

cycle of dependency, bereft of the education, the work training, the skills, and the resources to become self-supporting. How can anyone claim that putting an end to this reward is harmful of children? I, for one, feel that we do a great disservice to the lives of children by encouraging illegitimacy than we do by taking steps to reverse this unsustainable, cruel tide.

The last major point of contention is the return of control of the welfare system to the States through the use of block grants. Opposition to these block grants reflects a philosophy of Federal control, that believes at its core that States cannot and should not be trusted to attend to the needs of their own residents. It is a philosophy that I reject. We have built a Federal system that dares to presume that administrative rules and a bureaucracy based in Washington, DC, have all the answers to the localized, individualized problems in States ranging from California, to Maine, to Mississippi. The failure of the current system reveals the fallacy in that notion.

The existing welfare system proves that the creation of new program after new program is not an answer that works. In contrast, this bill takes the reverse tack of consolidating the numerous welfare programs into several targeted block grants. These dollars would be returned to the States, with important but minimal Federal standards, to be used in the manner that the States regard as the most efficient. I believe that the States will be more fully able to adjust their welfare programs to the particularized needs without having to come to the Federal Government to get approval to take the necessary action. An approach that gives power to those closest to the problem is one that will work.

Mr. Chairman, great change inevitably is accompanied by great controversy. Such is the case with this bill. But if we are to reverse the course of failure, if we are to refocus the welfare program to one that requires work, one that no longer rewards out-of-wedlock births, one that requires fathers to participate in the financial well-being of their children, one that gives States the freedom and resources to develop welfare programs that are compatible with the welfare needs they see, one that helps restore a sense of values to our welfare system, then we must be bold.

We can quibble around the edges. We can argue about funding levels. But the solution to obvious failure is not to perpetuate the system responsible for that failure. Instead, we must change course and seek answers in new and innovative approaches. This bill does that. And that is why H.R. 4—the Personal Responsibility Act has my support.

ON HOW THE REPUBLICAN CONTRACT WITH AMERICA HELPS AMERICA'S SENIORS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 1995

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, as we reach the end of the first 100 days of the session, it is fitting that the grand finale of the Contract With America honors our senior citizens by easing the burdens older Americans now face.

For instance, the comprehensive tax bill, which we approved by a substantial margin

yesterday evening, includes a substantial reduction in the Social Security earnings test, which unfairly penalizes seniors for working to supplement their Social Security benefits.

If the November elections taught us anything it was that the American people want to see their fellow citizens begin to take more responsibility for their personal circumstances. Many seniors want to do just that, but have been hindered from doing so by the Social Security earnings test.

The earnings test was instituted during the Great Depression when the Federal Government wanted to encourage older Americans from remaining in the national work force and occupying much-needed jobs. Despite the fact that this provision is clearly obsolete, it continues to be an unfair penalty to industrious seniors.

Essentially, seniors who earn more than \$11,280 a year face a supplemental tax of 33 percent on that income. This is in addition to the 7.65-percent FICA withholding tax and a 15-percent Federal income tax, bringing a hard-working, low-income senior's tax burden up to nearly 56 percent.

How many times have we all heard from constituents who acknowledge that they cannot survive on the meager Social Security benefits they are due? We cannot earnestly encourage these people to work to supplement these benefits while simultaneously taxing them at a highly unfair rate.

Furthermore, the earnings test deprives the American workplace of the talents and knowledge of our most experienced laborers.

The Contract With America, through H.R. 1215, increases the threshold at which the earnings test kicks in to \$30,000 in annual income over a 5-year period.

While this does not represent perfect resolution on this issue, it is a step toward equity in the workforce. In fact, I would encourage my colleagues to continue to work toward a full repeal of the earnings test, such as that represented by Representative HOWARD COBLE's H.R. 201, of which I am a cosponsor.

In addition, the tax relief bill includes a full repeal of the 1993 Clinton tax increase on Social Security benefits over a 5-year transitional period. In the mid-eighties, Congress instituted a tax on 50 percent of the Social Security benefits received by seniors earning \$25,000 as individuals or \$32,000 as couples.

Many of you voted against this tax—as I did—recognizing it as a double taxation on seniors who had taken the initiative to plan and save for their retirement. However, instead of repealing this unfair and counter-productive tax, President Clinton pushed through Congress in the first months of his administration—and over the vote of every House and Senate Republican, I might add—an increase in this tax.

The Clinton tax package allowed 85 percent of the Social Security benefits received by seniors making only \$34,000 per year to be counted as taxable income. This runs entirely contrary to the pact between the Federal Government and seniors which the Social Security program is supposed to represent.

