

more children and families will get high quality services, and no House family will be worse off. This new policy, then, will produce lots of winners and no losers."

It seems to me that a Child Care Center closely associated with the place of work is a winner to begin with, but it also must be financially viable. The step that we take with this bill today ensures indeed that we will continue to be winners.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill, a timely bill, and hopefully every Member will support it. The House is indeed fortunate to have such an excellent Child Care Center. At present, Mr. Speaker, the center is open only to children of employees of the legislative branch, with Members and employees of the House having priority. Numerous Members and staff have entrusted their children to the center over the years. My own granddaughter Judy, as a matter of fact, when my daughter was working here was at the Child Care Center and she was enriched immeasurably by that experience. The House Child Care Center is a wonderful place, and I wish there were many more like it for parents across the country who desperately need safe, reliable, high quality child care.

The House center, which occupies space in the Ford House Office Building, receives no direct appropriations. Except for its space, utilities and benefits for its staff who are House employees, the center must sustain itself through its tuitions. Like many child care centers, the House center has difficulty filling all its places for 3- and 4-year-olds. There is a long waiting list, Mr. Speaker, for infants and strong demand for places for 1- and 2-year-olds. This is because new working parents without family-based child care alternatives often find few options for child care outside the home. However, as children approach the school age, other options become available to many parents. These options may include free or low cost public preschool programs. Parents may enroll in prekindergarten programs that virtually assure later acceptance in a particular school. The arrival of younger siblings may render it more economical for one parent to stay home or to hire a nanny to care for children in the home, if that is financially possible. For child care centers, the loss of 3- and 4-year-olds, who are the most profitable since child-to-adult ratios can be higher, has a great effect on the bottom line.

This legislation will ease this problem for the House center by expanding the population it can serve to include employees of other Federal agencies. The center will continue to give first

priority to children of the House, then to other legislative branch children. If places remain, however, available thereafter, it will then be offered to children of other Federal employees. This is a sensible move that will make the House center more efficient. It will ease the upward pressure on the center's tuition rates which are already frankly beyond the reach of many House employees. Equally important, it will make the benefits of the House Child Care Center available to Federal employees throughout the Washington region. There are undoubtedly numerous Federal workers across this area who would appreciate the chance to enroll their children in the House Child Care Center. We should certainly offer them placements in our center that would otherwise go unfilled, and that is the key. We are simply providing for vacant spaces being available. We will not in any way compete with the House employees.

Mr. Speaker, by strengthening the House Child Care Center, this bill is good for the House and other legislative branch employees who need child care. By expanding the eligible population to include all Federal employees, it is good for Federal workers in this area and the government generally. I certainly rise in strong support of this legislation and ask for an affirmative vote.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this bill, H.R. 3122 that allows federal employees who do not work for the legislative branch to enroll their children in the House of Representatives Child Care Center. Every parent that works for the federal government should have access to quality child care.

Child care is critical to the success of working families and to ensuring that every child enters school ready to learn. The need for child care has become a necessity for many parents.

It is estimated that 65 percent of women with children younger than six, and 78 percent of women with children between the ages of six and 17 are in the work force. Almost 60 percent of the women with infants are also in the work force. The majority of working women provide half or more of their family's income.

Every day, 13 million preschoolers, including six million babies and toddlers are in child care. Children enter child care programs as early as six weeks of age.

Quality child care has a lasting impact on children's well-being and ability to learn. Poor quality child care can result in delayed language and reading skills.

Many parents struggle to find affordable, quality child care because of the high costs. Full day care costs as much as \$4000 to \$10,000 per year—close to the cost of one year of public college tuition.

The Child Care Center that serves the House of Representatives is a high quality center that currently benefits the children of employees of the House. This center offers the quality services that parents need, and this center should be made available for other employees of the Federal government.

