

\$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

until the building of the present school in 1969. Due to increased enrollment, a second floor addition was built in 1988. St. John the Evangelist has a current enrollment of 351 students.

The Saint John community began commemorating the 150th anniversary of St. John the Evangelist School on Friday, April 18, 1997, with an all-day celebration, entitled "150 Years of Quality Catholic Education." The day's events, which took place in the school gymnasium, included a prayer service, a giant birthday cake, and a program put together by the St. John the Evangelist students. The student program depicted the theme "Eras of Education" with costumed, musical presentations of past decades. Eighth-graders in turn-of-the century garb portrayed the construction of the Panama Canal, a malaria outbreak, and such inventions as the airplane, toaster, and Model T. Ford. Each class within the school researched an assigned era and similarly presented their interpretations. School Principal, Sister Angela Mellady, commented that the students learned a great deal about American history, as well as the heritage of their school, while planning the event.

Some celebration activities which will take place throughout the year, include the wearing of St. John the Evangelist birthday celebration shirts each Friday in place of the student uniform, and an appreciation luncheon for local businessmen who have supported the school throughout the years. The anniversary celebration will close with a 150th birthday reunion this coming Saturday, July 12, 1997. Approximately 1,000 St. John the Evangelist alumni have been invited to the reunion, where past experiences and memories will be shared.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again extend my most heartfelt congratulations to St. John the Evangelist School on achieving its sesquicentennial anniversary. Everyone involved in the school's growth and success over the years should be commended, as the values and quality instruction provided to students have undoubtedly served as a cornerstone of education in the Saint John, IN community.

TRIBUTE TO MR. VIRGIL KOECHNER

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to a distinguished gentleman from the Fourth Congressional District of Missouri, Virgil Koechner. He recently retired after more than 44 years of dedicated service for the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company.

Mr. Koechner, from California, MO, served for 5 years in the United States Navy before beginning work for Southwestern Bell in 1952. He was not only an employee of Southwestern Bell, but was also elected local president of the Communications Workers of America for 32 consecutive years. In retirement, Mr. Koechner plans to stay active in the labor movement.

Mr. Koechner and his wife Mary Jane have been long time friends of mine. It is dedicated people like Virgil Koechner who are the heart and soul of what makes this country great. I

know that other Members of this body join me in congratulating Virgil Koechner on his retirement and wish him the very best in the days ahead.

FARMERS CELEBRATE NEW FREEDOM

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, last year Congress passed a farm bill which provided farmers with the freedom they need to respond to market forces and more effectively compete in the global marketplace. This legislation represents a very fundamental departure from previous farm policy and allows much greater flexibility in planting decisions. Farmers have responded favorably to this new independence which places the decisions where they belong—with the farmers, not the Federal Government. This Member would like to commend to his colleagues the following editorial from the July 4, 1997, edition of the Lincoln Journal-Star, which highlights the positive changes brought about by the 1996 farm bill.

By the way, this editorial viewpoint represents a turnaround in views by this Lincoln newspaper—apparently based upon the results obtained.

[From the Lincoln Journal Star, July 4, 1997]

FARMERS GET MORE FREEDOM, WHICH WILL
BENEFIT EVERYONE

This Fourth of July, many farmers are celebrating their newfound independence.

In a front-page story in the Journal Star this week, Associated Press writer Robyn Tysver drew this telling image:

"Free at last. Free at last," Minden farmer LaMoine Smith warbled one morning from the field on his cellular phone."

The celebration is because this year, for the first time in decades, farmers are free to plant what they want, thanks to the Freedom to Farm Act. No more government restrictions. No more trips to the Farm Service Agency in town to submit a farm plan. No more certification of acres.

The Journal Star joins in the celebration. Putting decision-making in the hands of the farmers will, in the long run, benefit them and the taxpayers who have been subsidizing them. The change puts incentives before farmers to become better business managers. There are rewards to stay on the cutting edge.

The picture of farmer Smith in the field cheering on his cellular phone is an accurate one, for city folk who have lost contact with agriculture. Farming ain't like the reruns of "Green Acres." Farming today is cellular phones, commodity prices by computer modem, fertilization by Global Position System and more.

The farmers who learn to use those hi-tech tools most efficiently will be the ones reaping the greatest rewards under the new system. Under the new system, there are real decisions to be made. The best decision-makers are the ones who will prosper.

In the initial year of the Freedom to Farm Act, there have been some changes in planting patterns, but farmers generally were cautious.

Because land no longer must remain idle under government regulation, farmers put more into production. For example, the num-

ber of acres planted in corn went up by 600,000 in comparison with last year.

Other responses were more directly market-driven. This spring, soybeans were at \$8.50 a bushel, prompting Nebraska farmers to plant 650,000 acres more than last year.

There was also a little experimentation. Farmers in Kansas planted 12,000 acres of cotton. Farmers in Mississippi planted 550,000 acres of corn.

It's easy to celebrate this year, we acknowledge, because for now farmers have the best of both worlds. They have both freedom and a safety net, because the farm payments still exist. The payments will be reduced gradually over a seven-year period. This year, farmers still have a fallback if they made the wrong decisions last spring.

By 2002, when price-support guarantees are scheduled to end, there will no longer be a safety net. Freedom has its price.

Even now, support for the Freedom to Farm Act is far from universal. A majority of farmers favor it, but there is a minority who were happy with old regulations and the comfort they brought.

Their ranks could grow if the weather puts bumper crops of soybeans and corn on the markets this fall, which would depress prices.

Farmers might have more freedom this Fourth of July, but not from worrying about the weather. Some things never change.

PETER M. WEBER—A DISTINGUISHED RECORD OF SERVICE TO THE CITY AND PEOPLE OF ROLLING HILLS ESTATES

HON. JANE HARMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Councilman Peter M. Weber for 23 distinguished years of service to the city of Rolling Hills Estates and to the citizens of the 36th Congressional District.

No Councilmember in the history of Rolling Hills Estates has served the City Council for more years than Peter Weber. He has served six 4-year terms as councilman, including 5 1-year terms as mayor. Marked by his affection for and dedication to preserving the city's unique character, he stood behind the critical decisions that have preserved its rural atmosphere and fostered its financial strength. To provide for the city quality recreation, Councilman Weber lobbied in favor of bringing the city stables under Rolling Hills Estates management. Also during his tenure, the annual Tracy Austin Tournament was brought under the auspices of the city's Park and Recreation Commission. Further improving the scenic qualities of the city, both Ernie Howlett and Highridge Parks were developed. In addition to parks, Peter Weber successfully prioritized the establishment of nature preserves. During his tenure, George F. Canyon and the Chandler Preserve were acquired and dedicated as open space in perpetuity, and the George F. Canyon Nature Center was conceptualized and subsequently opened to the public. These assets of Rolling Hills Estates remind us of the dedication and vision Councilman Weber had for the community, and they should be sources of great pride for Peter Weber.

Councilman Weber was instrumental in the creation of the Peninsula Emergency Response Team [PERT], an information-gather-