

The Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 enjoys widespread support. It has gathered bipartisan sponsorship in the House and has already been approved by a bipartisan majority in the Senate Finance Committee.

Many, many beneficiaries urgently want to return to work and to make the most of their talents and abilities, but they are simply unable to do so for a variety of reasons. For instance, while people with disabilities possess the clear desire to work, they often require vocational rehabilitation, job training, or some other form of assistance in order to find a job and to hold that job over the long run. This bill would create incentives for providers of services to offer necessary assistance and to stay involved with the individual to assure as he adjusts to the work force.

At a hearing before the Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee last week, the General Accounting Office reported that the single most important barrier to work for people with disabilities is the fear of loss of medical coverage. People with disabilities are discouraged from securing employment, as they lose not only their SSDI or SSI benefits but also their medical coverage if they are successful in returning to work.

This legislation would extend medical coverage for people with disabilities who wish to return to work. The bill that the House passed last year by an overwhelmingly bipartisan margin—the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Act—made admirable progress in this regard. But I believe we can, and should, do more. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Commerce Committee to remove this barrier to work.

Rather than maintain the current barriers to work, we should strive to facilitate the transition back to the workforce for people with disabilities. Rather than penalize people with disabilities once they do return to work, we should ensure that they do not have to bear the costly burden of health insurance before they are able to do so. The Work Incentives Improvement Act accomplishes both those goals.

The Act would provide disability beneficiaries with a "Ticket to Work," which could be presented to either a private vocational rehabilitation provider or to a State vocational rehabilitation agency in exchange for services such as physical therapy or job training. The "Ticket to Work" would afford SSDI and SSI beneficiaries a much greater choice of providers and would thus enable them to match their particular needs with the capacities of private entities or public agencies more readily. Moreover, the Ticket program would spur providers, both public and private, to offer the most effective services possible, since, under the Ticket program, providers share in the savings to government that arise when a SSDI or SSI beneficiary returns to the workforce and no longer receives benefit payments.

The Work Incentives Improvement Act would also help to remove the most formidable obstacle that people with disabilities face in returning to work—the loss of their health care coverage. Last year's House-passed bill would have extended Medicare coverage for an additional two years beyond current law for individuals who leave the disability rolls to return to work. The Work Incentives Improvement Act that I am introducing today would build upon the foundation laid last year in a number of ways. First, it would ex-

tend Medicare coverage to 10 years for disability beneficiaries who return to work. Second, it would allow states to offer a Medicaid buy-in to people with disabilities whose incomes would make them ineligible for SSI.

Taken together, these provisions offer people with disabilities the support and the incentives they need as they strive to return to work. Consequently, I hope Members of both parties will join me and the other sponsors of the Work Incentives Improvement Act in enacting this innovative legislation this year and in helping to improve the lives of people with disabilities, people who want to work and who want to contribute, even more than they already do, to a brighter future for all Americans.

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BUDGET AUTONOMY ACT OF 1999
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
LEGISLATIVE AUTONOMY
ACT OF 1999

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce the District of Columbia Legislative Autonomy Act of 1999 and the District of Columbia Budget Autonomy Act of 1999, continuing a series of bills that I will introduce this session to ensure a process of transition to democracy and self-government for the residents of the District of Columbia. The first provision of the first bill in my D.C. Democracy Now series, the District of Columbia Democracy 2000 Act (D.C. Democracy 2000), has already been passed and signed by the President as Public Law 106-1—the first law of the 106th Congress. This provision repeals the Faircloth attachment and returns power to the Mayor and City Council.

The Revitalization Act passed in 1997 eliminated the city's traditional, stagnant federal payment and replaced it with federal assumption of escalating state costs including prisons, courts and Medicaid, as well as federally created pension liability. Federal funding of these state costs involve the jurisdiction of other appropriations subcommittees, not the D.C. appropriations subcommittee. Yet, it is the D.C. subcommittee that must appropriate the District's own locally-raised revenue derived from its own taxpayers before that money can be used by the District government. My bill corrects an untenable position whereby a national legislature appropriates the entire budget of a local city jurisdiction. The District of Columbia Budget Autonomy Act would allow the District government to pass its own budget without congressional approval.

Congress has put in place two safeguards that duplicate the function of the appropriation subcommittees—the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority (Financial Authority). Today, however, the District has demonstrated that it is capable of exercising prudent authority over its own budget without help from any source except the CFO. In FY 1997, the District ran a surplus of \$186 million. Last year, the District's surplus totaled \$444 million, and the city government is scheduled to continue to run

balanced budgets and surpluses into the future.

Budget autonomy will also help the District government and the Financial Authority to reform budgetary procedures by: (1) streamlining the District's needlessly lengthy and expensive budget process in keeping with the congressional intent of the Financial Authority Act to reform and simplify D.C. government procedures, and (2) facilitating more accurate budgetary forecasting.

