

CLARIFYING OVERTIME
EXEMPTION FOR FIREFIGHTERS

SPEECH OF

HON. CURT WELDON

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 4, 1999

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this legislation. I commend the gentleman from Maryland for introducing this bill, and as a former firefighter, appreciate his initiatives to help the firefighters of our nation.

This bill would clarify the overtime exemption for full time firefighters and EMS personnel. This would apply to all firefighters, paramedics, emergency medical technicians (EMS), rescue workers, ambulance personnel, and hazardous materials workers who are employed by a municipality, county, fire district, or state fire department. As the founder of the Congressional Fire and Emergency Services Caucus, and one who has continually kept informed on these issues, I realize the importance of this bill. By giving these men and women the opportunity to be treated fairly in the workplace, we are recognizing that firefighters and EMS personnel are employees that deserve overtime for their valiant efforts. These individuals are professionally trained in fire suppression, and work to keep our communities safe.

Every day across America the story is the same: public officers—be they firefighters, emergency services personnel, or law enforcement officials—leave their families to join the thin red and blue line that protects us from harm. They put their lives on the line as a shield between death and the precious gift of life. Mr. Speaker, I know the dedication of our men and women in the fire community, and know the risks they take each day they do their job.

As we all know, recent Court rulings have stated the EMS personnel do not qualify for the overtime exemption in the Fair Labor Standards Act because the bulk of their time is spent doing non-fire protection activities. This is absurd. During working hours, these men and women sit on alert for the calls that come in, and spend their time working on their fire stations. This legislation is long overdue, and I believe that we are taking the right steps by granting our firefighters this overtime status.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Maryland for introducing this important piece of legislation, and I look forward to working with him again on other fire related issues.

HONORING DR. EDOUARD JOSEPH
HAZEL

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 9, 1999

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Dr. Edouard Joseph Hazel, an international leader in medicine.

Edouard Joseph Hazel was born on November 10, 1951, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, the third largest Caribbean country. Dr. Hazel went to

private schools and joined the School of Medicine of the State University of Haiti. He graduated in 1975, and moved to the United States where he obtained his Board Certification in Internal Medicine and Infectious Disease.

Dr. Hazel is currently the Acting Chief of the Department of Medicine of Coler Hospital, where he was instrumental in establishing the first long-term program for patients infected with the HIV virus. In spite of his busy schedule with this municipal hospital, Dr. Hazel is also completing a term as the President of the New York State Chapter of the Association of Haitian Physicians Abroad, and is the current general secretary for the national committee of this organization of some 2,000 American physicians.

Dr. Hazel is at the forefront of the movement that ultimately defeated discriminatory policies and practices of the FDA and the CDC against Haitian Americans who were singled out as the carriers of the HIV virus. During his tenure, he visited the U.S. Base of Guantanamo, Cuba, where HIV-infected Haitian refugees were held and helped articulate the legal argument to ensure that this group received appropriate medical care. He was also one of the first scientists who recognized the danger that the HIV virus could represent for people of color all over the world.

Dr. Hazel also understands the importance of coalition building and works closely with numerous organizations such as the Hispanic American Physician Association, the Providence Society, the local chapter of the National Medical Association, and the Caribbean Health Association, to name a few. Dr. Hazel is also the current Director of the Visiting Physician Program of the Health and Hospital Corporation at Coler Goldwater Hospital, a program that has provided extensive training in the diagnosis and the management of transmissible diseases to physicians practicing in the Dominican Republic.

Fully aware of the changes taking place in the health care industry, Dr. Hazel has been vehemently working to increase the participation of minority professionals in shaping a better health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I would like you and my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to join me in honoring Dr. Edouard Joseph Hazel.

MEDICARE, MEDICAID AND SCHIP
BALANCED BUDGET REFINEMENT
ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. JIM RYUN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 5, 1999

Mr. RYUN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I have heard over and over from the health care professionals and the Medicare patients in the 2nd District of Kansas about how devastating the unintended consequences of the Balanced Budget Act have been on the Medicare system.

The BBA's attempt to reduce waste and fraud and prolong the life of Medicare by reducing reimbursements has unfortunately resulted in less care per patient, especially in rural Kansas. From 1997 to 1998 the average reimbursement per patient in Kansas dropped

from \$4,060 to \$2,642 and the average number of visits per patient dropped from 65 to 42. We can be certain that these figures do not reflect a sudden dramatic increase in healthy seniors.

Too many seniors have watched their rural hospital or home health clinic close or are denied care as a result of the budget cuts. In Kansas alone, 60 Home Health Agencies have closed their doors over the last two years. It's time for us to reverse the Balanced Budget Act's death sentence on Medicare and the Health Care Financing Administration's poor interpretation of the Act.