Seniors involuntarily turned over portions of their hard-earned paychecks to the Federal Government as a safety net for their retirement. They should not be taxed on this meager nest egg when they most need it and when many of them are living on fixed incomes.

I immediately introduced legislation to repeal the Clinton Social Security tax, but it was unfortunately stonewalled. I am very pleased that the Republican Contract With America includes a full repeal of President Clinton's unfair tax and that we have had the opportunity to relieve seniors of this burden.

The tax cut bill also makes great strides toward improving the provision of long-term care for seniors. Specifically, the bill provides a \$500 non-refundable eldercare tax credit to families caring for a dependent senior in their home.

Currently, 12.5 percent of our Nation's population is aged 65 and older. By the year 2030, when baby boomers peak in their golden years, fully one-fifth of our population will be in this age bracket. Already, American families nationwide have been faced with the difficult decision of how to best care for an aging parent or relative within their financial means. As society ages, more and more families will face this dilemma.

Many aging adults, particularly those suffering from Alzheimer's and other dementia, cannot lead a quality life without assistance and constant care. Often the full-time attention and individualized care these men and women require can only be found in a nursing home facility or in the privacy of their family home.

Providing the care at home can be costly and time-consuming. However, this sort of personalized care is preferable to many families, especially since it affords a terrific opportunity to solidify the family unit. Children can learn so much from the knowledge and experiences of their grandparents. And having a loving family around does a world of good for an ailing senior.

Last year, the Alzheimer's Association reported that more than one-half of all working Americans have either provided long-term care for their friends or relatives or believe that it is likely in the near-future. The Contract With America's eldercare tax credit will go a long way to help these well-intentioned people meet the needs of their loved ones.

The tax cut bill includes other improvements in the long-term care market as well to make it easier for seniors and their families to purchase long-term care insurance. In 1990, seniors aged 65 and older faced a 43 percent lifetime risk of requiring nursing home care. By 1992, the cost of such care was approximately \$30,000 per year.

Too frequently, seniors are caught between a rock and a hard place as they get older and need this more constant medical attention. Private long-term care insurance as it currently exists is often too costly to be comfortably within reach and Medicaid assistance is only available if they spend down their savings.

This measure provides seniors and their families with the financial incentives they need to save for quality long-term care. For instance, it: First, gives long-term care insurance the same preferable tax treatment as accident and health insurance, second, excludes up to \$200 per day in long-term care benefits from taxable income, third, excludes employer-provided long-term care coverage from taxable income, fourth, allows long-term care expenses to be treated equal to medical expenses as an itemized tax deduction, fifth, excludes withdrawals from IRAs and other pension plans for the purchase of long-term care

insurance from tax penalties, and sixth, allows the accelerated payment of death benefits from life insurance for the terminally or chronically ill to be paid tax-free.

These are common-sense approaches to a problem faced by more and more families every day and they are long overdue.

Finally, the tax relief bill increases the current estate and gift tax exemption over a 3-year period of time from \$600,000 to \$750,000. Through this modest change, seniors will be able to pass along their family business or family farm to their children and grandchildren without passing along an unmanageable tax burden as well.

In addition to these pro-senior provisions in the tax cut bill, the House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 660—which I am cosponsoring—to ensure that seniors will not be unfairly discriminated against for living in senior housing communities. These communities allow seniors to live amongst their peers and often provide access to services of particular need to seniors—such as periodic blood pressure screenings by local medical personnel.

Despite their increasing popularity amongst the senior population, vague language in the Fair Housing Act has left these communities vulnerable to litigation claiming that they discriminate against younger families. Furthermore, proposed HUD interpretations of this language have placed an insurmountable financial burden on these communities, requiring extravagant services and facilities to qualify for Fair Housing Act exemptions.

The language of H.R. 600 clarifies the definition of an "adult-only" housing community as a residential area consisting of a population of at least 80 percent seniors aged 55 and older. With this clarification, seniors will be able to form neighborhoods which conform to the unique needs of their retirement years without fear of unfair litigation or retribution.

I am proud to have supported each of these measures over my tenure in Congress and to have cosponsored them as part of the Contract With America as well. It is a credit to these past 100 days that we have soundly approved these proposals as the crowning achievement of the contract. America's seniors deserve no less.

THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CLASP CHILDREN'S CENTER

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 1995

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with my constituents and residents of the Great Neck community in honoring the CLASP Children's Center as they celebrate this organization's 20th anniversary.

