hour colleagues have responded to our President's challenge by saying that $4.25 is enough.

It's just a little bit of pain—pain that will be easily forgotten. Not the pain of working 40 hours a week, and still not having enough money to support your family.

I will be calling on my colleagues in the next few days to support my bill.

I hope every person who is listening tonight who is making $4.25 will call on their Representative to support my bill, because this bill is really about the value of work. The value of the American workers' sweat and sacrifice and pain.

I value the work of my colleagues. But I don't find it 15 times more valuable than that of the people who take care of our children, who tend to our sick, who clean our homes, and build our cities.

So, if my colleagues continue to say no to a livable minimum wage, then I will work to say no to our maximum salaries.

I encourage my colleagues to join me.

I include for the RECORD a copy of my bill.

H.R. —

Be in enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This act may be cited as the ''No Maximum Wage for Congress without a New Minimum Wage for America Act of 1995''.

SEC. 2. REDUCTION OF PAY OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS PENDING INCREASE IN MINIMUM WAGE.

Notwithstanding section 601(a) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 31) or any other provision of law, the rate of pay of Members of Congress shall be reduced by 2.6 percent on the date of the enactment of this Act, and by 2.6 percent at the end of each one-year period thereafter, until the effective date of the first increase to at least $5.15 per hour in the minimum wage under section 6(a) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. On that effective date, the rate of pay of Members shall be restored to the rate in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act.

COMMUNITY POLICING

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

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, 40 communities in my district got good news. They can hire more cops to fight crime, they can hire these cops because of the community policing program that President Clinton championed and we passed last year.

Community policing is not some new, untried approach. It has been used in many places across the country for some years.

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Putting cops on the street makes people safer. Despite this success, or is it because of it, next this House will debate the part of the Republican Contract on America which eliminates the community policing program. Community policing puts police on our streets who know the neighborhoods and are trained to work with residents to prevent crime. Community police work as partners with citizens to make their neighborhoods safer. Community policing takes cops out from behind their desks where they are doing record-keeping and paperwork and puts them back on the beat downtown in the neighborhood where kids gather at night, wherever there could be trouble.

In my district in the small city of Fitchburg which has just over 40,000 people, a community policing program was started 4 years ago, and it reports dramatic drop in crime. Here is what happened after 4 years of community policing in Fitchburg: 25-percent decrease in assaults, 55-percent decrease in burglary, 55-percent decrease in weapons possession, 23-percent decrease in domestic violence, 67-percent decrease in disorderly conduct.

The mayor of Fitchburg told me, and he will tell anyone, there is no substitute for a consistent police presence

in a troubled neighborhood. Community policing has helped make that neighborhood safe for families again.

Now, the Republican bill eliminates the community policing program, and that means fewer police officers catching criminals, fewer patrolling the neighborhoods, fewer building partnerships based on trust, and fewer people safe in their neighborhoods. The community policing program we passed last year ensures funding for small cities and towns.

My constituents know that violent crime is not just a city problem, and the Cops Fast Program was designed specifically to help rural communities and smaller towns. In many of my communities just one or two additional officers can make a world of difference.

In Dalton, a small town in my district, under 10,000 people, the chief of police, Dan Fillio, said that the Cops Fast grant gives him another set of eyes and ears out on the streets.

Community policing works. Now is not the time to break the promise we made to our citizens who live in fear.

Under the Republican bills, small towns in my district will have little chance of getting help.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans and Democrats agrees on one thing during last year's crime bill debate. We need more cops on the beat to help keep people safe. So why does the Republican contract cut funds for new police?

The contract combines the tried and true community policing program with a host of crime prevention programs and replaces it with a block grant, and then cuts the funding besides. Mr. Speaker, the block grant, the Republican block grant, is a shell game. Under the Republican bill, police will have to compete with other community groups, even those involved in street lighting, tree removal, and disaster preparedness.

The Republican bill makes no guarantees that money will go for additional cops.

Will American be safer if dollars are used to hire consultants? Will we be safer if the money is used to buy equipment? Will we be safer if it pays for desks? Well, the answer, obviously, Mr. Speaker, is no. People feel safe when they see a cop in their neighborhoods. We helped put them there last year, and this year the other side is taking them away.

