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# The Connection

Vol 12 No 1 Winter 1996

## National CASA CEO Attends White House Adoption Celebration



*l to r: National CASA CEO Michael Piraino, Thomas, Norman, First Lady Hillary Clinton, Mae H. Best, Chief of Adoptions for the Government of DC and Audrey Sutton, Deputy Director of Program Operations.*

**M**ichael Piraino, National CASA's CEO, participated in several adoption-related meetings during November, National Adoption Month. He attended a conference sponsored by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, focusing on the use of technology in adoption services. On November 13, Michael Piraino accompanied two waiting children and staff members from the DC Department of Human Services at a White House Adoption Celebration hosted by First Lady Hillary Clinton. Wendy's founder Dave Thomas also spoke at the event. In her remarks, Mrs. Clinton indicated that if qualified volunteers could be assigned to each child waiting for adoption, we could make it possible for thousands more children to be adopted by this time next year.

WP  
5/12/96

# Minimum Wage Vote to Come by Memorial Day

By John E. Yang

Washington Post Staff Writer

House Republican leaders said yesterday the House will vote by Memorial Day on raising the minimum wage as part of a bill rewriting labor laws, marking a concession to moderates in their own party.

In a written statement, House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and House Majority Leader Richard K. Armey (R-Tex.) said the increase would be offered as an amendment to a package that "creates jobs . . . and increases take-home pay for low-wage workers."

The timing and circumstances of the vote represent compromises House GOP leaders have made to the two dozen or so House Republican moderates, most of them from the Northeast, who have been pressing for a vote on the issue before lawmakers go home for the long Memorial Day weekend.

Many conservative House Republicans strongly oppose an increase, arguing it would raise businesses' labor costs, leading them to trim jobs.

The issue is also at the center of a legislative struggle in the Senate, where Democrats have brought work to a virtual standstill as they seek a vote. Yesterday Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.) met with Minority Leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.) in an attempt to break a protracted impasse over how to proceed with bills to raise the minimum wage and cut gasoline taxes. They reached no agreement but plan further discussions next week.

House GOP leaders were under pressure to reach an agreement with the moderates, led by Rep. Jack Quinn (R-N.Y.), before enough Republicans joined Democrats on procedural maneuvers to force a minimum wage vote—and give the minority Democrats control of the House floor.

The moderates had rebuffed their leaders' earlier offer of attaching the minimum wage increase to legislation overhauling welfare and Medicaid, because they feared President Clinton would veto the measure over the Medicaid provisions. They also wanted the vote before lawmakers go home May 23, while leaders wanted to delay it into at least next month.

The proposal the House is likely to consider would raise the \$4.25-an-hour federal minimum wage by 50 cents an hour three months after the bill becomes law and another 50-cent increase a year later. Enough GOP moderates are likely to join Democrats to pass it.

Even so, House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt (D-Mo.) accused GOP leaders of using "legislative contortions" to avoid a straightforward vote.

The other parts of the legislation have yet to be determined. The bill that is to serve as its basis—changing federal labor law to allow greater use of time off in place of paid overtime—was to have been approved by the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee yesterday morning.

But conservative GOP panel members demanded concessions from the leadership and refused to vote for the measure. Several of them met afterward with the leaders to ask for a vote on plans of their own to raise the take-home pay of low-wage workers without increasing the minimum wage.

# House Passes Adoption Credit

## *States Barred From Delaying Placement Because of Race*

By John E. Yang  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The House overwhelmingly approved legislation yesterday that would give most adoptive families a \$5,000 tax credit and penalize states whose adoption agencies delay placement of a child in order to find a family of the same race.

Lawmakers voted 393 to 15 to pass the bill, which President Clinton endorsed early this week, and send it to the Senate, where similar legislation is pending.

Rep. Susan Molinari (R-N.Y.), a key sponsor, hailed the vote as a step toward cultivating families. "The House today has shown its commitment to the encouragement of adoptions and the promotion of stable families," she said in a written statement.

The House approved the bill after narrowly rejecting an attempt by House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Don Young (R-Alaska) to remove a provision that would limit the jurisdiction of tribal courts over adoptions of American Indian children unless at least one of the birth parents has a significant social, political or cultural affiliation with a tribe.

The administration supported Young's effort to strike the provision, saying it would infringe on tribal sovereignty.

Rep. Deborah Pryce (R-Ohio) had added the language to the bill to correct problems with a 1978 law that was intended to prevent state welfare agencies from taking children from Indian parents who did not understand their rights. At the time, one-quarter of Indian children were in foster homes, adoptive homes or boarding schools, according to Young.

But some white families have complained that the law has kept them from adopting children with as little as 1/64th Indian ancestry. "If they can claim that's an Indian child and then take that child from the only secure family it's ever had, it's not hard for me to see what we have to do," said Pryce, who has a contested case in her congressional district.

Young called the provision "anti-Indian family" and said it would "create new impediments to protect abused and neglected Indian children." Young's effort failed, 212 to 195.

But there was broad agreement on the rest of the legislation, which would give individuals making up to \$75,000 a year a \$5,000 tax credit for the expenses involved in adopting a child. The credit was part of the GOP's "Contract With America." The amount of the tax credit gradually would diminish for taxpayers getting more than \$75,000 and be phased out for those earning \$115,000 or more. The bill also calls for a \$5,000 tax exclusion for employer-sponsored adoption assistance.

The average cost of adopting a child is \$20,000, according to the National Council for Adoption.

The measure would bar states and adoption agencies from discriminating against families that want to adopt a child on the basis of race. Race could be considered when placing a child if there are two or more qualified families, but agencies would not be allowed to delay placing a child to wait for a parent of the same race.

State agencies that repeatedly violate the law would see their federal foster care and adoption funds reduced. Private agencies in violation would be required to return all their federal funds for the quarter in which the transgression occurred.

Of the 460,000 children in foster care, nearly half are minorities. Studies have shown that minority children wait longer to be adopted, but most social workers say that is because many of the children have special needs, including disabilities.

While Molinari celebrated the bill's passage, she was not on hand to vote for it. She was at home in Staten Island, N.Y., awaiting the birth of her first child, a daughter to be named Susan Ruby. Molinari is married to Rep. Bill Paxon (R-N.Y.).

"Ms. Molinari has taken a route other than adoption," House Majority Leader Richard K. Armey (R-Tex.) joked earlier this week.

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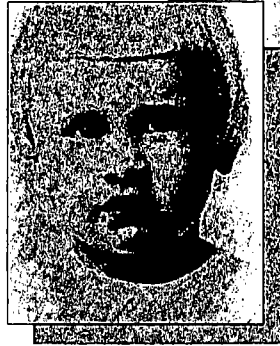
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*Dave Thomas  
Founder of Wendy's Restaurants*



*Wilson Riles,  
Former California Superintendent  
of Public Instruction*

*Greg Louganis  
Olympic Gold Medalist*



*Gerald R. Ford  
Former U.S. President*



*Kitty and Peter Carruthers  
Olympic Silver Medalists*



*Scott Hamilton  
Olympic Gold Medalist*

# Adoption Factbook

United States Data, Issues, Regulations and Resources

National Committee For Adoption  
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Washington D.C. 20009