In 1975, with the support of a local chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women, CLASP was founded by a group of working parents. Over the years, CLASP has grown in size and developed such an exemplary program that it has been accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. Set in a safe, challenging, and noncompetitive surrounding, children are offered a variety of activities that encourage them to express their creativity, and to develop friendships and positive social skills. CLASP reaches out to a vari-

ety of age groups and has established a preschool program for students 2 to 4 years old, before and after school programs for children attending the elementary schools in the Great Neck School District, and a 4-H Club for 8- to 10-year-old participants.

Realizing that CLASP is part of a most dynamic community, the organization joined in 1983 with the Great Neck Senior Center to provide an intergenerational program merging the children and the seniors of the area. This has resulted in a most successful and widely acclaimed effort, giving both age groups a feeling of support and appreciation.

CLASP has also had the good fortune to be able to draw upon the community for continuous support and creative leadership. On its 20th anniversary, as it celebrates this special milestone in this successful growth, CLASP is recognizing a group of individuals who have played a most effective role in helping it grow into such a renowned organization. Irene Lichtenstein has served as a founder and board member; Arlene Kase, current educational coordinator, was a president, board member, and a dynamic supporter of CLASP for legislative issues; Hon. May Newberger, town supervisor of North Hempstead, has for years championed family issues and consistently emerged as a supporter; Rabbi Robert S. Widom, spiritual leader of Temple Emanuel in Great Neck, has taken an ever-present role in community leadership that has greatly benefited CLASP; and Ann Durham, a long-time board member, was effective in assisting CLASP to obtain its initial funding.

Mr. Speaker, from its humble beginnings in a garage in Great Neck, CLASP has compiled over two decades of success, thanks to selfless individuals who have provided exemplary leadership and resources, and a dedicated parent group and a staff that has consistently sought to bring out the best in its students. I ask all my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join with me today in recognizing and applauding the CLASP Children's Center, and in congratulating CLASP on its 20 years of dedicated service and outstanding success.

TRIBUTE TO WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

HON. GEORGE E. BROWN, JR.

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 1995

Mr. BROWN of California. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Ontario, CA, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary on April 23.

The Westminster Church has a dynamic history which I would like to share with my colleagues. The Westminster Church was organized in 1895 when Rev. H.M. MacLeod and 58 members established a Presbyterian Church in Ontario. On August 4, 1895, services were held in the first unit of the new church building at Euclid and E Street in Ontario. This new building was formally dedicated on November 9, 1902.

Due to the rapid growth of the church after World War II, the need for a modern and enlarged church building became apparent. Under the leadership of Rev. C. Eugene Barnard and with the approval of the congrega-

tion, construction of a new church building began. A ground breaking ceremony for the present sanctuary was held on June 15, 1958, with Rev. Raymond H. Gordon as interim pastor.

The Westminster Presbyterian Church operates a day care center, which has been its principal mission since the center's inception on October 6, 1969. The day care center building, known as the Christian education unit, was erected under the leadership of Rev. Don Hawthorne in April 1967 and is also used for Christian education on Sunday. Founded and organized by Directors Helen Brewster and Evelyn Hoehn, the day care center cares for approximately 128 preschool children. Over the years, the directors and staffs of the center have met the needs of each child with a spirit of Christian love and genuine concern.

In March 1975, David T. Anderson came from Paisley, Scotland, with his family to assume the pastorate of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

At this time, I would like to pay special recognition to the church's current minister, Rev. David Mote, who has been providing spiritual guidance for members of the Westminster Church since June 1993, and to Joanne McAleer, who recently became the new director of ministries and volunteer activities. Their dedication to their calling is to be commended.

This past year, the congregation participated in a miracle Sunday, collecting pledges of over \$200,000 in 1 day, to refurbish the church facility in anticipation of its centennial celebration. In celebration of its anniversary, the church will be having a centennial high tea complete with period costumes and an old-fashioned song fest, tours, an art show, the opening of the church's 1958 time capsule, and refreshments.

Westminster Presbyterian Church has served the community in Ontario for over 99 years. Over the years, former ministers, assistant ministers, and church members have made valued contributions to the church. Although I am not able to mention them all by name, I wish to pay tribute to all who have been involved in the church's ministry over the years.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great honor to come before my colleagues today to recognize the dedication and care with which the Westminster Presbyterian Church has served Ontario and its surrounding communities. I ask my colleagues to take a moment and join me in congratulating the Westminster Presbyterian Church on the occasion of its 100th anniversary.

UNITED STATES-RUSSIAN
PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 1995

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, under the United States-Russian Partnership for Peace, the United States made a financial commitment to aid Russia's struggling economy in exchange for Russia's cooperation and compliance with international agreements. A reduced threat and defense burden were the expected outcome of the partnership. But after \$12 billion worth of United States investment