

recognize that much of this controversy is manufactured based on misunderstanding.

It is a misunderstanding about the origin of the program. It did not come from the FCC, it was not an invention of the Vice President, although he was clearly an advocate for Internet access to schools and libraries. This is an element that was part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 passed by a Republican controlled Congress and supported with overwhelming bipartisan votes.

There is some confusion over whether adding subsidies into the telephone rate is actually a new idea. In fact it is not. The E-rate is simply an expansion of the existing universal service program which has been around for 60 years and which was an important tool to assure that rural America had telephone service at affordable rates.

There is some confusion as to the actual cost that is borne by the phone companies, although it is quite clear that as a result of the benefits of deregulation the phone companies have saved in the neighborhood of \$3 billion as a result of deregulation to date, far more than is contemplated by keeping Congress' commitment to our schools and libraries.

There appears to be some confusion over this surcharge on the telephone bills. Is this simply an effort to recoup some of the costs of the E-rate, or are they trying to layoff some of those costs that the phone companies have, in fact, borne since 1934?

There is confusion over what the E-rate can be used for. It is, in fact, very narrowly drafted to include only a few services, not new computers and the so-called goldplating.

There is even confusion on the part of some as to whether or not this program is needed. Well, the allegation is made that most of our schools are already hooked up to the Internet. This, of course, misses the point completely since those connections in the vast majority of cases are simply to an administrator, a principal's office. Fully three-quarters of our classrooms are yet to be hooked up to the Internet.

We in Congress need to make sure that we fulfill this commitment.

I agree that legislation may be needed, but that is why I have introduced a Truth in Billing Act, H.R. 4018, to have a GAO study to clarify exactly what the telephone companies have saved, how much has been passed on to consumers and what additional costs, if any, have resulted from the Telecommunications Act. We in Congress will provide that information to those who need it in order to make the informed decisions. And under my legislation companies that want to put extra line item charges on the telephone bills could do so, but they would also have to fully disclose all the savings that have resulted.

This is not a debate about over whether or not phone bills are going to go high, because in fact telephone bills

are at their lowest point in history as a result of deregulation. What this debate is about is whether we as a Nation are going to meet the commitment we made to share the benefits of the deregulated telecommunication industry with the education system and our libraries and keep the commitment to those 30,000 schools and libraries.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, campaign finance reform has been a major topic for months on the House floor and, I understand, will continue to be a major debate. The last time the Congress has passed any major reforms dealing with campaigning was in the 1970s, and every problem that we had back then we have today, only it is much worse. Today, in order to comply with the law, we fill out tens of thousands of pages of forms, there is total misunderstanding of what the rules and regulations are, there are numerous fines being levied against many Members and many candidates, there are many inaccuracies put into the record mainly because a lot of people cannot even understand the rules and regulations, and I would not be surprised if just about everybody who ever filled out a financial reform at one time or the other inadvertently had some inaccuracies. All the challenges to these records have always been done by opponents and usually politicized, and it has not been motivated for the best of reasons.

New reforms are now being proposed, and I predict they will be no more successful than the numerous rules and regulations that we imposed on candidates in the 1970s. The reason I say this is that we are treating a symptom and not the cause. The symptom, of course, is very prevalent. Everybody knows there is a lot of big money that influences politics. I understand that there is \$100 million a month spent by the lobbyists trying to influence our votes on the House floor and hundreds of millions of dollars trying to influence our elections. So some would conclude, therefore, that is the case, we have to regulate the money, the money is the problem.

But I disagree. Money is not the problem. The basic problem is that there is so much to be gained by coming to Washington, lobbying Congress and influencing legislation. The problem is not that we have too much freedom. The problem is that we have too much government, and if we think that just more regulations and more government will get rid of the problem, we are kidding ourselves. What we need is smaller government, less influence of the government on everything that we do in our personal lives as well as our economic lives. The Congress is always being involved.

