

colleagues to support our bill, H.R. 2221, by becoming a cosponsor.

YOUTH SUMMIT '97

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House about an exciting and successful event that I sponsored in Ayden, NC, Saturday, October 18. This event, called Youth Summit '97, is an annual event for students that I have sponsored for the last 5 years. Each year, I am particularly pleased that the turnout is equal or greater than the one the previous year.

This year's summit brought together an impressive number of youth; over 600 participated. It was certainly an inspiration to see so many students expressing their interests in pursuing an education. Most of the youth were minority students throughout eastern North Carolina. Many came with school or church groups, while others came with their parents.

The youth summit was held this year in Pitt County at a local school called Ayden-Grifton High School. Over the past several years, I have sponsored the event in different counties exposing students throughout North Carolina to the seminar.

The youth summit is designed to expose children to educational opportunities afforded to them, to reaffirm the importance of their skills and competency development, to alert the children to explore all job and career options they have, and to remind and to encourage students that they should pursue their goals to their utmost ability.

The summit also prepares students about the entire process of applying to colleges, from testing procedures to the availability of financial aid. Because I feel that the financial aid is so important to students, particularly those who come from low-income homes, we explained to the students just exactly what has transpired in Congress this session regarding funding for education.

For example, we discussed and explained the legislation enacted granting increases in title I funding and what effects these increases would have particularly on particular families. The increases included, \$1,500 HOPE scholarships, the increase in Pell grants by 26 percent, the largest in the last 20 years, and 20-percent tuition tax credit for families with students in their third and fourth year of college and universities.

These increases are so critical for North Carolina's educational success, and particularly important for the educationally disadvantaged. According to the U.S. Department of Education, North Carolina families will tremendously benefit from the increase in the

scholarships and grants appropriated by title I.

Not only was the event an informational session, but the summit was also a forum where several speakers made their presentation. It also was a social event. Several speakers included guidance counselors, pastors, doctors, professors, judges, county commissioners, and representatives from the military academy. They spoke on a wide range of topics, including testing, financial aid, job career opportunities, parent-child communication, self-esteem, service academies, and the church's role in the development of our youth.

Additionally, our session three students explained just how difficult it was and their struggle from their path to make sure they would become adults.

The youth summit reinforced how essential education is for students and their communities. In order to be entirely successful, however, students must appreciate the importance of developing values and morals in their life, in addition to education they receive in attending class.

I am particularly pleased with the youth summit's success this year and I am looking forward to many future youth summits in North Carolina. These annual events seem to have such a positive effect, not only on the children, but on their parents and other communities. Therefore, I am also recommending to my colleagues that they do similar in their districts.

□ 1100

H.R. 2564, MARRIAGE TAX ELIMINATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. WELLER] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Madam Speaker, today I stand here to speak in favor of H.R. 2564, legislation entitled the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, which many of us believe should be the centerpiece of next year's budget. And I am proud to report that the Marriage Tax Elimination Act today has 222 cosponsors. Members of both parties have joined with us in this very important effort.

Let me explain why elimination of the marriage tax is so important; why bipartisan support is needed and so necessary for the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, with some three very simple questions:

Do Americans feel that it is fair that our Tax Code imposes a higher tax penalty on marriage? Do Americans feel that it is fair that 21 million married working couples pay almost \$1,400 more a year in taxes just because they are married; \$1,400 more than an identical couple living together outside of marriage? Do Americans feel it is morally right that our Tax Code provides a financial incentive to divorce?

I think the answer is pretty clear. The marriage tax is not only unfair, it

is wrong, it is immoral. It is immoral that our Tax Code punishes our society's most basic institution, which is marriage. And, according to the Congressional Budget Office, this marriage tax is imposed on 21 million married working couples for an average of \$1,400 more in taxes just because they are married.

Let me give my colleagues an example of a couple from my district in Illinois, a couple with the combined income of \$61,000. This particular couple, and I will say the husband is a machinist at the Joliet Caterpillar plant, the wife is a schoolteacher at the Joliet public schools. They each have essentially identical incomes, right around \$30,000.

If this couple were two singles, say living together outside of marriage, they would each be in the 15-percent tax bracket, after considering the standard deductions and exemptions. But because as a married couple they file jointly, their combined income, which is almost \$61,000, they are pushed into the 28-percent tax bracket.

For this married couple, this machinist at the Joliet Caterpillar plant, this public schoolteacher at the Joliet public schools, they pay almost \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they got married. And do the American taxpayers believe that it is right that we impose a higher tax on this Joliet couple just because they are married?

Think about it, what that \$1,400 would mean for an average married working couple. Fourteen hundred dollars is several months worth of a car payment, tuition at the Joliet Junior College, or tuition at a local parochial or private or religious school for their child. Of course, even a portion of a downpayment on a home.

Let me quote Mike Reading from Monee, IL, who many have talked with about the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, and Mike says, you know, "You try and be honest and do things straight, and you get penalized for it. That's just not right."

Well, that is really what it is all about. This is an issue of right and wrong. The marriage tax is wrong. We proposed the Marriage Tax Elimination Act to do something about it, and we really want to provide an issue of fairness by giving working married couples the power to choose their filing status. Very simple.

Under the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, this Joliet machinist and Joliet public schoolteacher would be able to choose to file each as single, even while they are married, to be able to enjoy the same tax rate as that couple who lives together outside of marriage. That would save this couple \$1,400, money they could spend to meet their family's needs.

And I am pleased that our efforts to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, which now has 222 cosponsors for the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, is gaining momentum. I am proud our efforts have been endorsed by the Joliet Herald News. The hometown newspaper for

this Joliet couple, this Joliet machinist and this Joliet public school-teacher, has said that working families would welcome repeal of the marriage tax penalty.

