o'clock p.m. for legislative business. We plan to take up four bills under suspension of the rules, H.R. 1508, the National Children's Island Act of 1995; H.R. 2005, a bill to make technical corrections in Coastal Barrier Resources Systems Map; H.R. 1358, a bill to convey the National Marine Fisheries Service Laboratory at Gloucester, Massachusetts; and H.R. 1691, the Homesteading and Neighborhood Restoration Act of 1995.

Mr. Speaker, Members should be advised that any recorded votes ordered on these bills will be postponed until 5 o'clock p.m. on Monday.

After suspensions, we will take up the rule on H.R. 2492 and the bill itself, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1996. We also plan on going to conference on H.R. 2491, the Seven-year Balanced Budget Reconciliation Act of 1995.

On Tuesday, October 31, and the balance of the week, the House will consider the following bills, both of which will be subject to rules: The District of Columbia Appropriations Act for fiscal year 1996, and H.R. 1883, the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 1995.

Of course, Members should keep in mind that conference reports may be brought to the floor at any time, and we do expect a number of appropriations conference reports to be ready next week.

On Monday, October 30, we expect to finish legislation around 8 o'clock p.m. On Tuesday, the House will meet at 9 a.m. for the morning hour and 10 a.m. for the legislative business. We hope to finish voting that night by 6 o'clock so Members may return home to see their little hobgoblins, ghosts and ghouls trick or treat on Halloween night. On Wednesday we plan to work later, probably until 10 or 11 p.m. so that on Thursday, November 2, we can have Members on their way home to their families by 6 o'clock p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this is the last vote for this week, and there will be no session tomorrow.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire of the majority leader, you know, the House had a series of very close votes on riders to the VA–HUD bill, particularly to the EPA section of that bill. We on this side of the aisle were concerned about the statement yesterday that appeared in Congress Daily that the Republican leadership may attempt to schedule another vote on this issue at a time when many Members were absent, ''to sneak it by,'' as the quote was relayed in Congress Daily.

That troubles us, as you can imagine dearly. We want to know if you plan to go to conference on the VA–HUD bill and when you want to do it.

Mr. ARMEY. If the gentleman would yield, we expect, Mr. Speaker, to go to conference on that on Wednesday.

Mr. BONIOR. On Wednesday. I thank my colleague.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. DOGGETT. I see that Legislative Branch Appropriations Act has been rescheduled for Monday. Are you sure we will reach it on Monday?

Mr. ARMEY. Yes.

Mr. DOGGETT. Really sure?

Mr. ARMEY. Really sure.

Mr. DOGGETT. Will the rule that is provided there allow for consideration of a gift ban and lobby reform?

Mr. ARMEY. It is not germane.

Mr. DOGGET. It is not germane.

Mr. ARMEY. You can check with the Committee on Rules, but that is my understanding.

Mr. DOGGETT. Will there be any other opportunity next week to consider gift ban and lobby reform legislation of the type that the Senate approved 98 to 0?

Mr. ARMEY. I can tell the gentleman from Texas I will be making an announcement on that subject tomorrow at a press conference to be held at 10 o'clock in the morning.

Mr. DOGGETT. Without presuming what your press conference might cover, does the gentleman contemplate the possibility of a rule being in place for this body on January 1, as is the case with the Senate?

Mr. ARMEY. I am sorry, the gentleman will repeat the question?

Mr. DOGGETT. Yes. Without getting into the details of your press conference, does the gentleman contemplate the possibility that we could have a rule in place here by January 1 as the Senate has done?

Mr. ARMEY. I thank the gentleman for asking. I will just say to the gentleman, I am sure that the gentleman's curiosity will be satisfied at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Mr. DOGGETT. I look forward to it.

Mr. BONIOR. Have a nice weekend.

Mr. ARMEY. You all have a nice weekend.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1995

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATHAM). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas? There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE HONORABLE SAM M. GIBBONS, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable SAM M. GIBBONS, Member of Congress:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, October 24, 1995.

Hon. NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: This is to formally notify you pursuant to Rule L (50) of the Rules of the House that my office has been served with a subpoena issued by the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

After consultation with the General Counsel, I have determined that compliance with the subpoena is consistent with the privileges and precedents of the House.