Not only domestically, but Congress is endlessly involved in many affairs overseas. We are involved by passing out foreign aid, getting involved in programs like the IMF and World Bank. We are interfering in internal affairs militarily in over a hundred countries at the present time. So there is a tremendous motivation for people to come here and try to influence us. They see it as a good investment.

More rules and regulations, I believe, will do one thing if the size of government is not reduced. What we will do is drive the influence under ground. That is a natural consequence as long as there is an incentive to invest.

Under the conditions that we have today the only way we can avoid the influence is not ourselves, we, the Members of Congress, being a good investment. We should be independent, courageous and do the things that are right rather than being influenced by the money. But the rules and the regulations will not do very much to help solve this problem. Attacking basic fundamental rights would certainly be the wrong thing to do, and that is what so much of this legislation is doing. It is attacking the fundamental right to speak out to petition the government to spend one's money the way he sees fit, and this will only make the problems much worse.

Mr. Speaker, government is too big, our freedoms are being infringed upon, and then we come along and say those individuals who might want to change even for the better, they will have their rights infringed upon.

There are many groups who come to Washington who do not come to buy influence, but they come to try to influence their government, which is a very legitimate thing. Think of the groups that come here who want to defend the Second Amendment. Think of the groups that want to defend right to life. Think of the groups that want to defend the principles of the American Civil Liberties Union and the First Amendment. And then there are groups who would defend property rights, and there will be groups who will come who will be lobbyist types and influential groups, and they want to influence elections, and they may be adamantly opposed to the United Nations and interference in foreign policies overseas. They have a legitimate right to come here.

Sometimes I wonder if those individuals who are now motivated to put more regulations on us might even fear the fact that some of the good guys, some of the good groups who are coming here to influence Washington to reduce the size of government are no longer able to.

CBO'S INDEPENDENCE THREATENED BY PARTISAN POLITICS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from

Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to point out a case of unfortunate and blatant hypocrisy on the part of the majority. The Congress created the Congressional Budget Office 23 years ago so that the House and Senate would have an impartial and independent source for budget forecast. Since its creation the Congress under both Republican and Democratic control and divided control between the House and Senate has respected the CBO's independence. In return for that independence CBO has served the Congress well by providing us with honest estimates of the budgetary effects of spending and taxing proposals.

Today that independence is threatened by partisan politics. Just last week the gentleman from Georgia, Speaker GINGRICH, and the Republican leadership threatened the CBO because their budget forecasts do not square with the irresponsible budget resolution passed by the House. Truth be known, Houdini could not create the magic budget forecast necessary to make this budget resolution work. In his letter to the CBO Speaker GINGRICH and the House leadership wrote that "CBO's low estimates have been consistently wrong and wrong by a country mile."

If the estimates were not changed, Congress then must review the structure and funding for the CBO in this appropriations cycle if CBO did not conform its estimates to the majority's budget resolution. The majority is seeking to abandon fiscal discipline by using ever larger surpluses to pay for tax cuts we cannot afford while making draconian cuts in nondefense discretionary spending and allowing the national debt to continue to grow, putting Social Security at peril. In fact, this bullying reminds me of the old adage, that, "if you don't like the message, shoot the messenger." This is typically what dictators and strong men do when they take power. They terrorize those most likely to question their programs: professors, newspapers and religious leaders.

But is it not ironic, 3 years ago the new Republican leadership demanded that the President agree to use CBO estimates to score his budget?

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The White House, on the other hand, wanted to use the estimates of the Office of Management and Budget.

The Speaker and the Republican leadership were so adamant about using the CBO, that they refused to pass appropriations bills, leading to 2 government shutdowns. Instead of having an honest and straightforward accounting, the Republican leadership would rather threaten the CBO.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read a few statements of what the Republican leaders said a few years ago in contrast to statements made last week.

Last week Speaker GINGRICH wrote, "We are deeply concerned about the increasing evidence that the CBO is utterly unable to predict consistent and future revenues or even the fiscal year implications of changes in budget policy."