I urge my Colleagues to support this measure. All children deserve quality care early in

life for a healthy start this bill will make these services available for more working families.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3122.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1500

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of H.R. 3122, the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOODLATTE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

#### RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF 4-H CLUBS

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 194) recognizing the contributions of 4-H Clubs and their members to voluntary community service.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 194

Whereas the American people have a tradition of philanthropy and volunteerism;

Whereas 4-H Clubs, an organization originally established by the Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture and land-grant colleges, provide young people in the United States with the opportunity to actively participate in volunteer services in their communities that can bridge the differences that separate people and help solve social problems;

Whereas there are more than 6,500,000 youth members of 4-H Clubs in the United States;

Whereas 4-H members touch and enhance the lives of others during the annual National 4-H Week and throughout the year by doing good, by giving where there is a need, by rebuilding what has been torn down, by teaching where there is a desire to learn, and by inspiring those who have lost hope;

Whereas 4-H Clubs and their members, as well as other volunteers and Cooperative Extension staff, have joined to promote the week of October 3 through 9, 1999, as an opportunity for national, collaborated voluntary community service; and

Whereas voluntary community service is an investment in the future all Americans must share: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring).* That the Congress commends and recognizes 4-H Clubs and their members in the United States for their contributions to voluntary community service.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

Georgia (Mr. DEAL) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL).

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, every day we hear more about the challenges currently facing our young people in society. However, today I am proud to bring good news about America's youth by specifically recognizing the 7 million young citizens who are involved in 4-H programs through this resolution.

The roots of 4-H began at the turn of the 20th century when progressive educators started to emphasize the need of young people and to introduce nature study as a basis for a better agricultural education. The 4-H program was founded sometime between 1900 and 1910 to provide local educational clubs for rural youth from ages 9 through 19 years. The program was designed to teach better home economics and agricultural techniques and to foster character development and good citizenship. Boys and girls clubs and leagues were established in schools and churches to meet these needs. Farmers saw the practical benefits, and public support and enthusiasm for 4-H, therefore, grew throughout the Nation.

The program is administered by the Cooperative Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, state land grant universities, and county governments. For nearly a hundred years over 45 million Americans, myself and many other Members of this body included, in some 3,150 counties have subscribed to the 4-H philosophy of learning by doing. In all projects, 4-H members strive to develop and improve the four H's: head, heart, hands, and health that not only make themselves better citizens but, through volunteer service, 4-H members make America's cities, towns, and farms better places to live.

To keep up with the wide range of interests of today's young people, the 4-H program has diversified tremendously. Its agricultural heritage is still alive and well, but today's 4-H members also design Web pages, participate in mock legislatures, organize community clean-ups, and deliver speeches. The 4-H Youth Development Program continues to make great contributions toward the development of well-rounded youth. By this resolution we congratulate them and recognize this ongoing contribution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have just one question for you and the gentleman from Georgia and all of my colleagues here this afternoon, and that question is: Are they into it?

"Are they into it" is the current slogan for the 4-H; "Are they into it" is the rallying cry for the 4-H clubs of

America as they approach 100 years of service to communities and neighborhoods from coast to coast. "Are they into it" is the call that over 6 million young people answered last year in 4-H clubs and organizations across the Nation. "Are they into it" is the mantra repeated by over a half a million volunteers who donate an average of \$200 per year to keep the 4-H clubs strong and vital in their communities. "Are they into it" is the question answered by private sector partners of 4-H, Mr. Speaker, who invest almost \$100 million into 4-H youth development programs.

I am glad to say that today this body is into it, and I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL) for bringing this resolution forward today.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased and proud to be on the floor supporting this important measure introduced by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL). Many people believe we live in an era of unprecedented cynicism and skepticism. That is why it is important for this Congress to take a little time to recognize the outstanding organization like 4-H which brings young people together to do good for their communities and to grow as principled individuals.

In fact, research indicates that volunteerism among young Americans has actually been on the increase. America's youth want to participate in the betterment of their communities and their country. The 4-H is uniquely established to provide opportunity to young people nationwide to learn valuable life skills, work with others toward common goals, and developing into community leaders.

The 4-H is a dynamic organization whose mission is to foster innovation and shared learning for America's youth, ages 6 to 19. Its vision is to draw upon combined power of youth and adults so that we can learn together in order to address the challenges and opportunities critical to youth in our communities.

4-H stresses three fundamental values: first, Mr. Speaker, we must treat others with mutual trust and respect and open and honest communication; second, we must assume personal leadership and responsibility for our actions; and third, we must celebrate our differences as well as our similarities and always realize that working with youth as partners is the key to our success.

Mr. Speaker, last week I met with several young people from my district, from western Wisconsin, who are in Washington on different trips, two of whom were here for the conference Voices Against Violence, and one was here with the National Young Leadership Conference which uses the 4-H facilities here in Washington for mock government sessions throughout the year.