Sincerely,

SAM M. GIBBONS,

TABLING OF PRIVILEGED RESOLUTION REGARDING FORGERY OF DOCUMENT BY A HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from New York [Ms. SLAUGHTER] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to participate in this special order in order to have an opportunity to discuss yesterday's tabling of the privileged resolution which dealt with the forgery by a House subcommittee. Although we were denied the opportunity to even debate the serious issue, I feel it is so important that we cannot let it go undiscussed.

Yesterday we tabled a resolution regarding an issue of basic responsibility of the people who serve here either by election or by appointment. This responsibility is to assure that all who serve here are cognizant of their responsibility and determined to carry out the legal obligations of this country.

This resolution, Mr. Speaker, was an effort to protect the history of our legislative record. It was designed to guarantee that we put together a fair and accurate record of our legislative history for those to come. What we do in Congress is used by teachers in classrooms, lawyers in courtrooms, authors and historians, all of whom depend upon our integrity so they need not question the authenticity of what they read.

Senator TRENT LOTT, when he served in the House, made an eloquent statement of the importance of the sanctity of our legislative records, and I quote.

For if the legislative history made by the duly elected representatives of the people is subject to malicious alteration and distortion by anonymous nonelected staffers, then the credibility of this institution in the people's branch is in serious jeopardy. All our written records become suddenly suspect in the eyes of the people and of the press and of the courts. How much weight, for instance,

are the courts likely to give to the legislative history we supposedly made as representatives when the actual source of that history is in doubt? And yet that is the situation in which we find ourselves until the guilty are found and punished and adequate steps are taken to prevent the reoccurrence of such abuse.

That was then House Member LOTT, CONGRESSIONAL RECORD June 30, 1983, and I agree with him.

Yesterday, a resolution was tabled that would have reaffirmed this House's commitment to history. Not only did this House refuse to affirm the integrity and honesty of House records, but we were prevented from even speaking about it. Are we to expect that when such things occur in this House we will sweep them under the carpet, pretend they never happened, in essence condone the actions with our silence?

Mr. Speaker, let us go back to the beginning. At a hearing on September 28 in the Government Reform and Oversight Subcommittee on National Economic Growth, Natural Resources, and Regulatory Affairs, a document was placed on the press table which appeared to be on the letterhead of the Alliance for Justice. It included a logo and address, phone number, fax number, E-mail address and a listing of member organizations laid out in such a manner as to replicate the Alliance's own letterhead. Incorrect information was then placed on this document in such a way in which any reasonable person would believe it came from the Alliance for Justice.

Upon closer examination by members of the Alliance for Justice it became clear that the document was falsified. When pressed, the Chair of the committee admitted his staff had created the document and, as admitted by his communications director, they had taken a faxed document, scanned it into the computer system and altered it.

Mr. Speaker, anyone could have picked up this piece of paper, walked out of the room and remained under the impression that it was put out by the Alliance for Justice. The creation of this document clearly held the intention of deceit. This is forgery. Forgery is a crime in the United States, and forgery was committed by those people who work in a place where the laws on forgery are made.

If the intent was not to deceive or to mislead, as claimed by the creators of the document, why create it at all? Why not simply make the point on a hand-out of their own committee letterhead? Why not just use the organization's name and list the information? The sole reason to replicate the logo and include an address, phone number, fax number, E-mail address and listing of members organizations is to make the reader of the document assume the document came from the organization instead of from the subcommittee.

Mr. Speaker, why did this staff need to forge a document in the first place? We should all be perplexed and outraged by this action. Regardless of your position on the legislation which was under consideration on September 28, that hearing cannot be ignored by anyone who believes that Congress must obey the laws that it writes. It cannot go unchallenged by anybody who honorably claims to represent the United States in these hallowed halls of Congress. It cannot be accepted by those of us who have vowed to uphold the laws of the United States as we take our oath.

In short, Mr. Speaker, the unauthorized creation and falsification of documents to be distributed to the general public must be condemned. The forgery calls into question the role that we, as Members of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, have been sworn to carry out. It is our duty and responsibility to ensure that we provide oversight, to make sure we are acting in accordance with rules and regulations of the land. We must guarantee we are fair to all our witnesses. We must guarantee we conduct fair and open hearings. We must guarantee we put together a fair and accurate record of our legislative history.

