

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 2490

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that my name be withdrawn as a cosponsor from H.R. 2490.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Dakota?

There was no objection.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. OBERSTAR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I see the distinguished minority whip on the floor, or I saw him, and would like to inquire about the schedule for tomorrow on behalf of our committee to know what the program is for the further consideration of Amtrak legislation which was put off last night. Is there a program for the further consideration of Amtrak?

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OBERSTAR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman asking the question. It seems that we have a lot of conflicting schedules going on after 6 o'clock, and at 6 o'clock, and we felt it was such an important issue that we would put it off and bring up the debate on finalizing the bill on reauthorization of Amtrak the first thing in the morning starting around 9 o'clock.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, would that be preceded by 1-minute speeches?

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I am not advised but I would assume, as is usually the custom on the end of the week, if we have any 1-minute speeches they will be severely limited.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, then the gentleman can assure us that the Amtrak legislation will come up tomorrow?

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, as much as anybody can assure anybody of anything around this place.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, the Stones concert will proceed tonight?

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I am advised that the Rolling Stones are in town and several members were going, but there are other events also. There is a Habitat for Humanity event going on and there are also many Members who have their spouses in town and there is an event honoring the spouses and the Members at the Kennedy Center.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I was just concerned that the Stones might be rolling tonight, but the trains might not be next week.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, we want those trains to roll.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, so we would be able to proceed on that legislation and I appreciate it.

PRESIDENT IS URGED TO GIVE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SCHOOL CHILDREN A CHANCE AT QUALITY EDUCATION

(Mr. GINGRICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGRICH. Mr. Speaker, I simply wanted to rise in praise of two Americans who are trying to help the children of Washington. Ted Forstmann and John Walton are giving \$3 million each to a scholarship fund for low-income children in the District of Columbia.

I think every Member of the House should look at this. Here are two people who do not live in Washington, but they love their national capital and they believe that the children of their national capital should have an opportunity to go to a school that is safe, drug-free, and where real learning occurs and where these children have a chance for a better future.

I think for Ted Forstmann and John Walton to go out of their way to help the national capital is a good thing, but I think it also sends a signal to the President that everybody in public housing should have the opportunity to choose a school for their children that is safe and disciplined and has education, and that that should not just be reserved to the two highest elected officials living in public housing, but everybody in public housing ought to have that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I would argue that we can have a chance in the bill we passed just 2 weeks ago to give 2,000 children an opportunity to have a scholarship to let their parents have the right to choose, and I would urge the President: "Please accept the chance for the poorest children of our national capital to have a chance to go to school that is safe and drug-free with real learning."

[From the Washington Times, Oct. 14, 1997]

VOUCHER FUND GETS \$6 MILLION

(By Susan Ferrechio)

Two private businessmen have donated \$6 million to a small D.C. school voucher agency that will use the cash to help pay for 1,000 low-income city students to attend private schools.

Theodore J. Forstmann, one of the donors, said at a news conference yesterday he was donating his share of the money because the D.C. public school system is "really awful" and he wants to help some escape a notoriously troubled system where they cannot learn or get ahead. He said he wants to encourage "citizens taking responsibility for problems and taking action."

The Washington Scholarship Fund, a privately financed charity, pays for 460 D.C. children to attend private school this year.

The agency will use the first of three \$2 million infusions to pay up to \$1,700 in tuition to each eligible student, beginning in September 1998. The students now served by the fund come from households that earn an average of \$18,000 each year.

John Walton, like Mr. Forstmann a business investor and a believer in vouchers, is matching the \$3 million donation to the agency, which was started in 1993 by a former Department of Education analyst.

"There was a real need in Washington, D.C., to help the children," said Mr. Forstmann, who is chairman of the scholarship fund's board of directors.

Mr. Forstmann, of New York, and Mr. Walton, of San Diego, have donated money to voucher programs in other cities, including a program in New York that helps pay private-school tuition for 40,000 low-income students.

The donation comes as Congress is debating a plan to spend public money on private school vouchers for D.C. students.

The House next week will resume debate on a plan in the D.C. Budget Bill to spend \$7 million next year on 2,000 scholarships for low-income students to attend private schools.

That plan, which would offer up to \$3,200 a year to pay for tuition, books or transportation to private schools, is supported by many Republicans but opposed by President Bill Clinton.

Washington Scholarship Fund president and founder Douglas D. Dewey said students are chosen by lottery to receive money from the agency, which pays up to half of one year's tuition.

He said the agency, which is run by three employees, will raise an additional \$800,000 this year.

Lora Watkins, a secretary for the Department of Commerce, took her three daughters out of Watkins Elementary in Southeast this year. She pays \$4,600 in tuition to send them to a nearby Catholic school, Our Lady Queen of Peace. The scholarship fund subsidizes \$2,300 for her tuition costs.

"I was just desperate to get them out of the public school, no matter what," said Mrs. Watkins. "They're learning a whole lot more, it's just totally different. The education is so much better."

Enrollment in the city school system of 78,500 students is declining, school buildings are crumbling, and students test poorly.

The system has been under reform since November by an Emergency Board of Trustees and chief executive officer appointed by the D.C. financial control board.

[From the Washington Post, Oct. 17, 1997]

WHAT A DIFFERENCE HAVING A CHANCE MAKES

(By William Raspberry)

Ted Forstmann isn't much of a philosopher—quite the refreshing opposite. He comes across, over lunch, as a down-to-earth rich guy who, for reasons even he has trouble articulating, just wants to give something back.

So he and his friend and fellow entrepreneur, John Walton, are giving \$3 million each to a scholarship fund for low-income children of the District.

He's sure it's the right thing to do, even though he is pretty much inventing his philanthropic largess on the fly.

