

Jewish New Year of 5758, we also move forward with reconciliation with people and with their descendants whose lives were destroyed during World War II in a way we can never truly understand.

During all days, but particularly during this period of remembrance and atonement, we cannot forget what occurred and those issues which remain to be resolved and the people who deserve justice.

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#### ROLLING READERS TO THE RESCUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the fine work of one of the largest nonprofit children's programs in the great State of California, the Rolling Readers Volunteer Tutoring Program.

Rolling Readers is one of the Nation's premier volunteer children's literacy organizations. Back in 1991, after realizing the benefits of reading aloud to his sons, San Diego resident Robert Condon began Rolling Readers by volunteering to read to children at a local homeless shelter. From this simple beginning, the Rolling Readers Tutoring Program was developed in partnership with the San Diego County Office of Education.

Under executive director Condon, the Rolling Readers Program takes volunteer readers from the community and trains them to become weekly story-time readers for an hour each week at local schools and community organizations. A professional site coordinator is available to help the tutors succeed.

Over 2000 Rolling Readers volunteers now read to and tutor 50,000 children each and every week. That is 2,000 readers and 50,000 children. Each volunteer in the Rolling Readers Program reads to the same group of children each week, establishing a continuity not only in tutoring but in inspiring minds, touching imaginations, developing language skills, and assuring a positive impact on the children's lives.

Because of financial contributions to Rolling Readers from many individuals, both those who read to children and those who are not able to volunteer their time, the volunteer readers are also able to give new books to the children three times a year. Millions of dollars worth of new books have now been given, each book a gift from the volunteer to the child. Offices, phones, postage, printing, and delivery trucks are also donated. In these ways Rolling Readers is an organization unlike any other.

The vision of Rolling Readers is very clear: We have a major crisis in our country. For 30 years literacy rates have been falling, with the biggest decline occurring amongst the population already in the bottom half in reading

test scores. Spend a few minutes thinking that over and you will realize how devastating that situation is and how important is the work of the Rolling Readers volunteers.

I am excited that the Rolling Readers Program is further expanding in my 50th Congressional District in San Diego. I salute this fine organization and its volunteers for the outstanding contribution they are making to our communities. What can happen for our kids through reading can be truly magical.

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#### SUPPORT THE MARRIAGE TAX ELIMINATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LEACH). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. STEARNS] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend Washington witnessed the arrival of hundreds of thousands of men who joined together to proclaim their commitment to God, family, and freedom. I am talking about the Promise Keepers. Although maligned by some folks, I applaud these individuals for looking into themselves and into others for self-improvement. I also commend them for highlighting the importance of the family.

No single unit of any society is as important as a family. It lies at the core of building sound individuals by offering love, support, and guidance. I sympathize with the difficult plight of those single parents who are struggling to raise their children, but it is true that two-parent households provide the most maturing environments. Sadly, the traditional family structure is under assault. The dissolution of the American family is not merely a personal crisis, it imposes terrible consequences throughout our society.

What is one of the greatest concerns of the American people? Obviously one of them is crime. Forty-three percent of all inmates grew up in a single-parent household. According to the Cato Institute, a 1 percentage point increase in births to single mothers appeared to increase the violent crime rate about 1.7 percent. The disturbing fact is that men from single-parent families are twice as likely to commit crimes compared with men from two-parent families.

The corruption of family values is not only mirrored in crime rates, but studies also show that a weak family structure is unhealthy. Men and women who divorce have a 40 percent greater risk of premature death than those who stay steadfastly married. What is the impact on children? Children of divorced parents see their mortality rate increase by 44 percent.

Strong families produce healthy, productive individuals. It is in the interest of everyone to promote stable families. However, the values that build strong families and a strong Nation are con-

stantly being undermined through our popular culture. In addition, families are threatened by the policies of our own government.

There is much that we can do and should do to strengthen American families. But today I would like to point out an easy means of reducing the pressure that is helping to tear our families apart. One simple step that we can take in Congress is to eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

Not only is it unfair to punish married couples through higher taxes, it is morally wrong to penalize the cornerstone of a strong, stable family, the institution of marriage. That is why I am a cosponsor of H.R. 2456, the Marriage Tax Elimination Act of 1997.

What is this marriage penalty? Under the present tax system, many couples filing jointly are pushed into a higher tax bracket. This often results in taxing the income of a family's second wage earner at a much higher rate than if that earner filed as an individual. For example, an individual with an income of \$24,000 would be taxed at a 15-percent rate. However, a working couple with incomes of \$24,000 each would be taxed at 28 percent if filing jointly.

How widespread is this penalty? According to the Congressional Budget Office, over 21 million couples have paid a marriage penalty which averages about \$1,400.

The Marriage Tax Elimination Act simply allows families to decide how they file their income taxes, either individually or jointly, whichever gives them the greatest tax benefit. Just this past year Congress passed the \$500-per-child tax credit to help families get by and enacted educational tax relief to help parents educate their children. We are moving in the right direction in defense of the family. We should continue our efforts by eliminating the marriage penalty.

For many Members, \$1,400 in tax penalties for married couples may not seem like much. However, this amount can make a real difference in improving the family situation, providing for their children, reducing the financial pressure under which most Americans struggle.

I am under no illusion that this will reverse the decline in families, but it is a step down the right road, a means to reduce the erosion of the family structure. It is an issue of fairness and of recognizing the value of strong families through strong marriages. I urge my colleagues to join with me in supporting the Marriage Tax Elimination Act.

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#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 44 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.