What I found striking about these young people is their commitment to their communities and, whether con-

sciously or unconsciously, to the values and ideals fostered by the 4-H. Andy Slind of Boyceville, Wisconsin, told me he plans to continue working in his community during the last 2 years of his high school and would work to participate in some form of public service after college.

Mr. Speaker, our young people know they have a stake in their communities and want to help shape their futures. 4-H provides opportunities for such involvement, and it hones the values and skills we all cherish as Americans.

I am grateful for the opportunity to commemorate the 4-H today for personal reasons as well. I am a former 4-H club member myself. When I was a boy growing up in western Wisconsin, I loved and appreciated the time that I spent within my 4-H club.

4-H continues to play a central role in communities like mine. In fact, just on Saturday my local paper carried an article describing a man who was being honored for his dedication to 4-H. Bob Fredrick of Viroqua, Wisconsin, has been a 4-H youth development agent for 40 years. He started in 1957 at the age of 25 and decided to make the youth program his sole career. In honor of Bob's lifelong dedication to Vernon County youth, the community is establishing a special fund for youth programs in his name.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, over 6 million young people were involved in 4-H programs last year. In fact, nationwide 1 in 7 Americans have been involved in 4-H at some point during their lives. In fact, in addition to myself, three of my staffers here in Washington were 4-H members in their youth; and I would venture to guess that many others around Capitol Hill have experience with a 4-H club.

4-H was founded in 1902 and established in my home State of Wisconsin in 1914. There are currently over 2,000 4-H clubs in my State alone and almost 190,000 young people from Wisconsin that belong to 4-H clubs. Wisconsin was proud to host the National 4-H Dairy Conference this last September, which drew over 250 young people from around the United States and Canada to learn about new technologies and techniques in dairy farming. While many people associate 4-H with rural communities and agricultural issues, kids from cities and suburbs from all backgrounds belong to 4-H clubs. Through 4-H they study citizenship and civics, communications and arts, consumer and family issues, Earth and environmental science, technology and personal leadership.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be here today to commemorate 4-H and its contributions to American communities for the past 98 years. By pledging their heads to clearer thinking, their hearts to greater loyalty, their hands to larger service, and their health to better living, our young people, along with the adult volunteers who teach and help them, do work to strengthen their clubs, their communities, their countries and their world.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BARRETT).

Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for yielding this time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise also in strong support of the resolution being offered today in honor of the millions of young people who participate in the 4-H program. As my colleagues know, at a time when we are so concerned about youth who act in negative ways, I think it is fitting that we take a moment to honor young people who work to give back to their communities in positive ways through service, education, and leadership. Four-H is a major program in my State, tracing its roots back to the 1890s. In Nebraska more than 325,000 kids participate in the 4-H programs. That is almost 40 percent of the young people in my State.

But 4-H is not only about kids. In Nebraska, nearly 13,000 dedicated parents and group leaders take their time and their energy to work with young people and help kids have fun while they learn. With eight different curriculum areas ranging from the traditional areas such as livestock, livestock, and food preparation to innovative projects in communications arts and environmental stewardship, the 4-H program challenges kids to work together and with adults to learn new skills and develop lifelong interests and contribute to their communities.

The 4-H program offers youth the positive experiences, support, the challenges that they need to be successful and to develop into strong, competent, caring, and responsible citizens. I want to take this moment to especially commend the chapters in Nebraska and all chapters for that matter for their dedication to our communities. These young people and their parents and sponsors deserve our thanks, and they certainly deserve our applause.

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe I have any more requests for time on this side, so let me just conclude with a couple of personal notes. I do want to sincerely thank the gentleman from Georgia for giving us this opportunity today to honor the 4-H clubs. It brings back a lot of fond memories for myself.

I, as I indicated, participated in 4-H when I was 8, 9, and 10 years old growing up on the north side of La Crosse. It was not a rural area. It was an urban area. We had a wonderful program, though, that brings back memories of those who participated in it, not only the other kids in the neighborhoods that I was a member with, but the adults and the volunteers who participated in it, adults such as Mary Lou and John Rochester who are no longer

with us today; Mrs. Olsen and Mrs. Severson who took over the program to keep it going when the Rochesters could no longer do so; and the countless number of friends, lifelong friends, that I have today because of an organization like 4-H.

Now for those who are familiar with western Wisconsin and La Crosse would know that growing up on the north side of La Crosse was considered growing up on the other side of the railroad tracks. We had some pretty tough neighborhoods back then, and like many youth do today, we were confronted with a lot of choices and a lot of options, some good, some not so good.