Furthermore, I find it distressing to witness this kind of overreaching and blatant disregard for the law simply in order to make a political point, to create an enemies list, mistreat them as witnesses before the Congress and then to silence those who challenge this kind of behavior brings dangerous memories to mind and sets off resounding alarm bells.

As the people of this country once again examine this institution ever more closely, do we think they would accept the use of forgery to make a point? Do we think they would accept silencing those who attempt to make us honest? I think not.

In the name of the men and women who have served Congress in the past, in the name of those who will come after us, and in the name of history, we must be clear. We will not let forgery go unchecked. We will not allow representatives in this Congress to deceive. Mr. Speaker, we will not tolerate this kind of action.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO].

Mr. FAZIO. I thank my friend from New York, Ms. SLAUGHTER, for including me in this opportunity to comment on something that I think is a very serious matter. And while the privileged resolution that was to be offered yesterday was tabled, it in no sense erases this problem from the RECORD. In fact, perhaps the claim of vindication that we have heard since then makes it even more important that we pursue the matter vigorously.

I think the gentlewoman's effort tonight is an effort, even in the midst of all that is happening here, with all the very fundamental questions about public policy, to make sure that this very key issue for those of us who are concerned about the legitimacy of our process here remains on the table. Because, in my view, there are few things as sacred to this House as the public trust. And that very legitimacy, that legitimacy of our representation, rests on a tradition of trust, a tradition that is truly built painstakingly over 200 years of serve to this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, 13 years ago an incident occurred that put that trust in jeopardy. I think that incident is very much like the one that the gentlewoman from New York is commenting on. And it might surprise some of the new Members of Congress, who seem to think that for 40 years we did not fight to uphold the integrity of this institution, but, in fact, a very different approach was taken. We were not into tabling and covering up, we were actually concerned enough that we took some action.

So perhaps I can outline for colleagues who were not aware of the similar occurrence and the differing approach we took under that Democratic leadership.

A staff member of the Government Operations Committee doctored the transcripts of a committee hearing. He altered an official committee document, part of the permanent record of the House of Representatives. The changes he made were designed to advance his political agenda. The testimony of committee members was changed in a way that reflected negatively on them. He made them look foolish, and in doing so, in my opinion, he made all of us look foolish.

Committee hearings and debate like the debate we are having tonight constitute a living history of the democratic process. Words have meaning. Debate has meaning. Parliamentary democracy derives its very legitimacy from rules and procedures, and, most importantly, from a tradition of trust. For these reasons, the House acted swiftly and on a bipartisan basis to investigate the matter. 409 Members agreed unanimously to authorize the Ethics Committee to look into the incident.

The entire shameful episode was put to rest with the resignation of the staff person who perpetrated the forgery and the release of an Ethics Committee report which commented on the fulsome nature of the activity involved. No single voice was more powerful in that debate than the voice of my Republican colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, BOB WALKER.

Today a similar outrageous incident compels us to take the floor. I believe that outrageous incident is deceitful and is damaging and just as dangerous. Another forgery, this time perpetrated by yet unnamed staff of the very same committee. No one has been brought to justice, and it looks like more than a few people here would just as soon sweep this whole matter, this entire episode under the rug.

Mr. Speaker, I am angry, and I think I am angry in the same context that our colleague BOB WALKER was angry in 1983. Twelve years ago he said the following: ''The integrity of this body

has been compromised.'' He added ''There is a need to begin a process to make certain that such an instance never happens again''. And I think we are in a similar position today.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WALKER] talked about the integrity of the committee process. He told the House ''To have any committee or any subcommittee of that full committee under a cloud of suspicion will reflect adversely on the base work of the committee, which is oversight of Federal agencies''. The same as it is today.

As we do today, my colleague demanded a thorough investigation of these matters. In language that seems, unfortunately, as appropriate today as it did then, my colleague, Mr. WALKER, characterized the incident as ''An example of congressional staff run amuck and of certain Members of Congress attempting to utilize our legitimate congressional oversight functions as platform to further their individual political ambition''.

While I certainly hope the same is not true today, 12 years ago we acted on a bipartisan basis to investigate a forgery. Today we should join together once again in condemning a similar shameful action. We have the opportunity to urge the Speaker to ensure that the integrity of the legislative process and the committee process are respected and protected. A vote to uphold the honesty and the integrity of the House of Representatives should still be scheduled here for the deliberation on the House floor.