I was particularly pleased when Chairman THOMAS, the author of this bill, came to Kansas to hear first hand the concerns of health care providers in my district. I know the Chairman took these concerns and so many others from around the country into consideration when he drafted this legislation.

The Medicare Balanced Budget Refinement Act is a positive step toward halting the closing of home health agencies and rural hospitals and will ensure greater patient access to quality care. Particularly significant to keeping the doors of home health agencies open is the delay of the 15% payment reduction until a year after implementation of the prospective payment system. The Act also recognizes the paperwork burden the OASIS questionnaire places on nurses and agency staff and provides a \$10 payment for each patient requiring this paperwork. The Medicare cuts for home health agencies were deep, and we cannot continue to expect agencies to do more with less. More importantly, many seniors will be able to remain in their homes rather than checking into hospitals and nursing homes.

Small rural hospitals have also suffered from the BBA as their limited budgets have been stretched thin. The Medicare Balanced Budget Refinement Act assists small rural hospitals with the cost of transition to the new prospective payment system through the availability of up to \$50,000 in grants to purchase computers, train staff and cover other cost associated with the transition. The Act eliminates the requirement for states to review the need for swing beds through the Certificate of Need (CON) process. It also eliminates the 5 constraints on length of stay providing flexibility for hospitals with under 100 beds to participate more extensively in the Medicare swing bed program.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against the Balanced Budget Act in 1997 largely because of the negative impact it would have on rural health care. I support H.R. 3075 because it goes a long way to correct the problems with the current system.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. 900,
GRAMM-LEACH-BLILEY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. EDWARD R. ROYCE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 4, 1999

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, the historic legislation that we are considering today, is a win for the consumer, a win for the U.S. economy and a win for America's international competitive position abroad.

American consumers will benefit from increased access, better services, greater convenience and lower costs. They will be offered

the convenience of handling their banking, insurance and securities activities at one location. More importantly, with the efficiencies that could be realized from increased competition among banks, insurance, and securities providers under this proposal, consumers could ultimately save an estimated \$18 billion annually.

Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan has stated that "Consumers of financial services are denied the lower prices, increased access and higher quality services that would accompany the increased competition associated with permitting banking companies to expand their activities."

This reduction in the cost of financial services, in turn, a big win for the U.S. economy. Finally, this legislation is a win for America's international competitive position, as it will allow U.S. companies to compete more effectively with foreign firms for business around the world.

As the Federal Reserve Chairman stated, "We cannot afford to be complacent regarding the future of the U.S. banking industry. The issues are too important for the future growth of our economy and the welfare of our citizens."

This legislation is thirty years overdue Mr. Speaker, and I urge my colleagues not to delay its passage a day longer.

At this time, I would like to make a few clarifying remarks.

Included in Title VI of the bill before us are complex changes in the structure of the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLBank) System. I believe these changes will enhance the ability of the System to help member institutions serve their communities, though there is enormous work yet to be done to implement these initiatives. Consequently, at the risk of redundancy, it is important to reiterate the view expressed in the Conference regarding related regulatory actions.

As noted in the Committee Report, the Conferees acknowledged and supported withdrawal of the Financial Management and Mission Achievement (FMMA) rule proposed earlier this year by the Federal Housing Finance Board (FHFB), the FHLBank System regulator. The FMMA would have made dramatic changes in such areas as mission, investments, liquidity, capital, access to advances and director/senior officer responsibilities. Because of serious concerns over the FMMA's impact on FHLBank earnings, its effect on safety and soundness and its legal basis, the proposal has been intensely controversial among the FHLBanks' membership, with over 20 national and state bank and thrift trade associations calling for a legislated delay on FMMA.

Many Conferees not only shared these concerns but also felt strongly that the FMMA should not be pursued while the FHLBank System is responding to the statutory changes in this bill. There was great sympathy for a moratorium blocking the FMMA, but prior to the matter coming to a vote, Chairman Morrison of the FHFB sent a letter to Chairmen GRAMM and LEACH agreeing to withdraw the proposal, which I want to make sure is part of the RECORD. He also promised to consult with the Banking Committees regarding the content of the capital rules and any rules dealing with investments or advances. The FHFB's commitment not to act precipitously in promulgating regulations in these areas creates the

proper framework for effective and timely implementation of the reforms that Congress is seeking to put in place.