At that time in my life I was just starting to get involved in another group called the Kane Street Killers, and we were arch rivals with the North Side Jack Rabbits. I guess according to today's terms they would be considered gang or gang affiliates, and we had rumbles. We would elude police officers with our youthful pranks and childish antics.

But looking back now at my own childhood, I really was at the crossroads of having to decide which way to go, and but for an organization such as 4-H or the Boys and Girls Club of the greater La Crosse area, I think many of us kids who hung out with the Kane Street Killers could have taken decidedly different routes in our lives. It was because of an organization that offered a structured learning environment like 4-H and many of the community activities that we were involved with, annual food drives during the holiday season to collect some food for the food shelters in the area, a community garden where we would grow food and share with senior centers, a softball team that we participated in that gave a lot of us a good outlet for our pent-up energies, those positive activities in our lives kept many of us out of trouble.

□ 1515

I remember participating in the musical "Oklahoma" when I was 10 years old. For me that was probably the most frightening moment of my young life, having to stand in front of people and try to carry a tune. It was not a very pretty sight, but, nevertheless, looking back on it now, it was a learning and growing experience for me. Because of that, I can honestly say here today that many of us were channeled into more constructive, more educational-oriented arenas, rather than pursuing different options on the street on the north side of La Crosse.

Again, let me conclude by thanking the gentleman from Georgia, and also thanking the thousands of individuals, the adults, the parents and uncles and aunts, grandparents, the neighbors from across the country, the volunteers, who are giving part of their busy lives to 4-H and to the kids participating in 4-H in order to provide this type of alternative option in young people's lives. I think it does perform a

very important and vital role in our society as we try to raise our kids in this Nation with the best opportunities possible.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA).

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 194, which deals with the 4-H Clubs and their service to the community. I happen to have the honor of representing the National Headquarters of the 4-H Clubs, and I have seen the kind of work that they have done.

We all know the roots of 4-H began at the turn of the century. Educators began introducing nature study as a way of getting young people interested in agriculture. The four-leaf clover that we know so well, that design with the H's, appeared around 1908. They stand for Head, Heart, Hands, and Hustle: Head trained to think, plan and reason; heart trained to be true, kind and sympathetic; hands trained to be useful, helpful and skillful; and the hustle to render ready service to develop health and vitality.

Today, more than 6.5 million youth are involved in 4-H Clubs nationwide. Twenty-seven percent of the young people involved in 4-H are from a minority racial or ethnic group.

These 4-H programs vary from state to state. Some involve after-school activities and tutoring in inner city public housing communities. Others involve teaching youth about the environment, how to develop and implement a project in their community that will help to solve an environmental issue. We see many examples of these projects at an annual agricultural fair that we have in Montgomery County, Maryland, which is typical of what is happening all over the country under the auspices of 4-H direction.

Whether they are fighting poverty in the inner cities, or combating HIV epidemics, 4-H volunteers are making a difference. They want to help others.

Volunteerism is an American tradition. Concern for others, working together to meet the social challenges of American society, embodies the very best of American values.

Every American has the capacity to reach out to others, to enrich his or her community, and to make a difference. In the act of serving, these 4-H volunteers often find that they make a difference in their own lives. Through volunteering, they develop their own knowledge, skills and character, and they build relationships with people they might not have known otherwise.

Again, I reiterate, I am proud of 4-H, I am proud of the 4-H headquarters in Chevy Chase, Maryland, I am proud of the staff at the headquarters. I have been very much involved with many of their activities focused on Citizenship

Washington and other activities where they have brought young people in from all over the country.

There are some people I want to mention. Trina Batte, Janet Hand, Jenna Carter, Loretta Espey, Sylvia Gould, and I could go on and on. These are but a few of the names of the staff members that work at the headquarters. So I am pleased to praise all of the wonderful people who work not only at the headquarters in Chevy Chase, but the volunteers and those people that work for 4-H throughout the country. They do make a difference.

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would first of all like to thank my staff person, Peter Dale, for his work in bringing this resolution to the floor. He has been involved in 4-H, as has his family.