But on November 15, 1995, Speaker GINGRICH demanded that the President "agree to two principles, that the budget shall be balanced in 7 years and that the scoring will be honest numbers based on the Congressional Budget Office."

On November 20, 1995, the Committee on Rules Chairman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. SOLOMON), said about balancing the budget with CBO scoring, "We will do it within 7 years as estimated by the CBO. There is no wiggle room there. No smoke and mirrors. We will do it with realistic figures."

On that same day, the majority whip and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) said the goal, "Is to achieve a balanced budget no later than fiscal year 2002 as estimated by the CBO. Very real. Very meaningful."

Why is it that 3 years ago CBO estimates were, quote, "honest," "realistic," "meaningful," "no smoke and mirrors," and today they are being attacked by the Republican leadership? Is it possible that the policies being put forth by the majority today are not honest, realistic, meaningful, and the budget numbers are fudged with blue smoke and mirrors?

Mr. Speaker, this is more than a case of hypocrisy. This is about responsible governing and responsible policy-making at which the leadership has proven not very adept. Manipulating budgetary estimates will allow both parties to abandon fiscal discipline. Without maintaining a course of fiscal discipline, the Congress' hard work since 1990 will be compromised. Federal budget surpluses will be short-lived and we will return to deficit spending and an increasing national debt.

CBO keeps our policy proposals honest through rigorous analysis and scoring. For the sake of fiscal discipline and trying to reduce our enormous Federal debt, we should let the CBO do its work without interference from partisan politics.

MARRIAGE TAX ELIMINATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RADANOVICH). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago this House of Representatives did something that many said could not be done. I remember when I came to Congress, there were those that said we could not balance the budget and lower taxes for the middle class at the same time. Well, we did that last year with the bipartisan budget agreement, and 2 weeks ago, the House passed the second balanced budget in over a generation.

What was significant about that balanced budget is it was a balanced budget that not only spent less, but it taxed less; and of course, when it made taxes lower for middle class families, it made elimination of the marriage tax penalty the centerpiece and the number 1 priority.

I thought I would take a few minutes today to talk about why elimination of the marriage tax penalty is so important for middle class Americans throughout this country. I think a series of questions really best illustrate why the marriage tax penalty should be eliminated, and that is, do Americans feel that it is fair that our Tax Code imposes a higher tax on marriage? Do Americans feel that it is fair that 21 million average, married, working couples pay on the average \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married; that a married couple pays higher taxes than an identical couple with identical income that lives together outside of marriage? Do Americans feel that it is right, or is it fair, that the only way to avoid the marriage tax penalty is to file for divorce?

It is clear that the marriage tax is not only unfair, it is wrong; and really, it is immoral that our Tax Code punishes our society's most basic institution, the institution of marriage. Let me remind my colleagues again that 21 million married, working couples pay on the average \$1,400 more in higher taxes.

I have an example of a couple in Joliet, Illinois, in the south suburbs of Chicago that I have the privilege of representing, and let me just give an example here of how the marriage tax penalty works. Usually the way it works is the husband and wife get married, they both work; when they file their taxes, they file jointly and it pushes them into a higher tax bracket. In this case we have a machinist at Caterpillar, and Caterpillar makes the heavy earth-moving equipment, and their biggest plant is right in Joliet in my district.

We have a machinist who works there, and he makes \$30,500 a year in annual income as a machinist at Caterpillar. After we factor in the standard exemption and deduction for which he qualifies, he is going to be taxed at a rate of 15 percent. Now, say across town he meets a gal, she is a school teacher in the Joliet public schools, and she has an identical income of \$30,500.

Now, if she stayed single, she would be taxed at 15 percent. But under our Tax Code when they marry, they file jointly, even after we factor in for this couple the standard deductions and exemptions for this married couple, this machinist and school teacher in Joliet, Illinois, they end up paying more in taxes just because they got married. In fact, this couple, this machinist and school teacher pays the average marriage tax penalty of \$1,400, just because they got married.