

No legislation is without flaws, and I hope to see a slightly different bill when it comes back from conference committee. Tax relief should be directed toward working middle class families—the backbone of our Nation—and I am concerned that the current bill gives too great a tax break to those with higher incomes at the expense of hard working families. However, this bill is an important step in reducing the tax burden of the people in east Texas.

The budget agreement crafted by Congress in 1993 put us on a path for tax relief. Our deficits have fallen significantly over the past 4 years, and it is now time to reward the people for shouldering their share of the load. Today, we passed legislation to give families \$500 for each child they are raising, to offer tax breaks on tuition for students in higher education, to reduce the capital gains tax, and to increase the exemption for the estate tax.

As I said, this bill is far from perfect. For example, the legislation does not adequately protect worker's rights and fails to immediately raise the estate tax exemption. The exemption, now \$600,000, would increase to \$1 million with this bill, but not until 2007. Many families in east Texas who own farms or small businesses could end up losing significant portions of their family property waiting for this provision to be implemented. The exemption should be \$1 million now, not 10 years from now.

I voted for this bill in spite of its imperfections which must be corrected in conference committee. I voted for this bill because I want tax relief for working families in east Texas. Over the next several weeks, I will be working with my colleagues to improve the bill so that we offer tax relief in a fair and equal manner; today, however, I am proud to say that I voted to save the taxpayers \$85 billion in taxes over the next 5 years.

BLENHEIM CELEBRATES 200 YEARS

HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, the true character of America was shaped, not in its largest cities, but in countless small towns and villages.

The spirit of pride, patriotism, and voluntarism is alive and well in these smaller communities, where everybody knows and cares about everybody. I'd like to say a few words this morning about one such community, one of my favorites.

The town of Blenheim was the largest of six towns formed in Schoharie County on March 17, 1797. Its most famous landmark is the Blenheim Covered Bridge, the longest single span wooden covered bridge in the world and a national registered landmark. The town's most famous son was Hezekiah Dickerman, who built a large tannery after moving there in the 1840's.

Another famous figure was Capt. Jacob Hager, who, along with his brothers fought in the Revolutionary War and had several encounters with the Iroquois Indians in the Schoharie Valley. Some of the present-day Hagers still live on part of the original Hager property.

The town of Blenheim is also home to Lansing Manor, home of Judge John Lansing's daughter and her husband. Lansing played a role in developing our Bill of Rights. The Lansing Manor is currently home to the New York State Power Authority Visitors' Center.

The town still has a one-room school house which has been reopened as a museum. Every year, third and fourth graders visit the school to learn about the Revolutionary War heroes who came to Blenheim to lease land on the Blenheim patent. The museum is also used for collecting, preserving, interpreting, and promoting interest in the art, history, and culture of the town of Blenheim and surrounding area.

In the period immediately after the Revolutionary War, the area was primarily agricultural. The town of Blenheim has adjusted to the modern era, but not at the expense of its small-town charm, which present-day residents have been careful to preserve.

On Saturday, July 12, the town of Blenheim will celebrate its 200th birthday. The celebration will feature the New York State champion fiddler and many exhibits on the theme of the Revolutionary War.

Mr. Speaker, let us today express our own birthday wishes to this most American of small towns, and wish her and all her residents best wishes in the future. Better yet, Mr. Speaker, come up and visit the town of Blenheim some time for a good glimpse of what made this Nation great.

HONORING NORMAN L. GEISSLER

HON. JON D. FOX

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a heroic and selfless man, Mr. Norman Geissler. Mr. Geissler is a valuable citizen in the Elkins Park, Montgomery County community, and a keystone of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Geissler devoted most of his life in service to the people of Montgomery County. Starting at the age of 18, Mr. Geissler progressed through the ranks and became a chief figure in the fire-fighting force of Pennsylvania. His positive leadership and heroism make him a role model in the eyes of both the citizens of Pennsylvania and its most elite firefighters.

Mr. Geissler grew up in Abington Township. In 1946, shortly after his 18th birthday, he joined his father's fire company and he soon advanced to assistant chief. In 1950, he joined Elkins Park Fire Company in Cheltenham Township and became the chief engineer and secretary of the active crew.

Advancing yet again in 1957, Mr. Geissler became the secretary of the Montgomery County Fireman's Association. This role was especially significant because he followed in his father's footsteps, and he remained in this leadership rank for 26 years.

In 1970, Mr. Geissler advanced to the president of the Fireman's Association of the State of Pennsylvania and in 1971 he chaired their convention in Erie.