□ 1915

Once Republicans learn, I believe, that vindication has been claimed, as I said earlier, and once they learn that there is a precedent for taking action on matters that are very similar, if not exact, I am hopeful that their sense of fair play and bipartisan sense of integrity, the integrity of this institution, will come into play and that the cavalier decision to simply table the matter without further comment will be not only regretted but reversed.

It seems to me that the only way perhaps we can call upon a sense of fairness and a sense of not only perpetuating a tradition of integrity, but following a precedent can be brought about is for the gentlewoman, and others who have a concern for the institution, to continue to bring the issue to the floor until it is properly dealt with by the Republican leadership.

So, I want to thank the gentlewoman for her diligence, for the serious nature that she views this indiscretion, and I hope that other Members looking back to 1983, to when Democrats were embarrassed but unanimously, with our Republican colleagues, took action, with that harkening back to I think the proper management of the House, we will ultimately succeed.

Once again, I appreciate, the gentlewoman for letting my comments be a part of the RECORD, and I hope she will continue her effort.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Thank you, very much. The gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SKAGGS].

Mr. SKAGGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding some time to me and for her courage in pursuing this very troubling matter.

Mr. Speaker, one of the wonderful words of political debate in this country over the decades has been the word ''balderdash.'' It just occurred to me that as with so many things, perhaps like obscenity, it is hard to define, but we know it when we see it.

My colleagues, this is balderdash. The idea that the gentleman from Indiana would claim that a vote to table the gentlewoman's resolution of inquiry and privilege somehow vindicated the acts that were taken under his name by his staff in the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight really stretches credulity to the breaking point.

This is a classic example of, I think, ''He protesteth too much,'' and we will see how the facts ultimately unfold here.

I think, as the gentlewoman has pointed out, this is a very serious matter. It does implicate the integrity of the House of Representatives of this country and the trustworthiness of the legislative process. This forgery was committed with the official resources of the House of Representatives. What kind of example does that set for not only our colleagues, but others who are observing us and trying to discern whether this body deserves to have their trust and confidence?

Let us be perfectly clear about this. There could be no purpose in this document's being produced other than to deceive. There is simply no such thing as an innocent forgery.

Let me just show, this is a blowup of the genuine article, the real stationery of the Alliance for Justice, and this was the forgery. I think there can be absolutely no doubt that this document was devised and intended to look like this one and to mislead people in the process.

Mr. Speaker, I was there at that hearing. I questioned the chairman about it at the time. He professed to have no knowledge that this had been done by his committee staff, and I think that is why the gentlewoman's resolution, which was a measured response asking the Speaker of the House of Representatives to deal appropriately to correct this failure of the committee staff to meet the high standards we expect of them, was a very, as I say, measured reaction to this.

Yet, what does the majority leader do but to move to table the resolution, clearly hoping that this problem will just go away. To the contrary, I believe that it will fester until it is dealt with openly and straightforwardly by the body. It is another example of the leadership style that seems to prevail around here these days, which is essentially encapsulated in the phrase, ''Our way or no way.''

The underlying issue here, the so-called Istook-McIntosh-Ehrlich proposal, is a perverse one to begin with. It directly attacks the ability of many, if not most organizations, and many if not most citizens of this country, to fully participate in the political life of American. It is a direct attack on the life blood of any democracy, which is the free flow of information and debate.

What is the problem? What is the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. MCINTOSH] afraid of? Why is political advocacy by the American Red Cross or the Girl Scouts or the YMCA somehow a threat? Why should those organizations not have the full right to talk to the Congress and to others in public life about things that concern them?

It is hard to figure out, but that is, as the gentlewoman knows, the underlying agenda here. Perhaps one of the things that explains all of this is that it is intended to distract, intended to draw attention away from the failure on the part of the majority party to take up real lobbying reform, real gift ban legislation.

But in their zeal to push this kind of extreme proposal, they have overstepped the bounds. That zeal has clearly been communicated to staff in a way that has evidently blurred the very important distinction between means and ends.

A forgery by the official staff of a committee of the House of Representatives. Give me a break. That is bad enough. But for the majority just to brush it off, to table the gentlewoman's resolution, is a sorry spectacle indeed.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Thank you. The gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. HEFNER].

