

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting legislation to end double taxation of income and offer real tax relief for middle-class Americans and small businesses.

NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL
STRATEGY

HON. ROB PORTMAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, November 8, 1997

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my serious concerns about the failure of the Department of Defense to provide sufficient support for the National Drug Control Strategy in its fiscal year 1999 request. I also would like to commend the Office of National Drug Control Policy for refusing to certify the DOD budget request.

After making tremendous progress in the war on drugs from 1979 through 1991, drug abuse among our young people has been rising significantly over the past 5 years. Drug abuse is not only threatening the health and lives of our young people, it is a predominant factor behind violent crime, welfare dependency, teenage pregnancy, rising health costs, lower economic productivity, the spread of AIDS, and many other problems. Now is not the time to be backing away from our responsibilities to attack this problem.

Many of us in Congress have been working hard over the past few years to reverse these disturbing trends. We have been working in cooperation with General McCaffrey to support and enhance the National Drug Control Strategy. We must continue to support the goals of the strategy on both the supply and demand sides.

We strongly support the effort to ensure that the Department of Defense amends its fiscal year 1999 budget request to include an additional \$141 million in drug control initiatives. These funds are absolutely essential to enhance efforts in the Andes, the Caribbean, Mexico, and along our borders, where this battle has to been fought initially. With a strong effort in source countries and along our borders, we can help reduce the use of drugs in the United States, which is crippling our young people.

Currently, counterdrug spending represents only 0.3 percent of the total Department of Defense budget. Despite rising drug use, the Department's counterdrug effort has declined by 2 percent since fiscal year 1996.

I also believe that it is vitally important to have a coordinated effort with leadership from the Office of National Drug Control Policy. This is a good example of why we need a drug czar. If we all stand behind the same goals and work hard in every agency and in Congress to support and enhance the anti-drug efforts at home and abroad, we will reverse the disturbing escalation in illegal drug use in our communities.

I call on the Department of Defense to bring its budget request in line with the National Drug Control Strategy and to help support the comprehensive Federal effort we must have if we are going to reduce drug abuse.

THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE
CORPS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
INCENTIVE ACT OF 1997

HON. NANCY L. JOHNSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, November 8, 1997

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, for many years our Government has supported health care training programs to increase the number of health care professionals to serve our Nation's people. One of the most successful health training programs we have created is the National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program. Enacted more than 20 years ago, the purpose of this program is not only to encourage the training of top quality health care professionals but also to improve access to health care for Americans living in medically underserved areas.

This program encourages the training of primary care providers, focuses on preventive care, and targets medical manpower shortage areas. The graduates of this program work in our migrant health centers and in both rural and inner city community health centers, such as the community health center in my hometown of New Britain.

Program recipients are given a scholarship award, covering the costs of tuition and fees, together with a monthly stipend covering living expenses. In response to this award, the National Health Service Corps scholars are obligated upon completion of their training to provide a year of full-time primary health care in a designated shortage area for each year of scholarship funding. These areas are located in some of our Nation's neediest communities which are desperate for primary care providers.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this successful program is now in jeopardy—not from lack of funds, but from the new IRS interpretation of section 117(c) of the Internal Revenue Code to treat these scholarship amounts as fully taxable income.

Many scholarship recipients have tuition and fees amounting to more than \$36,900; income tax withholding at the required 28 percent can eat up nearly all, if not all, of the stipend portion of the award. If the student has additional income—a part-time job for example—he or she could face an additional tax liability on that income, though their money available for daily living expenses has not changed.

I have been contacted by a concerned student regarding this IRS interpretation. Jenny, a student at Yale University, is studying to be a nurse practitioner. As a recipient of a National Health Service Corps Scholarship, her \$30,000 a year tuition is paid directly to the school; she receives \$3,500 toward school fees, equipment, books and supplies, and a small stipend for living expenses for which income taxes are withheld. She was recently notified by the Department of Health and Human Services that income taxes would be withheld on the scholarship money as well.

Jenny will now be taxed at the 28-percent rate because the entire scholarship amount will now be included in her income, even though she never sees the majority of this money that is sent directly to her school for tuition. Jenny is now worried about her living expenses, because the new additional withholding will almost eliminate the stipend that

she relies on for her room and board. Since Jenny already has a lot of debt from her undergraduate student loans, this abrupt change in policy threatens her ability to afford to stay in school and makes it more difficult to fulfill her obligation to work as a nurse practitioner in an underserved area, where her wages would likely be lower.