This bill would return the city's budget process to the simple approach passed by the Senate during the 1973 consideration of the Home Rule Act. The Senate version provided a simple procedure for enacting the city's budget into law. Under this procedure, the Mayor would submit a balanced budget for review by the City Council with only the federal payment subjected to congressional approval. Under the Constitution's District clause, of course, the Congress would retain the authority to intervene at any point in the process in any case, so nothing of the prerogatives and authority of the Congress over the District would be lost ultimately. A conference compromise, however, vitiated this approach treating the D.C. government as a full agency (hence the 1996 very harmful shutdown of the D.C. government for a full week when the federal government was shut down). The Home Rule Act of 1973, as passed, requires the Mayor to submit a balanced budget for review by the City Council and then subsequently to Congress as part of the President's annual budget as if a jurisdiction of 540,000 residents were an agency of the Federal Government.

The D.C. budget process takes much longer compared to six months for comparable jurisdictions. The necessity for a Financial Authority significantly extended an already uniquely lengthy budget process. Even without the addition of the Authority, the current budget process requires the city to navigate its way through a complex bureaucratic morass imposed upon it by the Congress. Under the current process, the Mayor is required to submit a financial plan and budget to the City Council and the Authority. The Authority reviews the Mayor's budget and determines whether it is approved or rejected. Following this determination, the Mayor and the City Council (which also holds hearings on the budget) each have two opportunities to gain Authority approval of the financial plan and budget. The Authority provides recommendations throughout this process. If the Authority does not approve the Council's financial plan and budget on second review, it forwards the Council's revised financial plan and budget (containing the Authority's recommendations to bring the plan and budget into compliance) to the District government and to the President. If the Authority does approve the budget, that budget is then sent to the President without recommendations. The proposed District budget is then included in the federal budget, which the President forwards to Congress for consideration. The D.C. subcommittees in both the House and Senate review the budget and present a Chairman's mark for consideration. Following markup and passage by both Houses, the D.C. appropriations bill is sent to the President for his signature. Throughout this process the bill is not only subject to considerations of fiscal soundness but individual political considerations.

This procedure made a bad budgetary process much worse causing me to write a consensus budget provision in the President's Revitalization Act that allows the parties to sit at the same table and write one budget. Even so, instead of that budget becoming law then, the District remains without a budget for months, often after the beginning of the fiscal year.

Under the legislation I introduce today, the District of Columbia still remains subject to the full appropriations process in the House and Senate for any federal funds. Nothing in this bill diminishes the power of the Congress to "exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever" over the District of Columbia under Article I, section 8, clause 17 of the U.S. Constitution should it choose to revise what the District has done concerning locally raised revenue. Nothing in this legislation prevents any Member of Congress from introducing a bill that addresses her specific concerns regarding the District. The Congress should grant the District the power to propose and enact its own budget containing its own revenue free from Congressional control now during the period when the Authority is still the monitoring mechanism providing an important incentive to help the District reach budget balance and meaningful Home Rule.

The second bill I introduce today, the District of Columbia Legislative Autonomy Act of 1999, eliminates the congressional review period of 30 days and 60 days respectively, for civil and criminal acts passed by the D.C. City Council. Under the current system, all acts of the Council are subjected to this Congressional layover period. This unnecessary and undemocratic step adds yet another unnecessary layer of bureaucracy to an already overburdened city government.

My bill would eliminate the need for the District to engage in the byzantine process of enacting emergency and temporary legislation concurrently with permanent legislation. The Home Rule charter contemplates that if the District needs to pass legislation while Congress is out of session, it may do so if two-thirds of the Council determines that an emergency exists, a majority of the Council approves the law and the Mayor signs it. Emergency legislation, however, lasts for only 90 days, which would (in theory) force the Council to the pass permanent legislation by undergoing the usual congressional review process when Congress returns. Similarly, the Home Rule Charter contemplates that the Council may pass temporary legislation lasting 120 days without being subjected to the congressional review process, but must endure the congressional layover period for that legislation to become law.

In actual practice, however, most legislation approved by the City Council is passed concurrently on an emergency, temporary and permanent basis to ensure that the large, rapidly changing city remains running. This process is cumbersome and inefficient and would be eliminated by my bill.

It is important to emphasize that my bill does not prevent review of District laws by Congress. The D.C. Subcommittee would continue to scrutinize every piece of legislation passed by the City Council if it wishes and to change or strike that legislation under the plenary authority over the District that the Constitution affords to the Congress. My bill merely eliminates the automatic hold placed on

local legislation and the need to pass emergency and temporary legislation to keep the District functioning.