"You've heard that biblical passage about it being easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven?" said Forstmann, co-founder and senior partner of the \$16 billion New York investment firm Forstmann Little & Co. "I think what that's saying is that if you achieve success and don't do something worthwhile with it, then—well, you're just sort of pathetic."

He's trying to do something worthwhile with his success. But why schools? In part, he says, because of what he learned at his first job, at a reform school, and in part because he believes schools—Andover, Yale, Columbia—have been a huge factor in his own success. Why D.C.?

Why not D.C.? Besides, Douglas Dean Dewey, who runs the Washington Scholarship Fund, asked him to help.

Forstmann, athletically trim at 57, has just left a press conference announcing the

gift, and he's trying to talk about what motivated him and Walton to do it. "I worry about kids who are born into the world without a choice," he says over a huge swordfish steak at Washington's Capital Grille. "It's like being born already dead. There are too many children like that, and I just feel we have to do what we can for them."

He is just a little weary of critics pointing out the inadequacy of his effort, which amounts to a partial scholarship (one-third to two-thirds of a tuition) for K-8 youngsters who are accepted into private or parochial schools and then win a lottery for the awards. The 1,000 lucky winners are ensured of scholarship help for at least three years, and probably through high school.

"Sure, I wish we could do more—and over time, we will," he says. "Sure, the parents will have to put up some money [for application fees, uniforms, books] they many have. And sure, what we are doing won't fix the public schools. But I'm not going to beat myself up for what I can't do."

Nor will this lifelong bachelor concern himself over the politics of his effort. "I'm not allied with the people who are pushing vouchers. I'm not opposed to them, necessarily. This is something separate."

"Let me put it this way. I've been what happens to people when they feel they have no choice in their lives. The kids I worked with at the reform school—I was an assistant hockey coach—wouldn't cheer if the game was close, or if they were behind. But when they were up 10-0, they would raise the roof. They had lost so many times, they couldn't let anybody see they cared about losing. What was true for those kids in sports is true for the kids we're trying to help in life. We want them to have the courage to try to succeed, to meet high standards."

Is he afraid of skimming the public schools of some of their brightest children (and most committed parents)?

"I see it differently," he says. "It's the people who are defending the status quo who ought to be called to task. I look at it the way the kids themselves look at it. I talk to them, and they say maybe about one-tenth of their friends will make it for sure and, with help, maybe half of the rest. The others don't want to try. But then maybe one of those will look at the others and say, well, maybe I'll give it a shot. In other words, you start with those you can help, and with luck pretty soon you've got a majority. The ways things are going now, the majority is on the other end—and they keep the brighter kids from trying."

Forstmann, who recently was named man of the year by the Inner City Fund of New York, of which he is a director, doesn't particularly like the limelight. The only reason he agreed to the news conference, he says, is the hope that maybe his effort might inspire other people of means to join in.

"There are just so many kids who need a boost that they aren't getting, the way things are now. The point is, there's nothing wrong with the kids. What's wrong is the situation in which they find themselves. We can complain about it, or people of goodwill can step up to the plate and try to do something about it."

Forstmann is stepping up.

□ 1745

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

IRA EXPANSION NEEDED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, the Congress is about to enact one of the most important proposals in several years, legislation to reform the antitaxpayer bias of the IRS. Once this legislation to protect taxpayer rights is passed, the focus will shift once again to questions involving tax policy. As we all know, a national debate on fundamental tax policy issues is expected in coming months. This debate will center on several proposals advanced for sweeping reform of the current income tax system.

Many expect actual tax reform to emerge only after an extended period of debate ends with the emergence of a consensus on a tax package. Given the complexity of the issues involved, this process could take a long time, perhaps years.

In the interim, the current counterproductive tax system would still undermine economic incentives while tax reform efforts proceed. Some action is needed now to limit the damage resulting from the current tax system. The tax system we know today has many problems, but one of its main defects is its bias against personal savings. Personal savings is taxed once out of income and then the return on savings is taxed once again when we tax interest.

This multiple taxation penalizes personal savings, a major source of economic growth, so it is no surprise that America has one of the lowest personal savings rates in the world.

This bias can be addressed by increasing the tax deduction for IRA contributions, currently set at \$2,000 annually. Earlier this year, I introduced a bill, H.R. 891, to boost IRA deduction limits by \$500 per year over several years. When fully phased in, a middle class family could deduct up to \$7,000 a year for an annual IRA contribution. I strongly urge that an increase in the IRA deductions be part of any tax relief plan offered in 1998.

An increase in IRA deductions would help middle class families save for their future, become more financially independent, and be better able to deal with unexpected events and become less dependent, less dependent on government. It would also give them a greater stake in the United States economic system. It is a tax cut that average Americans would understand and strongly support.

An increase in IRA deductions would increase personal savings, a major source of investment and economic growth. This would help firms to supply their workers with the best and most advanced tools, thus increasing productivity and income. If we want personal savings to increase, we should increase IRA deductions for middle class Americans. A tax code that penalizes savings and investment makes no sense.

Middle class taxpayers need a means of addressing their responsibilities to save for retirement, for education, for medical expenses, for unemployment, for first-time homeownership and perhaps some other purposes. Federal tax policy should not discriminate against taxpayers willing and able to take on these responsibilities for themselves, but are prevented from doing so by the disruptive, destructive impact of the current tax system.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2107, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

Mr. SOLOMON, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-342) on the resolution (H. Res. 277) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2107) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1119, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1998

Mr. SOLOMON, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-343) on the resolution (H. Res. 278) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 1119) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1998 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALSH). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. WATERS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentlewoman from California [Ms. WATERS].

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.