(Mr. HEFNER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for making this time available. I do not usually participate in special orders, but I read a press release that took on, in my view, a very vicious tone and made some accusations about a gentlewoman who has been my friend for a long, long time.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing we have in life is our integrity, and our word is our bond, as people take about. We have some high rhetoric when we get into debate about different issues. We have just had Medicare and reconciliation. I have been here for some 20 years, but we usually try to, in our arguments, be basically honest and have some truth to what we say.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any argument, nobody has disputed, that this was not a forgery, which in itself is bad enough that anyone would forge a document. The only reason that I can imagine that anyone would put a document out is because the heading ''Alliance for Justice'' maybe would call attention that this is an organization and people would pick

it up and they would have some respect and people would read it.

It would seem to me if someone wanted to put the information out, they would have used their own stationery, or the subcommittee's stationery head. Not only was it a forgery, which is bad enough, but after contacting the different organizations that were mentioned, they denied that they got the numbers. They got no Federal funds. And this, in itself, is false witness about an agency.

Then when they get caught with their hand in the cookie jar, if they are in the majority, they can have a motion to table and if they have got the votes, they can walk lockstep and table it. It does not mean that they are not caught with their hand in the cookie jar.

It seems to me if they had wanted to do the honorable thing when it was called to their attention, if the subcommittee chairman had wanted to do the honorable thing, he would apologize if his staff had done it.

Mr. Speaker, if my staff had done it, I would have been the first one on this floor. I have been a subcommittee chairman for a lot of years. I would have been the first one on this floor to apologize to this House and to apologize to the people that were affected, and the staff people that had done it would apologize and they probably would not have been on the staff anymore.

This is something that takes on a very serious situation to me. Then I read the press accounts here. The press release says: Taking Ms. SLAUGHTER to task for all she wants to do and use this as politically motivated and unfounded.

It is not unfounded. Nobody denies that it is a forgery. There is no doubt about that. Let me just read and follow up on what the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO] said. I have a quotation here on the same situation that the gentleman was talking about. This was from the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WALKER]:

> We have got to make certain that what we do serves the best interest of the House, but also accomplishes the purpose of making certain that we never have the future staff people or future Members thinking that this is the kind of thing they can get away with.

He goes on to say,

> This is political dirty tricks with venom, because what they have done here is the dirty tricks have resulted, potentially, in the change in the entire public documentation, but in this case, in trying to change the people's minds on legislation that is being proposed in this House.''

In my view, it is to put a muzzle on these people that you do not agree with their positions, but you will just do away with these organizations. We just shut them down. We want to be able to end up detailing precisely how this came about, what took place, and then make whatever changes are necessary to make certain it never takes place again, including, of course, getting rid of the people who are responsible.

Mr. Speaker, if my colleagues are responsible Members of this House, talking about family values and principle, they would not condone and would certainly not be a party to this, which constitutes dirty tricks. It is a forgery. It is a false document. It does not have any truth to it. They are trying to do this so they can prevail in their ability to do away with all of these different agencies; muzzle the agencies, the Red Cross, the Girl Scouts, and all of these that I consider to be legitimate agencies.

If my colleagues are responsible Members of this House, and they represent, as I do and the gentlewoman from New York [Ms. SLAUGHTER] and these other people that have spoken, some half a million people in this country, they owe it to these people to be honest, to the best of their ability to speak the truth, to where the people in their district and the people of the great United States of America know that when they speak or they put out a document, it has some basis of truth to it.

And, Mr. Speaker, when they are caught in a case where this is not the case, rather than to admit and be big enough to come before the House and at least come before the people on the committee that could be affected by it and the agencies that could be affected by it, be big enough to come to them and apologize and take the people to task, the staff people, take them to task so it would never happen again.

What goes beyond all bounds of reason in my view is they muzzle the gentlewoman that brought the resolution to the House and just say, ''Hey, we have got the numbers. We will not face up to it. We do not have to explain to anybody, because we have the numbers and we will just vote to table it and that will be the last of it.''

I do not believe that that is the way this place is supposed to work. That is not the way that we have operated in the 22 years that I have been here, and there have been times when we have been forced to take painful votes when it affected people in my party. But we made the votes and we did not sweep it under the rug.