Since the adoption of the Home Rule Act in 1973, over 2000 acts have been passed by the council and signed into law by the Mayor. Only thirty-nine acts have been challenged by a congressional disapproval resolution. Only three of those resolutions have ever passed the Congress and two involved a distinct federal interest. Two bills to correct for any federal interest, rather than a hold on 2000 bills, would have served the purpose and saved considerable time and money for the District and the Congress.

I ask my colleagues who are urging the District government to pursue greater efficiency and savings to do your part in giving the city the tools to cut through the bureaucratic maze the Congress itself has imposed upon the District. Congress has been clear that it wants to see the D.C. government taken apart and put back together again in an effort to eliminate redundancy and inefficiency. Congress should therefore eliminate the bureaucracy in D.C. that Congress is solely responsible for by granting the city budgetary and legislative autonomy.

Only through true budgetary and legislative autonomy can the District realize meaningful self-government and Home Rule. The President and the Congress took the first step in relieving the District of costly escalating state functions in the Revitalization Act. This bill takes the next logical step by granting the District control over its own budgetary and legislative affairs. I urge my colleagues to pass this important measure.

HONORING MARIE THERESE
DAMRELL GALLO

HON. GARY A. CONDIT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Mr. CONDIT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Marie Therese Damrell Gallo in recognition of her being awarded the Anti-Defamation League's Torch of Liberty Award for the Central Pacific Region. Marie has established standards for charity and voluntarism which are remarkable—all the while, gaining the admiration and love of the many people who have had the pleasure and enjoyment of working with her.

I'm proud to report that first and foremost in Marie's life is an incredibly strong commitment to her family. Marie married Bob Gallo in 1958 and together they have raised 8 children, and have 10 grandchildren.

Yet while raising her family, Marie never forgot her commitment to her friends of her community. In tribute to her many accomplishments, Marie has also received the Liberty Bell award from the Stanislaus County Bar Association, the Standing Ovation Award from the Modesto Symphony Guild, the Outstanding Women of the Year award from the Stanislaus County Commission for Women, and The Cross for the Church and the Pontiff Papal award from His Holiness, John Paul II.

The diversity and breadth of her interests and concerns are amazing. She has been the founder and chairwoman of innumerable fund-raising events for charitable organizations, in-

cluding the Modesto Symphony Guild's Holiday Overture, the American Diabetes Association of Stanislaus County's The Great Caper; the Opening Night Gala for the Central California Art League's Spring Show, the Bishop of Stockton's Celebration of Charity; An Evening Starring Loretta Young for the benefit of the Sisters of the Cross Convent; the YMCA of Stanislaus County's An Autumn Affair; and the Fashion Show for the benefit of St. Stanislaus School.

A native of Modesto, in my district in California's great Central Valley, Marie attended Lincoln Elementary, Roosevelt Junior High, and Modesto High School. She is a graduate of the College of Notre Dame and taught in the San Francisco school system before her marriage to Bob. Marie is an accomplished pianist and studied under Bernhard Abramowitsch at the University of California/Berkeley.

Mr. Speaker, Marie Gallo exemplifies the finest spirit of voluntarism and selfless dedication. I am proud to represent her in the Congress and ask that my colleagues rise and join me in honoring her.

TRIBUTE TO JACOB H. "BUD"
BLITZER

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of Jacob H. "Bud" Blitzer. Bud was a man of integrity and tremendous resilience, who used his creativity, intelligence, humor, and a sense of fairness to navigate through a life of great challenges.

A victim of polio at age 27, Bud—never one for self-pity—became a successful businessman, consultant, educator, mentor, and all around mensch. Most important to him were the relationships he cultivated with family, friends, the I Have a Dream Foundation, and the many people fortunate enough to know him.

But, with his brother-in-law Len Milner, founded Integrated Ceilings, Inc., specializing in innovative architectural custom ceiling designs. He held many patents for designs which have enhanced numerous office buildings, retail stores, and homes. These innovations inspired an entire industry of ceiling design. He ran his company with the highest standards of honesty, quality, and excellence. This commitment was reflected by the employees of the company who were loyal and proud of their product and most of whom remained with the company throughout the entire time that Bud was its president and CEO.

But did not limit himself to his company. He also served as a mentor for many young entrepreneurs as they began their businesses as well as many people who were struggling with the challenges of life. One notable example was Tom Greene of the T.A. Greene Co., of whom Bud was known to have said, "I started out helping Tom, but in the end, it was he who helped me."

Bud was a jazz drummer in his youth, served as an officer in the Army Air Corps, and was founder and president of the Lightrend Co., prior to founding Integrated Ceilings, Inc. An avid sailor and a jazz enthusiast, a conversationalist par excellence, Bud's