The Daily Journal, another paper in the 11th Congressional District, says: "The marriage tax is an unfair imposition. The code should be rewritten to eliminate it.

"While we are all for simplicity in the Tax Code, the reality is that taxes drive social engineering."

The marriage tax should be eliminated and repealed today.

I have a letter here from Robert Eckert of Jacksonville, FL, a tax preparer. He says, "As a seasoned tax preparer and enrolled agent, I find the marriage penalty can be very significant, 12 percent of after tax income or 33-percent increase in tax liability."

My colleagues, group after group have endorsed the Marriage Tax Elimination Act. It should be the centerpiece. The bottom line is elimination of the marriage tax penalty should be the centerpiece of next year's budget agreement. I ask for bipartisan support and I ask for public support for our campaign to eliminate the marriage tax.

THE CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS FOR WOMEN'S ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands [Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN] is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN. Madam Speaker, I rise to salute the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues for 20 years of leadership and tenacity on legislation affecting the lives of women and all Americans.

Our founders, Representatives Elizabeth Holtzman and Margaret Heckler had the foresight to realize that women and their families required significantly more attention from our Nation's leaders.

The baton has been passed on to us and so I salute all of my colleagues, past and present, Democrat and Republican, and especially Representatives NORTON and JOHNSON for the direction and leadership they have provided to this distinguished caucus.

I hope that you have noticed that our famous women's intuition is alive and well. Just this past weekend in my district, the Virgin Islands, women were reenergized as they came together at the annual women's conference hosted by our Senate president, Senator Lorraine Berry and the local women's caucus. And this week, as we celebrate our anniversary, members of the Congressional Black Caucus and thousands of American African women are preparing to travel to Philadelphia for the million woman march on Saturday.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to have been given the wonderful opportunity to be one of the caucuses' 50 members

in the 105th Congress, and although some of us will not be in Philadelphia this weekend, we should all stand with the women who will be there in the Godly, creative, energetic, and loving spirit that has made this caucus what it is.

So Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to salute the past, the present, and, most importantly, the future of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues.

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO HELP STATES PROTECT CHILDREN FROM SEX OFFENDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Madam Speaker, I join my colleague today, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. NICK LAMPSON, and congratulate Texas law enforcement agents for identifying a prime suspect in the kidnapping and murder of young Laura Smither, but I also share his frustration that things might have turned out differently.

We need tougher mandatory sentences; we need more effective community notification programs. While every State now registers child sex offenders, many of their notification programs have been stalled by legal challenges and confusion. This is unacceptable.

To help the States, 31 of my colleagues have joined me in introducing a resolution which gives the States a model community notification program that they can follow, if they choose. This resolution is not a Federal mandate. Instead, it expresses the sense of Congress that States should enact a tier-based system, like nine States have already done successfully.

For example, a released sex offender posing a high risk of repeating his crimes moves into a community. Everyone, police officers, past victims, and, most importantly, neighborhood parents, are notified.

As someone who served in the State legislature for 12 years, I urge my colleagues to join me in helping the States to protect America's children. Cosponsor House Concurrent Resolution 125.

CELEBRATION OF 20 YEARS OF THE WOMEN'S CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MALONEY] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, tonight we will honor the 20th anniversary of the Women's Caucus. President Clinton will join us as we celebrate the past, present, and future of the Women's Caucus.

Women have always faced extra hurdles as they served in Congress. Recognizing these extra challenges, Elizabeth Holtzman, from my home State of New York, along with Peggy Heckler of Massachusetts, organized 13 Members to join them in forming the Women's Caucus in 1977.

We have certainly expanded our numbers. The caucus is 53 members strong this year, but we still face many obstacles.

I would like to submit this copy of achievements of the Women's Caucus during its 20 years for the Record, and just note some of the achievements for the Record.

In 1978, the caucus was instrumental in the passage of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, guaranteeing employment rights to pregnant workers.

In 1979, Congress, at the pushing by the Women's Caucus, created the Office of Civil Rights at the Education Department to enforce the title IX ban against sex discrimination in education.

In 1984, the caucus' Economic Equity Act was the driving force behind enactment of important legislation in retirement equity and child support enforcement legislation.

That year, also, a caucus member, Geraldine Ferraro, from my home State of New York, was nominated for Vice President of the United States, the first time a woman ran for that office on a major party ticket.

In 1985, for the first time, legislation was introduced to provide temporary leave for parents of newborns and seriously ill children and for workers with serious health problems. This effort sparked an 8-year campaign that ended with the 1993 enactment of the Family and Medical Leave Act. That was the first bill that I voted for in Congress.

In 1992, the media called this year the "Year of the Woman" in politics as hundreds of women lined up to run for office. It was a year in which many people voted for women candidates, not as a slogan but as a force to be reckoned with. A record 48 women were elected to the House and 6 to the Senate. And our presence here truly did make a difference.

We passed many important bills: The Family and Medical Leave Act; we expanded the earned income tax credit; we passed the domestic violence bill; the Violence Against Women Act; we expanded coverage and funding for breast cancer and breast cancer research; and this year, in 1997, Congress passed landmark legislation to balance the Federal budget, and they included in it very important expansions for women's health provisions.

One bill that I am particularly proud of is one that I worked on since 1992 with my Republican colleague, Barbara Vucanovich, which expanded the coverage of mammograms in Medicare for women over 65 and bone mass measurement. And I note the very good work of my Republican colleague, the gentlewoman from Maryland [Mrs. CONNIE MORELLA], in this area.