The regulatory standstill to which the FHFB has committed should apply to any final rules or policies applicable to investments, and the FHFB should maintain the current \$9 billion ceiling on member mortgage asset pilot programs or similar activities. In the context of dramatic impending changes in the capital structure of the FHLBanks, I believe it is necessary for the FHFB to refrain from any effort otherwise to rearrange the FHLBanks' investment framework, liquidity structure and balance sheets.

Finally, Mr. Speaker I would like to note that it is my understanding that credit enhancement done through the underwriting and reinsurance of mortgage guaranty insurance after a loan has been closed are secondary market transactions included in the exemption for secondary market transactions in section 502(e)(1)(C) of the S. 900 Conference Report.

FEDERAL HOUSING FINANCE BOARD,
Washington, DC, October 18, 1999.

Hon. PHIL GRAMM,
*Chairman, Committee on Banking, Housing,
and Urban Affairs, Washington, DC.*

Hon. JIM LEACH,
Chairman, Committee on Banking and Financial Services, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR GRAMM AND CONGRESSMAN LEACH: As you proceed to consider legislation to modernize the Federal Home Loan Bank System as part of the S. 900/H.R. 10 conference, I am aware that there is substantial concern regarding our proposed Financial Management and Mission Achievement regulation (FMMA). Unfortunately, this legitimate concern regarding a far-reaching regulatory initiative has resulted in a proposal for a statutory moratorium on our regulatory authority. Despite the best efforts of well-meaning advocates, such statutory language can only lead to serious ambiguity and potential litigation over the independent regulatory authority of the Finance Board.

Therefore, this letter is intended to give you and your colleagues on the Committee of Conference solid assurances about our intentions upon final enactment of the statute being drafted in conference. Upon such enactment, the Finance Board will: 1. Withdraw, forthwith, its proposed FMMA. 2. Proceed in accordance with the statutory instructions regarding regulations governing a risk-based capital system and a minimum leverage requirement for the Federal Home Loan Banks. 3. Take no action to promulgate proposed or final regulations limiting assets or advances beyond those currently in effect (except to the extent necessary to protect the safety and soundness of the Federal Home Loan Banks) until such time as the regulations described in number 2 have become final and the statutory period for submission of capital plans by the Banks has expired. 4. Consult with each of you and your colleagues on the Banking Committees of the House and the Senate, regarding the content of both the capital regulations and any regulations on the subjects described in number 3, prior to issuing them in proposed form.

I believe that these commitments cover the areas of concern which have led to a proposal for moratorium legislation. You can rely on this commitment to achieve those legitimate ends sought by moratorium proponents without clouding the necessary regulatory authority of the Finance Board which could result from statutory language.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

BRUCE A. MORRISON.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BILL PASCARELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 9, 1999

Mr. PASCARELL. Mr. Speaker, as is reflected in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, I was granted a leave of absence for Monday, November 8, 1999.

I would respectfully request that the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD reflect the way in which I would have voted had I been present. The votes are as follows: Rollcall Vote 574—H. Res. 94 On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree, Recognizing the generous contribution made by each living person who has donated a kidney to save a life; on rollcall vote 574, I would have voted "yes."

Rollcall Vote 575—H.R. 2904 On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, to Reauthorize Funding for the Office of Government Ethics; on rollcall vote 575, I would have voted "yes."

Rollcall Vote 576—H. Res. 344 On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree to Recognizing and Honoring Payne Stewart and Extending Condolences to his family and the families of those who died with him; on rollcall vote 576, I would have voted "yes."

HONORING JIM AND CATHY THOMPSON AND THE TOWN OF KILLINGWORTH FOR THE 1999 ROCKEFELLER CENTER CHRISTMAS TREE

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 9, 1999

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Thompsons and other residents of Killingworth, Connecticut who will provide a 100 foot tall spruce tree that will serve as New York's Rockefeller Center Christmas tree. I am proud, as are the residents of Killingworth, of the special role our tree will play in the national celebration of the holiday season.

This amazing Norway Spruce tree currently stands along side the farmhouse of Jim and Cathy Thompson. When Henry Marquard planted this tree 100 years ago, he never could have imagined its ultimate fate. But now the Thompsons find themselves the proud "parents" of what is to be the tallest tree in Rockefeller Center history.

The tree was first spotted by helicopter last April and later selected by Rockefeller Center officials as the 1999 Christmas tree. Over the summer the huge tree was carefully maintained, despite a record-setting drought. The people of the small town of Killingworth also managed to maintain a huge secret. The public did not know that this tree would become the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree until this week. The secret broke when the state police began to guard the tree around the clock. It will soon be carefully cut down and transported to New York City's Rockefeller Center, where it will stand throughout the holiday season.

The Rockefeller Center Christmas tree is world-renowned. It has been capturing the