Elected president of the Keystone State Fire Chiefs in 1987, Mr. Geissler continued to put forth effort and dedication to his duty for the next 2 years. On February 24, 1985, he was

inducted into the Chapel of Four Chaplain and given their award for heroism. Mr. Geissler was also honored with the prestigious James A. Miller Award for Meritorious Service at the Firemen's Association convention, the highest award given by this eminent association.

Mr. Geissler holds several highly ranked leadership positions. He is the parliamentarian emeritus of the Firemen's Association, as well as the parliamentarian of the Montgomery County Firemen's Association and their representative to the Firemen's Legislative Federation. In addition, he is the chairman of the by-laws-committee for the Keystone Fire Chiefs.

Mr. Geissler received his 50-year award in March 1990 by the Elkins Park Fire Co. at their annual banquet. Paul Ditzel, a renowned historian of the fire service, gave special recognition to Mr. Geissler in his book, "A New Look at the Old Firehouse."

In addition to well deservedly receiving all of these awards and prestigious positions, Mr. Geissler is a dedicated fireman in practice. The most exemplary incident occurred on April 21, 1963. Mr. Geissler heroically rescued Sharon, Laurie, and Paul Newman from suffocation from a fire in the kitchen. Despite the potential danger to himself, Mr. Geissler entered the dwelling, crawled to the second floor, gathered the children, and carried them downstairs. In recognition of this life-threatening and heroic act, the commission awarded him a well-deserved bronze medal and \$500 award.

The fact that Mr. Geissler progressed all the way through these prestigious positions and the multitude of well-deserving awards illustrates his dedication to his job as well as to his State. Not only do his neighbors think highly of him, but across Pennsylvania he is thought of as a man with integrity, heroism, and extreme loyalty to the Commonwealth.

In addition, Mr. Geissler is devoted to the many fire-fighting organizations of which he has been a part or a leader. His genuine heroism, desire and ability to improve, and dedication to task combines to provide him as a positive leader, ideal role model, and keystone in the fire-fighting force of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

As Mr. Geissler and his family have just celebrated his 75th birthday, I extend to him my personal warm wishes and ask that the Congress of the United States honor him for a lifetime of devotion to his family, his community, and his Nation.

NO TAXATION WITHOUT RESPIRATION

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, taxes on inheritance ought to be abolished, and the sooner the better.

In Congress, we are moving toward our goal of eliminating the tax on property and savings when inherited by descendants.

Even though total elimination of the tax may take several years, we have already approved a measure to protect more Americans from the ravages of inheritance taxes.

The tax, often called the death tax, currently attacks individual estates of more than

\$600,000, and twice that for couples. I'm working hard in Congress to raise the threshold to \$1 million then index that figure for inflation thereafter.

The death tax is wrong, plain wrong. It comes at the wrong time and hurts the wrong people. It breaks up family farms and small family businesses. It robs families of the fruits of their labor and the earnings of their investments.

For the Government, there is little value in the death tax since it brings in only a sliver of the Nation's revenues. Yet, it's very expensive to administer.

The only people helped by the death tax are lawyers, accountants, and IRS tax agents. For example, the Center for the Study of Taxation found compliance and enforcement costs total 65 cents for every dollar collected.

Every IRS field office maintains a separate death tax unit to deal with 380 pages of rules and laws associated with the tax. Federal courts are now backlogged with 10,000 estate-tax cases.

Although led by Republicans, our death tax relief proposals enjoy bipartisan support. Finally, Congress is realizing that a pro-family, pro-agriculture, pro-business tax policy entails death tax relief.

Taxing people after they die just doesn't seem fair. As I've often stated on the floor of the House, "no taxation without respiration."

ON PHILIP ALBERT PLANTNER'S ATTAINMENT OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Philip Plantner of North Olmsted, OH, who will be honored on August 10, 1997 for his attainment of Eagle Scout.

The attainment of Eagle Scout is a high and rare honor requiring years of dedication to self-improvement, hard work and the community. Each Eagle Scout must earn 21 merit badges, 12 of which are required, including badges in: Lifesaving; First Aid; Citizenship in the Community; Citizenship in the Nation; Citizenship in the World; Personal Management of Time and Money; Family Life; Environmental Science; and, Camping.

In addition to acquiring and proving proficiency in those and other skills, an Eagle Scout must hold leadership positions within the troop where he learns to earn the respect and hear the criticism of those he leads.

The Eagle Scout must live by the Scouting Law, which holds that he must be: trustworthy, loyal, brave, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, clean, and reverent.

