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(Mr. UDALL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN SUPPORT OF A MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my strong support for an increase in America's minimum wage. The current minimum wage pays $10,712 a year for full-time work. That is not even enough to lift a family of three above the poverty line.

America needs families earning a decent living, wages good enough to afford a home and a car and a quality education for our children. That is how we grow the American economy.

This year my colleagues are proposing to increase the minimum wage by $1 over a period of 2 years. In my home State of Nevada more than 60,000 workers would benefit from this increase.

Opponents say that a minimum wage increase would be bad for the economy. I do not believe that. The last time we raised the minimum wage, the job market boomed, and unemployment fell to a historically low 4.2 percent. That is what we enjoy now, and our economy has never been stronger.

Keeping minimum wage workers below the poverty lines means that taxpayers everywhere are in effect picking up the tab for the costs of that poverty, Mr. Speaker, whether it be through food stamps, hospital emergency room visits or the social consequences of children neglected by their parents who work excessively long hours just to get by.

An increase in minimum wage benefits businesses, families, women, children, minorities, every aspect of our communities. It benefits all of us.

Congress just gave itself a $4600 pay increase, more than two times the pay raise that the minimum wage bill proposes. Yet here we are still debating the merits of a pay raise for the people who serve our food, care for our children, clean our office buildings and perform countless other jobs that our economy depends on and are vital to the daily functions of our society.

Americans deserve a decent day's pay for a hard day's work. Let us do the right thing in this Congress. Let us pass the minimum wage increase. America's working families need it, they deserve it, and they should have it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TECHNOLOGY IN OUR SOCIETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to discuss the issue of technology in our society and how it effects us. We have all heard a lot about it. There are a lot of stories about technology companies booming and how it is changing our lives in everything from the information we get to the entertainment that we choose. But one has to wonder sometimes, as my colleagues know, just exactly how much does high tech effect all of us. We certainly read about the people who are making millions on it in Silicon Valley or elsewhere throughout our country, but how does it effect the rest of us? And that is a question I want to answer tonight because the other part of it is there is a lot of policies that we are advancing here in Congress aimed at helping the high tech industry, and in advancing those policies a lot of people wonder, as my colleagues know, why should we push something that is simply targeted out of narrow industry. Should we not look at the broader good of the country?

The argument I want to make tonight is that we are looking at the broader good of the country when we talk about advancing policies to help the high tech industry, and in fact technology and its growth and the economic opportunity that it creates is one of the most important things for all of us in this country as we face the future.

As a Democrat and, more specifically, as a member of the new democratic coalition, creating opportunity for me is supposed to be what this place, Congress and government, is all about. I grew up in a blue collar family on the south end of Seattle down by the airport and was very pleased to grow up in a society that gave me the opportunity to do a little hard work to achieve whatever I wanted in life. No one in my family had ever gone to college before. I went to college, went on to law school and basically created the life for myself that I wanted. I did not do it alone; I did it because of the society that we have created here, to make sure that that sort of opportunity is available to as many people as possible.

As we look towards the 21st century, one of the key issues in making sure that that opportunity continues to be available to everybody is technology. As my colleagues know, there is no such thing anymore as a low tech area of this country. Technology effects all of us regardless of what our business or what our interests are, and it can have a positive effect. The unemployment rate, the economic growth that we enjoy right now at 30-year low for the unemployment rate, 30-year high for the economic growth is driven in large part by technology, and again that benefits all of us.

It also benefits us as consumers. We are finally creeping towards a situation where consumers will have that level of information that is really required for a free market to work. No longer, for instance, do you have to go down to the local car dealership and hope that you are better at arguing than the car dealer who you are going to deal with to get the best price on a car. You can look it up on the Internet, get the price, get an offer, go down and get your car. You can find the lowest price without having to go through that negotiating session, Mr. Speaker, and the same is true for products across the board. That empowers consumers and enables every single family out there to stretch their budget farther.

More importantly, I think, is the information that is available, the education that is available to all of us through the use of technology over the Internet. As my colleagues know, you do not necessarily have to go off and get a four-year degree somewhere anymore to learn a skill that is going to enable you to be employable or maybe improve your current job situation. That information, Mr. Speaker, is out there for all of us.

So the big point I want to try to make tonight is that when we talk about technology policy, when we talk about, as my colleagues know, making the telecommunications infrastructure available to everybody, increasing exportation of computers and encryption softwear, investing in research and development, we are not just talking about, gosh, as my colleagues know, there happens to be a company in my district that would benefit from this so let us go ahead and help them out so we can employ a few people maybe in central Texas or in northern Massachusetts. What we are talking about is policies that are going to benefit our economy across the board.

That is why we in this body should be supportive of this agenda, this agenda that is moving towards trying to make sure that America continues to be the leader in these high tech areas that are going to be so critical to our economic future, Mr. Speaker. Are those policies that we have been advancing include certainly education at the top end of that, investments in making sure that we educate our work force and educate our children and implement the lifelong learning plans that we know are going to be necessary, are critical to reaping the benefits?

