

loses his own soul? Mr. Speaker, America is in danger of losing its own soul, losing those values that built a great Nation: faith in God, hard work, integrity, a common sense of decency, and respect for men and women regardless of race or religion.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge those of us here in Washington to return to the values that built a great Nation, lest we fall from our greatness.

PUBLIC SKEPTICAL ABOUT FUTURE OF SOCIAL SECURITY

(Ms. SANCHEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with my colleagues the success of a forum that I hosted in my district on the future of Social Security. Social Security is a focus of intense public interest; and there is talk about long-range funding problems, means testing, and privatization.

The public is skeptical about the future of Social Security. Opinion poll after opinion poll shows that fewer than 50 percent of Americans feel confident that Social Security will be able to meet its long-range commitments. We need to assure America's seniors and future generations of Americans that the retirement benefits they are entitled to will be there when they need them. Let us restore public faith in Social Security. Through listening to our constituents, we can learn what kind of changes are best to preserve Social Security and its worth for years to come.

The President has pledged to hold public forums across the Nation on Social Security reform throughout this year. I encourage my colleagues to host similar forums in their districts. The time has come to give our constituents the information they need to make informed decisions about Social Security reform.

H.R. 2736, TAXPAYER REFORM AND PROTECTION ACT

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, the voices of millions of American taxpayers have finally penetrated the White House walls. In yet another reversal of national policy, the White House has pulled up its pants, put on its thinking cap, and announced its IRS reform package.

Wow. From the President's opposition just 2 weeks ago to yesterday's flip-flop on IRS reform, this has left us all with a distinct impression that our President is finally thinking with the head on top of his shoulders.

Included in his reform proposals is the idea that, once and for all, we should bring to an end the illegal use of quotas. Mr. Speaker, I hope this means that the White House fully supports

H.R. 2736, legislation I introduced 5 months ago to put an end to the improper and illegal use of such quotas by the IRS. We all know the IRS has become an out-of-control Federal agency.

H.R. 2736, the Taxpayer Reform and Protection Act, will end illegal quotas and make the IRS more accountable, more customer friendly for the millions of American taxpayers.

REACH PROJECT

(Mrs. TAUSCHER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding achievements of the REACH project, a nationally acclaimed drug abuse prevention and treatment program headquartered in the City of Antioch in the 10th Congressional District of California.

Founded in 1970, REACH stands for Rehabilitation Education Awareness for Community Humanitarianism. The REACH project brings law enforcement, government, business, and schools together to educate the community about the dangers of drug abuse. REACH also offers a wide range of effective youth and family counseling programs.

An example of this is the Youth Intervention Diversion Program, a collaborative counseling program with the Antioch Police Department which keeps first-time juvenile offenders out of the criminal justice system.

REACH Executive Director Shirley Marchetti has been an integral part of the REACH project and the main reason the project has become what it is today. Her outstanding efforts have helped public service providers work together to reduce drug abuse and crime in my community. The staff of the REACH project and Shirley Marchetti are to be commended for their hard work and dedication to strengthening our community.

RELIGIOUS PRISONERS CONGRESSIONAL TASK FORCE

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge Members to join the Religious Prisoners Congressional Task Force. The task force will advocate on behalf of persecuted religious prisoners around the world by appealing directly to independent national leaders. Minority religious believers often suffer beatings, torture, extended incarceration, even death at the hands of their governments unless intervention is made.

Reputable human rights organizations report that advocacy with key government officials changes prisoners' life for the better; it alters prison conditions, stops torture, and secures release.

Amnesty International documents one prisoner's statement. "When the first 200 letters came, the guards gave me back my clothes. Then the next 200 letters came, and the prison director came to see me. When the next pile of letters arrived, the director got in touch with his superior. The letters kept coming and coming, 3,000 of them. The President was informed. The letters still kept arriving, and the President called the prison and told them to let me go."

Mr. Speaker, as citizens of a country founded on the principle of freedom of religion, we must work to ensure that international human rights standards are upheld by all countries of the world and that religious liberty is a fundamental human right. We can only intervene on behalf of religious liberty if Members act.

IRS SENSITIVITY TRAINING

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, IRS reform has taken on a whole new spin. The Vice President now wants the IRS to undergo sensitivity training, and the other body wants the taxpayers to pay for it.

Beam me up, Mr. Speaker. Who is kidding whom? There can be no reform of the IRS without changing the burden of proof and without requiring the IRS to get a warrant before they rip off our homes. Let us tell it like it is. The IRS does not need more fine tuning. The IRS needs an overhaul, big-time, and taxpayers should not pay for it.

As far as the Vice President's sensitivity training program, it sounds just ducky. But quite frankly, Scarlet, I yield back all the hugs and kisses at the IRS.

WHITE HOUSE SPIN FACTORY

(Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I believe it was P.T. Barnum that once said, "There is a sucker born every minute." I hope the President and those at the White House spin factory do not believe that is true.

We, the American people, are fair-minded people; and we like to give others the benefit of the doubt. But we also like to be dealt with in a straightforward, truthful manner; and nothing disturbs us more than having our trust violated. All we asked for is what we have ever asked for is what Sergeant Friday from a former popular TV series used to ask of his suspects, "Just the facts, sir. Just the facts."

Mr. Clinton has 21 accusers saying he has done something wrong, and they are providing facts. But instead of facts coming from the White House, all we are getting is spin after spin after spin.