And the Eagle Scout must complete an Eagle Project, which he must plan, finance and evaluate on his own. It is no wonder that only 2 percent of all boys entering scouting achieve this rank.

My fellow colleagues, let us recognize and praise Philip for his achievement.

STATE APPROVING AGENCIES—50 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO VETERANS

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that July 1997 marks the 50th anniversary of State approving agencies [SAA's] and their representative organization, the National Association of State Approving Agencies [NASAA]. With the enactment of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 and the subsequent implementation of the World War II GI bill, Congress recognized that each State has a right, and responsibility, to monitor the quality of education within its borders. Congress also acknowledged the Federal Government's responsibility to ensure that the readjustment benefits provided by our grateful Nation to our veterans effectively assist in the adjustment to civilian life following military service. Accordingly, Congress established a triangular alliance that has been uniquely successful. Within this three-sided partnership, the SAA approves education and training programs; the Department of Veterans' Affairs administers veterans' education programs; and the institutions and their approved programs provide the training for our veterans—be it educational, professional, or vocational.

The philosophy of State approving agency [SAA] personnel can best be described in the Creed of NASAA that was written in 1960 and still stands today—

We believe the veterans education and training program is an important aspect of a free, democratic society, deserving of the rights and benefits bestowed by the Congress of the United States.

We believe the security of the country to be vested in the young men and women in our armed forces—that they are the guardians of our people.

We believe such sacrifice on their part can and should be offset with opportunities for education and training and other necessary adjustments to help them to a better life for themselves, their families and their communities.

We believe that as the Approving Agencies for the education and training programs, we are the working partner of the veteran.

We believe most firmly in the future of this partnership—in its ability to grow and prosper in the pursuit of its acknowledged goal—and we believe that goal to be the proper utilization of the natural abilities of the veterans.

We believe that belonging to this partnership we are charged with certain responsibilities and that among these are:

- maintaining a working knowledge of local and national conditions, methods and problems,
- providing the trained personnel necessary in giving prompt and efficient service,
- being always ready and willing to offer guidance on problems, and
- being always ready and willing to offer guidance on problems, and
- maintaining high standards to insure each veteran of the best possible training.

We believe, finally, that belonging to this partnership is a trust, a trust to be constantly exercised by being at one time a good citizen, a conscientious worker, and by making ours the best program possible—and, if we do this, we believe we will have accomplished our purpose.

The contributions of NASAA and its individual member SAA's have been tremendous. SAA personnel have not only worked to ensure the integrity and the success of the various GI bills, but also have been instrumental in the creation and refinement of the programs. They were at the table during discussions about how best to serve the education and training needs of returning Korean war veterans, Vietnam veterans, Desert Storm veterans, and all the others who have served our country through military service. Of special note, SAA's worked side by side with our former colleague and chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the Honorable G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, to ensure that the Montgomery GI bill would provide the broadest possible education and training opportunities. With their assistance, we were able to expand the Montgomery GI bill to include apprenticeship and other on-the-job training; vocational/technical training, graduate school, and flight training programs. All of this, Mr. Speaker, has been for the purpose of ensuring that our Nation's veterans are never forgotten or disadvantaged because they took time out of their lives to serve their country.

Before closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment NASAA and the member SAA's on the outstanding job that they do in protecting the best interests of those who are serving or have served their country. The world of education and training is changing at lightning speeds. The many new fields of knowledge and the new and innovative ways to deliver instruction have received the immediate and thoughtful attention of SAA personnel because they work diligently to stay in the forefront of education and training. The SAA national training curriculum ensures internal and interstate consistency and a high level of professionalism. A new reporting system provides a common data base of shared information. Additionally, SAA's actively engage in outreach to encourage usage of the MGIB by veterans.

In short, NASAA is a progressive organization whose membership works hard—and succeeds—in their efforts to ensure that the education and training programs available to our veterans are the very best that can be offered.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST SCHOOL IN ST. JOHN, IN, CELEBRATES ITS SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct honor to congratulate St. John the Evangelist School, in Saint John, IN, on the completion of its recent sesquicentennial celebration.

St. John the Evangelist School is a parochial elementary school under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Diocese of Gary. Upon its founding in 1846 by the Brothers and Sisters of the Holy Cross from Notre Dame, IN, St. John the Evangelist was the first school opened within the town of Saint John. With the beginning of the Civil War, the parochial school was closed, and was reopened after the war as a public school. In 1903, the school returned to its Catholic origin and was in use