It is also critical that we build the telecommunications infrastructure necessary to make sure that this high tech economy can flow. In the 19th century building railroads was critical to economic development. In the 20th century building highways was. In the 21st century building a telecommunications infrastructure is going to be critical to our economic health. We need to advance the policies that make that happen.

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Now there is a lot of debate back here about winners and losers, various telecommunications companies maneuvering for advantages or to disadvantage opponents, but for all of us in this body the Number 1 goal ought to be to build the infrastructure, set up the policies that make it happen, and I guess the biggest thing about high tech for me is that, as I mentioned, being a Democrat, a new Democrat, is about creating opportunity. But that opportunity does not always come through a government program. In fact, the best place that opportunity is created is in a strong economy where the government does not have to get involved, and that is what technology does for us. By enabling businesses to grow in the fast-growing sector of technology we create jobs, we create economic growth that benefits all of us across the board.

And I would like to, I guess, conclude by making it specific to my district. As my colleagues know, a lot of people know that I am from the Seattle area, and there is assumption that the only reason I care about technology is because, well, Microsoft just happens to be from that area. They happen to actually be from an area quite different from my district. I represent the district south of Seattle, a blue-collar suburb, mostly Boeing workers, some at Weyerhauser, a blue-collar area that is about as far away from Microsoft, at least psychologically, as Boston is from it geographically. It is a different area. It is folks who do not necessarily work directly in that tax sector. But I know that those people, the people that I grew up with and now represent, are the ones who are going to most benefit from policies that help America maintain its leadership role in technology. Because the folks at Microsoft, the folks in silicon valley, they have got it, okay? They have got it, and then some. We do not really need to worry about taking care of them. We need to make sure that our economy continues to expand in a way to include people like the people I represent, and these policies that will help technology grow will do just that. They will create more and better jobs and a stronger economy so that opportunity gets spread, and it is not locked into just a few folks.

I really hope that in this country we can understand that this talk about the digital divide really misses the point. There has always been divisions between people who have knowledge and people who do not. What technology gives us the opportunity for is to shrink that divide, not increase it. All you have to have these days to get access to the same information that everybody else in the world has is a relatively cheap PC, which is down to like almost $500, and a telephone, dial-up service access to the Internet. Technology can be the great equalizer if we build that telecommunications infrastructure that I was talking about. It can create opportunity, not just for the richest of the rich, but most importantly for the poorest of the poor.

That is why we need to be smart about these policies and advance them. We also need to be smart and realize that in advancing any industry, but certainly in the technology industry, we need access to overseas markets.

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Ninety-six percent of the people in the world live some place other than the U.S. That means if we are going to sell stuff we are going to need access to those other markets. We currently consume 20 percent of what the world produces and that is great, but that means the rest of the world is where our markets are available. We need to get access to those things.

I really believe that we have the opportunity to succeed and provide opportunity for the people we represent in this country as we never have before. We are already doing that. I think we can do even better, but we have got to be smart about embracing the policies and recognize that technology is not just about what is going on between Microsoft and AOL or NetScape or anybody. What it is about is creating opportunity for everybody in this country and showing that we can use technology to be that great equalizer, to help lift folks up out of poverty or wherever they want to go to realize these opportunities.

So when people hear us down here talking about these policies about research and development, telecommunications, patent reform, encryption, exports, whatever, understand that it is not just about talking about some specific company. It is talking about the new economy and the direction that our economy is headed; in fact, in many ways is already at. We need to be there, keep up and make sure that we advance the policies that will make sure that that opportunity spreads to all of us, not just to a select few.

I am committed to doing that. The new Democratic coalition that I am proud to be a part of is doing that, and we understand the importance that technology companies and technology policy will play in that. I urge every American to recognize that as well and work hard to advance these policies so we can continue to create the type of opportunity that we have been creating in recent years.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. HOLDEN (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today and the balance of the week on account of medical reasons.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BROWN of Ohio) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LIPINSKI, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. BERKLEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. EHRLICH) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. EHRLICH, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FOLEY, for 5 minutes, September 24.

Mr. BEREUTER, for 5 minutes, September 24.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 2 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, September 24, 1999, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

4389. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Sweet Cherries Grown in Designated Counties in Washington; Change in Pack Requirements [Docket No. FV99-923-1 FIR] received September 17, 1999, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4390. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Irish Potatoes Grown in Modoc and Siskiyou Counties, California, and in All Counties in Oregon, Except Malheur County; Temporary Suspension of Handling Regulations and Establishment of Reporting Requirements [Docket No. FV99-947-1 FIR] received September 17, 1999, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4391. A letter from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—2,6-Diisopropylnapthalene; Temporary Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance [OPP-300918; FRL-6381-7] (RIN: 2070-AB78) received September 17, 1999, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4392. A letter from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Spinosad; Pesticide Tolerance [OPP-300920; FRL-6381-9] (RIN: 2070-AB78) received September 17, 1999, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4393. A letter from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Sulfentrazone; Pesticide Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions [OPP-300903; FRL-6097-8] (RIN: 2070-

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