In my view, the IRS position regarding its application of section 117(c) is simply wrong. First, this money is not disguised future compensation. In fact it is the opposite. It is recognition of the compensation forgone as a consequence of going to work in an inner city or underserved rural area where wages are often low because there are not the resources needed to support a health care professional's income. Second, there is little difference between the obligations required under the National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program and the obligations required by the debt forgiveness provisions we enacted this summer in the Tax Payer Relief Act of 1997. And there should not be a difference in the tax treatment of the school scholarship or loan amount in terms of taxable income.

Through the passage of the Tax Payer Relief Act, we in Congress affirmed our support for favorable tax treatment of medical student loans forgiven in exchange for future service in medically underserved areas. It seems inconsistent and arbitrary to tax a scholarship given in exchange for a future commitment of public service in a medically needy area, while exempting a student loan forgiven for a similar commitment from the tax.

We need to correct this aberration in tax policy now before this successful program is destroyed. We need to take immediate action to clarify the Tax Code so that those students who wish to undertake the obligations of the program are assured stable, predictable financing of their academic program in exchange for a commitment to serve our underserved communities. It is also important to ensure that communities continue to have access to low-cost, quality health care services and that community and rural health centers will continue to have health professionals available.

My bill will reverse the IRS position regarding the taxability of these scholarships. It will rectify tax policy inconsistency, and it will ensure that a well-run and successful program is not devastated by a bureaucrat operating in clear contradiction of the intention of this valuable, proven program. In addition, it will let people like Jenny continue with her studies and be assured that her scholarship and stipend are intact.

I ask my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring this legislation to save the National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program.

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CALUMET CITY CHAMBER OF CONGRESS

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, November 8, 1997

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 60th anniversary of the Calumet City Chamber of Commerce, an organization who represents a community rich in heritage.

The Chamber of Commerce is a strong and independent leader of the business firms of Calumet region, and thus addresses issues that affect its members and the community. The Chamber has lent greatly to the development of this fine community over the years and should be recognized for its spirit of leadership and vision.

Currently, the Calumet City Chamber of Commerce provides many services to its residents. From initiating the area's ambulance program to attracting new business to the area, the Chamber has shown a devotion to continuing to build and revitalize the region. Community strength, in part, stems from those who are willing to give back to their patrons, the very community they serve. We all share a vision of good schools, safe streets, and a healthy commerce. The Chamber should be commended to their dedication toward achieving this goal.

The 60th anniversary of the Calumet City Chamber of Commerce will be celebrated this evening, Saturday, November 8. At this time the Calumet City Chamber will install its new officers for 1998 who include: Frank Orsini, president, Mike Sawicki, vice president, Don Todd, treasurer, Kenneth M. Tease, executive manager.

Board of Directors: Tom Cornwell, Harry Jones, Jeanette Sackol, Elaine Lane, Bob Sanders, George Karl, Tom Sanders, Ray Mika, Jerry Eurlay, Chris Martin, and Mike Gauthier.

It is truly fitting that this Chamber celebrate 60 years of history and progress. I extend my best wishes to the Chamber's membership, its present and incoming leaders for many more prosperous years to come.

THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT

HON. MARK E. SOUDER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, November 8, 1997

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing the National Historic Preservation Act, which would establish a national historic light station preservation program. It has been introduced in the other body by the chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Senator FRANK MURKOWSKI of Alaska.

As you may know, Mr. Speaker, lighthouses have served as lifesaving navigational aids since before the turn of the century. However, many of these lighthouses have outlived their use to the Coast Guard as navigational aids. Thus, the Coast Guard is left with surplus lighthouses, and declares them excessed. The question then becomes, who cares for these lighthouses once they leave the Coast Guard's hands? If the land on which a particular lighthouse in question was first granted by a Presidential Order to the U.S. Lighthouse Establishment, it is considered to be public domain, and has to be first offered through the Bureau of Land Management [BLM] to the Interior Department. If the Interior Department does not claim the land, then the lighthouse is placed in the General Service Administration's [GSA] excessing process. If the property is not considered public domain, then the lighthouse is placed directly into the GSA excessing process.

