

### AVOIDING ANOTHER GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak out about an important initiative that I will be supporting next week and have been supporting up until now, which is an effort to avoid another Government shutdown. There is a disaster appropriations bill that should be coming to the floor next week, and I support an initiative to attach a feature to that appropriations bill that would be a safety measure to avoid another Government shutdown. The gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GEKAS] has been the primary mover behind this, and I rise to speak out strongly in support of this initiative.

I believe that the Government shutdowns that we had last year were generally agreed by people on both sides of the aisle as well as the President and the Vice President to have been counterproductive and to have been something that we should have avoided. And we have an excellent opportunity right now to attach an amendment to this appropriations bill that simply stated what it would do is, it would in the event that we cannot reach agreement with the White House on an appropriations bill, that the Government would stay open at a given funding level, whether it is 100 percent or 98 percent of the previous year's funding level, so that we do not get into this scenario where the Government is shut down.

Mr. Speaker, as many Americans know, on September 30, the previous year's appropriation bill expires, and we need a new appropriations bill to go into effect on October 1. This continuing resolution or safety measure that I am talking about tonight would simply keep the Government open. A safety CR would ensure that on October 1 all of the appropriations bills that have not been signed into law, such as those that fund the Veterans' Administration, NASA, the Social Security Administration, to make sure Social Security checks continue to get funded, as well as other programs that affect retirees, all Federal agencies that would be covered by this safety CR would be able to stay open at that level of funding which they received last year or, if it is agreed, to be slightly below the previous year's level of funding.

I think that this measure has several good, important features, one of which, it ensures that both Congress and the President negotiate in good faith and that they do not use a threat of a Government shutdown as a bargaining tool or bargaining chip, so to speak.

Let me answer a couple of questions first off. Many people are asking, is this a new concept? Is passing a continuing resolution a new concept? No, it is not. We have passed 53 different continuing resolutions in the Congress since 1982. So this is not a new concept

at all. I believe that this is good preventative medicine.

Some people are asking, why is it really needed? Well, last year we experienced several Government shutdowns, and we all agreed that it was just a very, very ineffective thing to do. I believe that this continuing resolution attached to the disaster bill makes good sense. I believe that the Government shutdowns in many ways was a disaster for many of the agencies that were affected by it. And by passing this safety CR, attaching it to the supplemental bill that will come up next week, we will make sure that the Government stays open and many of the people who are dependent on the Federal Government in many ways will continue to be able to have, whether it is in the form of a Social Security check or whether it is in the form of disaster relief, they will be able to continue to use those resources. Therefore, I encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle as well as the White House to support the safety CR.

□ 1845

### LEGISLATION CORRECTING FLAWS IN NEW WELFARE LAW

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. WOOLSEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, today we debated new ways to punish juvenile offenders, but last Congress the Republican majority enacted a welfare reform law that punishes children whose only crime is being poor. It is time for us to address the problems in the new welfare law.

So today I, along with my colleague, Delegate ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON from the District of Columbia, introduced two pieces of legislation that would correct some of the flaws in the new welfare legislation. We did this to give parents and kids on welfare a fighting chance.

Mr. Speaker, I am a former welfare mother, so I understand what goes on inside a welfare mother's mind. The main thing is anxiety. Will there be enough food for our children? Are my kids safe at home and at school? Am I doing what is best for them? Will I ever be able to get out of this mess?

These questions have always been tough to answer, but the new welfare law has made it even tougher. Parts of this law actually penalize moms who are trying to protect their children and improve their prospects for a better future.

So today, Delegate NORTON and I introduced two essential bills aimed at correcting serious flaws in the law. Our bills give welfare moms a fighting chance. One bill helps ensure that the children of welfare mothers are safe, as we wish all of our children to be; the other gives moms on welfare the educational opportunities that the rest of us take for granted.

The first bill is called the home alone bill. It is called that because it is aimed at preventing kids from being left home alone, unsupervised and unsafe. Right now, under this welfare bill that was passed, moms with kids age 6 and above can be forced to leave their children at home while they work, even if there is no suitable child care available. In fact, if they do not go to work, no matter that they have to leave their children home alone, they lose their welfare benefits.

Our bill is very simple. It raises the age from 6 years old to 11 years old. It protects kids and it protects their moms. This is really not asking too much. Would any of us put up with being required to leave a 6-year-old home alone? No, we would not.

Mr. Speaker, welfare recipients generally live in the poorest neighborhoods, neighborhoods where child care is not always available. That leaves children to the school of the streets, a tough school, a school known for its lessons in drugs, violence and crime. Home alone, if we are to protect a generation of children, should not be. There should be no place like it for our children.

The second bill, one that we introduced today also, allows welfare recipients to meet the work requirements of the new welfare law by acquiring the skills needed for permanent employment. It lets education qualify as work under the new welfare law. Americans have long realized that education is the door to success, but our new welfare law has basically told welfare recipients that the only door open to them is the employees' entrance to McDonald's. And, Mr. Speaker, statistics show that, even though low-paying jobs are easily lost during bad economic times.

How did I get off welfare? I had determination and I had an education. But only 32 percent of welfare recipients have a high school diploma. Only 10 percent ever attended a college class. Let us not condemn people who are striving to get off welfare to a lifetime of low wages and drudgery. Let us not condemn their children to the rules of the streets.

If we want welfare recipients to work, let us make welfare reform work for them. If we want the poor to aspire to a better life, let us make it attainable for them. That is what our bill does, Mr. Speaker. It makes education qualify as work under the new welfare law. It moves us closer to what welfare reform is supposed to be, permanent self-sufficiency.

These two bills are just the start. In coming months to Progressive Caucus will introduce other legislation designed to assist welfare recipients to get off welfare permanently, and they will be intended to help people get off welfare through jobs that pay a livable wage, jobs that they can support their families on.

These two bills that we introduced today correct some of the flaws in the welfare law, and we plan to fight hard