To me, this is absolutely, totally unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman from New York for taking this special order. I would urge that the Member that is responsible for this would take the responsibility. He swore to uphold the laws of the great United States of America and the Constitution, that he would take it upon his shoulders to come to this House and admit that this was a forgery and that the people who are responsible for it are no longer in the employ of the taxpayers of the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for taking this time and I think she certainly is to be commended for standing up for what is morally right and the integrity of this House of Representatives.

□ 1930

Ms. SLAUGHTER. I thank the gentleman very much.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois [Mrs. COLLINS], the ranking member of the full committee.

Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, it is not often that I come to this floor for special orders, but I come here today because I feel this is an extremely important matter.

Mr. Speaker, the chairman of the Subcommittee on National Economic Growth, Natural Resources, and Regulatory Affairs, has said that he had no prior knowledge of the document distributed at the hearing on September 28.

I have no reason not to believe him. I, therefore, also believe that he had no personal involvement in creating the document that misled so many who saw it.

However, Mr. Speaker, this incident should never have happened.

In this case, when the facts failed to support the majority's view, it appears they manufactured their own facts using official funds, committee staff and support agencies of the House to mislead Members, the press, and the public.

When they did these things, Mr. Speaker, they went too far. They ran afoul of rule IX of the Rules of the House of Representatives, and that created a question of the privileges of the House of the kind Ms. SLAUGHTER presented yesterday. Her resolution, which was tabled twice deserved a full and open debate on this floor.

Adoption of the motion to table which was offered by the majority leader obviously represented a desire to avoid debate and to side step accountability. We have seen this blind vision so often in the 104th Congress—far too often. It was hardly the vindication which some have claimed.

What is particularly offensive about the events described by Ms. SLAUGHTER is that a document was created using official funds which misrepresented the views of a witness at the hearing, an organization called the Alliance for Justice. In addition, the information about Federal grants was inaccurate.

There is only one reason the subcommittee would have created this document and that is to embarrass the Alliance for Justice.

When the document was exposed as a fraud, the chairman of the subcommittee claimed that he was not aware of any problems in the preparation of the document.

He accused the witness, Nan Aron, the director of the Alliance for Justice, of hiding behind the fifth amendment when she refused to confirm the accuracy of the numbers contained in the document.

Later he admitted that the subcommittee staff created the document. After that, he wrote a letter of apology to Nan Aron.

It is still unclear which staff actually participated in this deception and what authorization they received from Members. Concerns have also been raised that staff of a member's personal office performed functions which should have been under the direction of subcommittee staff.

Mr. Speaker, some have said in defense of the subcommittee that the forged document with the Alliance for Justice letterhead was merely a harmless graphic which was intended to illustrate the majority's contention that some member organizations of the Alliance received Federal funds.

But if this was merely a harmless graphic, then one of its purposes was to give the impression that there was something improper or illegal in their receipt of Federal funds.

Mr. Speaker, this was an exercise in using an official investigative hearing of a House subcommittee to deceive, rather than to enlighten.

The House and its committees cannot function if Members of the House attempt to deceive each other, as well as the press and the public which we represent, with false information.

The resolution submitted by Ms. SLAUGHTER called for the Speaker to get to the bottom of this incident. The Speaker had already acted earlier to ensure that Members of the House must take responsibility for documents circulated on the floor about pending legislation and amendments.

We still need action to ensure that the integrity of the committee process is respected so that its principal purpose—to gather accurate information which we can use to write legislation and to conduct proper oversight—is respected.

That integrity has been under attack throughout this Congress, not just in the incident we are addressing today.

For example, at the recent Waco hearings jointly conducted by subcommittees of the Judiciary Committee and the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, we discovered that representatives of a private entity, the National Rifle Association, were treated like professional committee staff of the House; that an attempt was made to allow them access to confidential materials which might be used as evidence in the hearings; and that there was an effort to cover up their role.

As the majority must now realize, those revelations, as well as the incident involving the forged document, were counterproductive. They interfered with whatever message the majority might have been trying to put out. They embarrassed the committees and Members involved. Ultimately, they reflect on the House and on all of us.

