least from now through 2030, start paying off the debt, and still provide significant tax relief to the American people. That is the direction that we should be heading with our Nation.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOK). Members are reminded to refrain from characterizing Senate action or inaction.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 128, CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS, FY 1999.

Mr. SOLOMON (during the special order of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. NEUMANN)) from the Committee on Appropriations, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105–724) on the resolution (H.Res. 541), providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J.Res. 128) making continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 1999, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4569, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT FINANCING AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

Mr. SOLOMON (during the special order of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. NEUMANN)), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105–725) on the resolution (H. Res. 542) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4569) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3248, DOLLARS TO THE CLASSROOM ACT

Mr. SOLOMON (during the special order of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. NEUMANN)), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105–726) on the resolution (H. Res. 543) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3248) to provide dollars to the classroom, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

RESHAPING THE INSTITUTIONS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me apologize for keeping you here after 10 o'clock at night. Also, let me apologize to the staff. I do not ordinarily talk to myself in an empty room, as the other two gentlemen have been doing for an hour. But there is something tonight that I feel I simply have to get off of my chest.

Mr. Speaker, I intended to speak tonight to address some of the institutional failures that I believe are besetting this country as we deal with the matter involving the President. The Speaker's recently announced guidelines about what comments are permissible about the Starr report that we voted to release, and the President's conduct, prevent me from saying on the floor certain things that I wanted to say. In deference to those guidelines, I will honor them. But the whole text of what I intended to say will be available in my office.

Mr. Speaker, Friday night after 2 hours of reading, after our vote on Friday, I began to wonder about the correctness of my vote earlier that day in light of my concerns about the appropriateness of what should be electronically directed into people's homes in this country. Taking a break from my reading, I turned on the TV to see, as an unreconstructed Cubs fan, if I could find out whether Sammy Sosa had hit another home run again. The tube came on, and within seconds I heard a CNBC reporter using language that I never expected to hear on the Nation's national news programs, or what passes for them these days. And at that moment I reached the same conclusion that millions of Americans have probably reached. I have had it. Not just with this story, but with something far more disturbing.

What I felt was a conclusion that has been building within me for months, even years. I was overwhelmed with the feeling that our society and our country is faced with nothing less than the accelerating failure of institutions that are central to our functioning as a decent society and as a democracy that works the way our Founding Fathers wanted it to work.

Mr. Speaker, please do not misunderstand. This is a great country. In many ways, it is a good country. There is much that is good in our society and we have had much good economic news in recent years. Nonetheless, I believe that most crucial institutions and institutional arrangements in this country and in this society are failing in their responsibilities. That failure is affecting our economy, our culture, our political system, our long-term environmental security, and even our own spirituality.

The evidence of the failure of our most important institutions is all around us in this and other events. At the moment our Nation is transfixed on this episode, global challenges face us everywhere. The world's economy is in turmoil. We have almost no tool but persuasion to move the Japanese Government off a course of economic and fiscal impotence and incompetence that threatens the economic health of all of Asia and indirectly threatens our own economic health as well.

International financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund are being overwhelmed by changes in the world economy, changes in currency relationships, changes in capital flows that each day weaken the ability of the major institution the world has to stabilize economic relationships between nations, the IMF.

The Nation with the largest arsenal of nuclear weapons that could possibly one day be arrayed against us, Russia, is experiencing political and economic chaos. Much of Europe is focused on that chaos, but here in America we give it only intermittent attention and analysis.

The most irrational, paranoid, and dangerous government in the world, North Korea, is facing military, political, and economic instability that could easily threaten the lives of 50,000 American servicemen and women stationed in South Korea, and hundreds of thousands of other human beings.

Our ability to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons has been brought to the edge of failure by events on the Indian subcontinent and in Korea. And yet the discourse in this country about how to deal with that issue is shallow and in some cases down right dangerous.

The best chance in a generation for peace in the Middle East is slowly but surely sliding away, and this decade has produced the hottest known global temperatures in years with huge potential consequences for worldwide agriculture, fisheries, economic dislocation, public health, and environmental stability. And yet commercial disputes about profit levels are threatening our ability to take even marginal action to minimize potential catastrophe.

On the home front, the Supreme Court, the institution that we in the end rely upon more than any other to preserve the balance of forces that protect our democratic processes and our liberty, has handed down two very different sets of decisions that have crippled the ability of our political system to function as a democracy should.

First, the spectacularly myopic decision by the Court in the Paula Jones case that the government would not be distracted if that case went forward now rather than 2 years from now and the President was out of office.

Second, the mind-bogglingly naive decision that the constitutional rights of Americans to have a political system that functions for them would be protected by a series of naively libertarian decisions that equate money with speech, establish absurd legalisms about campaign financing that have no relationship to reality that have turned politics into a money chase and political campaigns into the competition of dollars rather than ideas.