My mayors and police and police chiefs lose in the block grant shell game. All the money for new cops will go to big cities with population numbers and crime statistics the Republican contract requires. This is not smart. This is not savings.

Wake up, America. Do not fall for the shell game.

WELFARE REFORM, THE MINIMUM WAGE IN BLOCK GRANTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUNNINGHAM). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island [Mr. REED] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about welfare reform, work is and should be the centerpiece. During this welfare reform debate, I have heard many people declare that they find it amazing that so many individuals do not work. What I find equally amazing, however, is that so many individuals work full time, play by the rules, and find themselves below the poverty level.

Currently, there are 2.5 million hourly minimum-wage workers, and 1.5 million more workers are paid less than the minimum wage and depend upon tips. From January 1981 to April 1990, the cost of living increased 48 percent while the minimum wage remained frozen at $3.35 an hour. It is no wonder, then, that the number of working poor in this country has increased 44 percent between 1979 and 1992.

As a first step to giving value to work and to promote individual responsibility, we must increase the minimum wage.

An increase in the minimum wage is also an important component of welfare reform. Real welfare reform has the potential to move individuals and families from dependency toward lasting self-sufficiency. But meaningful welfare reform must be sensitive to both the realities of the job market and the difficulties faced by individuals when an individual is unable to work because of a disability or when dependent children require care.

If the goal of welfare reform is to move individuals from welfare to work, we need to ensure that an individual working full time will not fall below the poverty level. If we want to instill responsibility, we must ensure that the minimum wage is a livable wage.

The minimum wage is not just about our workers, it is also about our children. Some 58 percent of all poor children under six in 1992 had parents who worked full or part-time. The number of children in poverty increased from 5 to 6 million from 1987 to 1992. Some 18 percent of all poor children under 6 in 1992 lived with unmarried mothers who worked full-time.

An increase in the minimum wage is also necessary because the income gap between the wealthiest of our society and working Americans is growing. In fact, income inequality in this country is currently at its highest level since 1947.

As we move into the area of welfare reform, it is time to question old assumptions. We must ask the question: ''Can we do it better?'' I believe we can.

The majority currently advocates the block grant as a mechanism to reform our welfare system. But let us be very clear, block granting programs do not make the problems go away. It simply shifts responsibility to the States, and if a block grant is a way of simply saving money as opposed to providing adequate assistance to eligible individuals, then we are not doing the Governors any favors. If we adopt a block grant approach, these grants must be flexible to adjust to changing local economic conditions.

Currently, funding for entitlement programs increased to meet demand during economic downturns when State budgets are financially strapped. Under discretionary block grant programs in a recession, sufficient money is unlikely to be available to meet the demand. While the number of people eligible to receive benefits will grow as the economy weakens, they will not necessarily be entitled to receive any support.

Because Federal funding for assistance would no longer automatically increase in response to greater need, States would have to decide whether to cut benefits, tighten eligibility, or dedicate their own revenues to these programs. The demand for assistance to help low-income Americans would be greatest at precisely the time when State economies are in recession and tax bases are shrinking.

A second issue that must be addressed in designing block grants is the formula by which funds are allocated. A formula that is based merely on historical data would not reflect economic and demographic changes. These changes must be reflected.

Another concern I have with block grants is the phenomenon of interstate competition, which may encourage a downward spiral in benefit levels and result in a race between States to the lowest benefit level. More than two dozen States have been granted waivers from the Federal Government to experiment with their welfare programs, and already State officials are expressing concern that welfare recipients will travel to their States if the benefits are reduced in neighboring States, and while we must be careful not to be overly prescriptive when it comes to designing block grants, we have a responsibility to ensure states are moving welfare recipients from welfare to work in providing a minimum level of support for their citizens.

We have begun an important debate. The present welfare system must change, but we must continue our commitment to providing all of our citizens an opportunity to support themselves.

I welcome the challenges in the days ahead during this crucial debate.

TRIBUTE TO KATE HANLEY ON HER ELECTION AS CHAIRMAN OF FAIRFAX COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, the first election of any consequence, maybe the only one, but there may be some that I have not heard about, but the first