Through the GSA process, priority is first granted to Federal agencies. This means that the lighthouse could be used for such things as an office for the Internal Revenue Service. If no Federal agency claims it, the property is then surveyed to see if it is suitable to qualify under the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, thereby allowing it to be transferred to those organizations that assist the homeless. Should neither of these categories claim the lighthouse, it is then offered to the State in which it is located, possibly to be used for recreation purposes. If the State does not claim it, then it is offered to the local government where the property is located. Finally, if the lighthouse is still available at the end of the GSA process, it is put up for public sale.

The real tragedy here, Mr. Speaker, is that many of these lighthouses have been protected and preserved over the years by nonprofit historical lighthouse societies, who have donated a great deal of time, money, and resources to lighthouse preservation. As you can see, in order to have the lighthouses conveyed to them, they must wait through the long process described above, and then must bid on them. This process basically requires these nonprofit organizations to compete financially with private groups that have greater access to funds, and that have, in many cases not made the same commitment to the lighthouse in the past. In addition, these private groups may have plans for the lighthouse that are inconsistent with the best interests of the community. Though these nonprofit groups can, in some specific cases, purchase the lighthouse directly from the BLM, they must pay half of its market value—a value that those particular groups helped to increase over the years through their hard work. Thus, the message we are sending here is that if you're going to provide a public service by preserving historical sites, you're going to have to pay for them in the end.

I should point out that another method for conveyance is for Congress to enact separate pieces of legislation to transfer a lighthouse to a specific group. As we know, this process can be very time consuming and cumbersome considering that there are hundreds of lighthouses that will be excessed in the near future.

My legislation would introduce fairness into the conveyance process for historic lighthouses by amending the National Historic Preservation Act to transfer this process to the National Parks Service, which would be able to work in conjunction with the State Historic Preservation Officer, to establish a national historical light station program. This new program would give priority to those Government agencies that have entered into a partnership agreement with a nonprofit organization whose primary mission is historical preservation of lighthouses, and would convey them at no cost. If no such applications are offered, or approved of, then the lighthouse would be put up for public sale. Thus, this legislation would help to ensure that in those cases where a nonprofit group has been active in a particular lighthouse's preservation, and wishes to continue in its work, that that group would be given a fair shot at claiming lighthouses when the Coast Guard excesses them.

Mr. Speaker, we need to recognize the very important role lighthouses have played in this country's history. By encouraging Government agencies to join with nonprofit groups to help

preserve lighthouses for the future, we will be providing a much fairer process to those who wish to continue their work in preserving these nationally historic structures.

HONORING MAYOR RAY BLEDSOE

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, November 8, 1997

Mr. HALL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise today to pay tribute to Mayor Ray Bledsoe of Howe, TX, who last month received the national Hometown Leadership Award, given by the National Association of Small Cities. Only 300 officials in the country received this award, and I am so pleased that my good friend and outstanding civic leader, Ray Bledsoe, is one of those.

Ray is always at the center of community service in Howe. He has served Howe as mayor for the past 11 years. He has spearheaded economic development and was instrumental in obtaining a connector road from Highway 11 and U.S. Highway 75. He helped put together funds for a new community center and coordinated a joint effort between the city and school district to build two new baseball parks. He is the president of the Grayson County Fair, serves on a half-dozen boards, and works about 60 hours a week taking care of the city of Howe's business—all without pay.

Ray not only provides leadership and guidance for the citizens of Howe but also provides hands-on service. Last month, as reported by the Herald Democrat, he was at the Grayson County Fair unfolding chairs, moving extension cords, and setting up booths. Earlier he built a fence around a statue of Judge Jake Loy, then got on his hands and knees and landscaped around it. Ray is willing to help with any task—no matter how large or small—and he is respected and beloved by the citizens of Howe.

Mr. Speaker, in the small towns and cities of America, the mayor plays an indispensable role in the functioning of the community. Often, as in Howe, this is an unpaid position. Too often the mayor receives far more complaints than thanks. So as we adjourn today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize an outstanding civic leader of Howe and an outstanding American—Mayor Ray Bledsoe—and to thank him for a job well done.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHAEL P. FORBES

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, November 8, 1997

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, November 6, 1997, I appreciated being granted an excused absence for part of the day. Due to that absence, I missed several rollcall votes.

Had I not been absent for part of the day on June 6, I would have voted in the following manner:

"No" on rollcall No. 585—Motion to adjourn;

"No" on rollcall No. 586—Motion to adjourn;