Mr. Clinton, that may work for a while. But, unlike P.T. Barnum's theory, Abraham Lincoln had a much better one. "You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all of the time." And that is a truth that we can count on.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

(Mr. PASCRELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, the efforts of the freshman task force have given us a very real chance for meaningful campaign finance reform. I am committed to seeing that this opportunity is not lost. It is incumbent upon this Congress that we honestly address the many flaws in the current system by which we finance our campaigns. I believe the very credibility of not just this Congress but of the entire institution is at stake.

The sad reality is that the American public holds Congress in very low esteem. We cannot reasonably expect to effectively carry out our duties as Congressmen if we lack credibility.

Whether we want to admit it or not, the fact is that our campaign finance system is jeopardizing our own credibility. We should not fool ourselves into believing that the problem is only the illegal activities that occur during campaigns. Quite to the contrary, the real problems stem from what is legal.

I hope that we will address, Mr. Speaker, the growing problem of the way soft money is influencing this system; and the sooner we do it, the better we will be in terms of getting back our own credibility.

TIME TO MARK END OF AN ERA

(Mr. GUTKNECHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, it is time to mark the end of an era, and that era lasted only 2 years.

On January 23, 1996, just 2 short years ago, the President declared in his State of the Union address that "the era of big government is over." Now it appears that that era is over.

When we came to Washington just a few years ago, we were looking at a \$250 billion deficit as far as the eye could see. We set to work to eliminate programs to reform the entitlements; and, as a result, we are looking at the first balanced budget in a generation.

Last August, we had an agreement with the President. We set very tough spending caps for the next 5 years. That is represented here by this blue line. The red line shows what the President is supporting this year in his budget. He is talking about spending over \$100 billion more than we agreed to last August, and he is also talking about raising taxes and fees by over \$100 billion.

Unfortunately, it sounds like the era of big government is not over, but the era of talking about the era of big government is really over.

□ 1015

ABSOLUTELY INCREDIBLE KID DAY

(Mr. SANDLIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, the words today for the children of America are praise and encouragement. Today is national Absolutely Incredible Kid Day, a day each of us can reach out to the young people in America in our lives and let them know how much we appreciate them. Sponsored by the Campfire Boys and Girls, Southwest Airlines, Yahoo, PaperMate and caring individuals all across this great Nation, Absolutely Incredible Kids Day is an annual event designed to bring adults and children closer together by encouraging children in a positive and meaningful way and letting them know how important they are in our lives. The goal of Absolutely Incredible Kids Day is for every child in America, every child in America, to receive a letter from an adult in his or her life encouraging him, praising him and letting him know that he is appreciated. It is a simple goal, but a goal that can make a great difference in a child's life.

Last year was the Inaugural of Absolutely Incredible Kids Day. Participation throughout the country was absolutely enormous. Everyone from the President of the United States to employees of corporations, to caring individuals sent a letter to let a child know that he or she is special. I urge all my colleagues to reach out to the children of America. As a father of 4, I agree and encourage Members to do that and tell them that it will make a difference.

THE REAL MEANING OF CONSERVATISM

(Mr. ROGAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, I hear from my liberal friends that labels do not mean much anymore. If that is true, then why do liberals believe that Americans are undertaxed, and conservatives know that Americans are overtaxed? Why do liberals attack Republican proposals to cut taxes, while Republicans fight so the middle class will not be forced to send so much of their income back to Washington?

Mr. Speaker, when families complain that it is harder to get ahead today than it was in their parents' day, one big reason is because government takes so much more of their family income. Whether one parent works or both parents work, Washington stands as an ob-

stacle to families getting ahead, by taking money out of their pockets and pouring it down the black hole of wasteful and ineffective Washington bureaucracies.

The tax burden keeps going up and up while the government's ability to deliver on its promises keeps going down and down. Washington must offer a better deal to America's families. It is the responsibility of Congress to promote that dream.

RAISE MINIMUM WAGE

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, minimum wage workers in America make less today than they did in 1968 when inflation is taken into account. That really is outrageous and it is time to raise the minimum wage. You cannot raise a family on \$5.15 an hour these days, even when you are working full-time. A minimum wage family earns \$10,700 a year. That is just not enough.

Republican Members, it is worth noting, made more money in the days when they shut down the United States Government 2 years ago than a minimum wage worker made in full that entire year.

Democrats have a proposal to increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$6.15 per hour by the turn of the century, 50 cents a year. This body needs to recognize the importance of millions of Americans who get up every single morning and who go to work in our factories, in our office buildings and in our restaurants. We need to raise the minimum wage. I urge the Republican leadership to schedule that kind of a vote today and help working middle class families in this country.

SILENCE SPEAKS VOLUMES

(Mr. HEFLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, a White House official was quoted in the New York Times last month referring to "our continuing campaign to destroy Ken Starr." Listen to that again, and I am quoting, "our continuing campaign to destroy Ken Starr." Here is a White House spokesman openly acknowledging their despicable strategy to destroy Judge Starr, the special counsel named by a 3-judge panel to investigate allegations of serious wrongdoings by the President.

Am I to conclude that the Democratic Party thinks it is okay to smear the independent counsel? Am I to conclude that the Democratic Party does not care that the White House was in possession of 900 FBI files of Republicans, in gross violation of law and the civil rights of American citizens? Am I to conclude that the Democratic Party