As has been reiterated by others, I have been involved in 4-H. My oldest daughter was a National 4-H Citizenship Winner, and in my local community we have people who are volunteering their time through an adult organization sponsoring scholarships through the 4-H program so young people can get a college education. My State is indeed fortunate to have one of the premier State 4-H educational and recreational facilities, known as Rock Eagle, in the State of Georgia. Many young people pass through that facility each year and are enriched by the experiences that they receive.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would simply urge the favorable adoption of this resolution as a recognition of the outstanding contributions that the 4-H Clubs have made to our communities and to our country. I would urge favorable adoption of the resolution.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 194. For nearly a century, 4-H has been helping the children of this Nation "learn by doing." As the largest youth organization in the United States, 4-H educates children through practical, hands-on methods that emphasize life skills. It is difficult to point to another organization that has had a comparable positive impact on America's youth. Since its inception in the early 1900s, more than 45 million Americans have participated in 4-H. In my home state alone, 4-H is currently helping over 252,000 young people improve their self-confidence and learn important skills such as leadership, citizenship, and decision-making that can be applied over a lifetime. Originally founded as an agricultural youth organization, the 4-H program is no longer limited to rural communities. 4-H clubs are thriving in urban centers across the country, teaching inner city kids the same values and self confidence that have helped so many rural youth. Today, kids from all walks of life can learn to design web pages, participate in mock legislatures, and organize community clean-ups. 4-H continues to work toward the development of youth as individuals and as responsible and productive citizens. I urge you to join me in supporting this resolution.

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOODLATTE). The question is on the

motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 194.

The question was taken.

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 194.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

#### AUTHORIZING PAY ADJUSTMENTS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 915) to authorize a cost of living adjustment in the pay of administrative law judges, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 915

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. PAY OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES.

*Section 5372(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—*

*(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting "(A)" after "(1)" and by striking all after the first sentence and inserting the following:*

*"(B) Within level AL-3, there shall be 6 rates of basic pay, designated as AL-3, rates A through F, respectively. Level AL-2 and level AL-1 shall each have 1 rate of basic pay.*

*"(C) The rate of basic pay for AL-3, rate A, may not be less than 65 percent of the rate of basic pay for level IV of the Executive Schedule, and the rate of basic pay for AL-1 may not exceed the rate for level IV of the Executive Schedule."*

*(2) in paragraph (3)(A), by striking "upon" each time it appears and inserting "at the beginning of the next pay period following"; and*

*(3) by adding at the end the following:*

*"(4) Subject to paragraph (1), effective at the beginning of the first applicable pay period commencing on or after the first day of the month in which an adjustment takes effect under section 5303 in the rates of basic pay under the General Schedule, each rate of basic pay for administrative law judges shall be adjusted by an amount determined by the President to be appropriate."*

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 915, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 915, sponsored by my esteemed colleague the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS). H.R. 915 is a bipartisan bill to reform the process for setting the pay of the Federal Government's administrative law judges, otherwise known as ALJs. The Federal Government employs over 1,400 administrative law judges. Their work is crucial and very important to the Federal Government's operations. ALJs decide important cases, ranging from the Social Security complaints of senior citizens to complex securities litigation.

In order to recruit and retain qualified administrative law judges, steps must be taken to ensure their pay remains competitive. Regrettably, circumstances are making this difficult. Each grade and step of the current ALJ pay schedule is rigidly set as a fixed percentage of Level IV of the Executive Schedule. As a result, pay increases for ALJs have lagged behind those of their colleagues under the general schedule or in the Senior Executive Service.

This situation creates a disincentive for highly qualified attorneys, both in the Federal Government and in the private sector, to compete and apply for these important positions. The disincentive is particularly acute for private sector attorneys. While they must generally start at the bottom of the ALJ pay scale, government attorneys at least have the option to keep a comparable salary when they become ALJs.

By reforming the pay-setting process, H.R. 915 will make ALJ positions more attractive for attorneys across the board. Although the bill retains the current grade and step structure for ALJs, H.R. 915 provides the President with more flexibility to adjust ALJ pay. Rather than link each grade and step to a specific percentage of Level IV of the Executive Schedule, H.R. 915 simply establishes minimum and maximum rates of pay for ALJs. These are the same as the current minimum of 65 percent of Level IV and the current maximum of 100 percent of Level IV.

H.R. 915 also authorizes the President to adjust ALJ pay rates below the maximum when employees under the general schedule receive an annual pay adjustment. This mirrors the authority the President now has to adjust the pay of the Senior Executive Service.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this chance to offer H.R. 915 for consideration by the House. I encourage the support of all Members.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.