Mr. Speaker, we often disagree on policy. But let's not attempt to deceive each other, or the national audience outside the House, with forged documents, tricks, and misrepresentations. That hurts the House on every legislative issue, not just this one. And that is what the House must speak firmly against. This must not happen again.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. If I could just ask the gentlewoman a question. I know you have seen the press release that was handed out saying that the House voted to vindicate the gentleman involved.

Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois. I did.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Did you notice that that was written on committee stationery?

Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois. No, I did not.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the leadership of the gentlewoman from Illinois [Mrs. COLLINS] in this committee in trying at least to uphold the laws of the House, but the laxity, as you had pointed out, what we have seen in the Waco hearings and what we saw the other day in the hearings on the White House Travel Office, indicate to me that integrity is in very short supply on that committee.

I wonder if you agree with me, and you were there the day this document came about. I have said many times I think the thing that saddened me most was the fact that the staff and the subcommittee chair thought it was very amusing, and they saw nothing in the world wrong with what had taken place here.

I feel that it is going to be my obligation. If no one else of the 435 Members care about it, it is terribly important to me that this not take place here in this House. This is too sacred a ground that we stand on. Too many people send us here with their total trust that we are going to do the right thing. I can imagine their outrage if they really knew that this is going on. Frankly, I do not know how much more of it goes on. But at least on this piece right here where I was closely involved I intend to make my stand.

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the efforts of the gentlewoman from New York to bring a serious problem to this body's attention. The actions of majority staff of the Subcommittee on National Economic Growth, Natural Resources, and Regulatory Affairs are very disturbing, and every Member of this House should be alarmed. The entire House is once again subject to more public outrage about our activities by the production of a phony press release concocted just to make a point.

When the Republican leadership immediately tabled the gentlewoman's resolution yesterday, it certainly sent a strong message to me. Why has the Republican leadership gagged us? Why can't we have a debate? As the gentlewoman has pointed out, quite correctly, forgery is a crime. This matter needs to be examined to ensure that it never happens again. Contrary to arguments from the other side of the aisle, this is not merely a partisan issue: it is a question of institutional integrity.

I was encouraged at the beginning of this Congress when the new leadership promised that the House would be more open and that debate would be free. What has happened to that promise? I opposed efforts in the last Congress to gag or shorten debate, and I still oppose these restrictions. To say I am extremely disappointed in what happened here yesterday would be an understatement.

This is a serious problem that casts a dark shadow over this institution. So why have the Republicans also attempted to discredit the gentlewoman from New York? We all received a Dear Colleague from the Republican members of the subcommittee that not only attacked the integrity of the gentlewoman from New York but also evaded the facts. Perhaps it is because the gentlewoman is correct: forgery is a crime. This matter needs to be examined to ensure that it never happens again. Regarding the integrity of the gentlewoman, I wonder how many signers of this Dear Colleague have received campaign contributions from Defense corporations? We don't see the Republicans attempting to subvert the first amendment rights of Defense and other corporations who engage in lobbying activities.

I also question the fact that this was just a simple mistake. If the intent was only to show the amount of Federal dollars received by the Alliance for Justice, why was it necessary to use House Information Resources to produce an exact duplicate of the Alliance's letterhead, even down to its e-mail address?

The legislation that produced this controversy, the restriction of groups from using any of their own funds to lobby, deserved to be debated in a very open forum. I do not see how this is possible now. The fact that the majority staff of this subcommittee believed it necessary to willfully falsify a document to make a point about the need for this legislation certainly sends a unmistakable signal that they and their superiors did not have enough facts to bolster their arguments.

I hope the matter does not end here. Regardless of the propriety or impropriety of the actions by majority staff, the fact remains that the information was false and could have become part of the public record.

Finally, how can we explain this to our constituents? As we all know, the public's perception of Congress is still quite low. This sad situation will only lower our constituents' opinion of both the process and the institution most of us respect. This is the greatest tragedy of all, because it undermines every Member's mission—producing sound and reasoned laws for the public good. How can I tell my constituents back home that I am making the best decisions on important issues when the information I am receiving may be either skewed or fraudulent?

Once again, I salute the gentlewoman's commitment to this serious problem.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized to control the balance of the pending hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, could I just inquire, does that mean that I have 5 minutes or that I have how long?

The SPEAKER pro tempo. The gentleman has a maximum of 22 minutes remaining.