

seen such double counting since the White House wacky plan to use sampling and educated guesses for the census.

Mr. Speaker, the President's spending numbers are pure fiction. His Social Security numbers are even worse. How does one take seriously a plan that double counts to the tune of \$2.4 trillion? Even Newsweek and the Washington Post are having a good laugh about that.

Unfortunately, the retirement security of seniors should not be subject to phony numbers and accounting gimmicks that even Orange County, California could not get away with.

Let us put the trust back in the Social Security Trust Fund.

ALL AMERICANS WILL GET TO SEE THEIR STATE OR TERRITORY ON THE BACK OF A QUARTER THANKS TO THE GENTLEMAN FROM ALABAMA (MR. BACHUS)

(Ms. NORTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Delaware, the first State whose design appears on the back of a quarter. This follows a bill we passed last year allowing this privilege to every State, privileges to deficit reduction. Every State gets a turn at its own design except the District of Columbia and the four territories who were somehow left out.

We are American citizens every bit as much as the residents of the 50 States thanks to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS), who has cosponsored a bill to allow the District of Columbia and the territories to be added. All American citizens will get to see their State, their territory or their District of Columbia design on the back of a quarter.

Mr. Speaker, we welcome the help of the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS) and ask that this bill come to the floor soon so that we can cure this oversight.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 15, 1999.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 5 of Rule III of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, I have the honor to transmit a sealed envelope received from the White House on March 15, 1999 at 4:44 p.m. and said to contain a message from the President whereby he submits a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Iran.

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

JEFF TRANDAHL.

CONTINUING NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO IRAN—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 106-40)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on International Relations and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c), section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), and section 505(c) of the International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1985, 22 U.S.C. 2349aa-9(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Iran that was declared in Executive Order 12957 of March 15, 1995.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.
THE WHITE HOUSE, March 15, 1999.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the provisions of clause 8, rule XX, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken later today.

WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER AMENDMENTS ACT OF 1999

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 774) to amend the Small Business Act to change the conditions of participation and provide an authorization of appropriations for the women's business center program, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 774

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999".

SEC. 2. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 29(c)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656(c)(1)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A) by inserting "and" after the semicolon at the end; and

(2) by striking subparagraphs (B) and (C) and inserting the following:

"(B) in the third, fourth, and fifth years, 1 non-Federal dollar for each Federal dollar.".

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendments made by this section shall apply beginning October 1, 1998.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Section 29(k)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656(k)(1)) is amended by striking "8,000,000" and inserting "11,000,000".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY).

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

Today the House considers H.R. 774, the Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999. As a member of the Committee on Small Business, I know how important this bill is to Members on both sides of the aisle and to some small business women throughout the Nation. The committee held a hearing in early February and thoroughly examined this program before drafting the legislation. The committee marked up H.R. 774 and unanimously passed it on February 25.

Before I take a moment to explain the bill, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the ranking member of the Committee on Small Business, my colleague from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) as well as the rest of my friends from the Democratic side of the aisle for their commitment to this issue and their help in moving this legislation forward.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues know, March is Women's History Month. Throughout March we honor women who have dedicated their lives to improving the position of women society, and we celebrate the achievements of women throughout history. While this month we celebrate the accomplishments of the past, today we have the opportunity to promote the success of thousands of women in the future. The ability of women-owned businesses to flourish is crucial to our Nation's economic future.

Consider some of the following statistics. Women entrepreneurs are starting two-thirds of all small businesses in this country. Women-owned businesses are growing at twice the rate of all other businesses. Women own nearly 40 percent of all businesses in the United States of America.

I have been a small business owner, and I know both the joy and heartbreak that comes from owning a business. Additionally, as chair of the Congressional Women's Caucus, I have heard much from women who want to succeed in the business world. They will do so if given a chance. Consequently, this Congress has a responsibility to do all we can to support the growing economic force of women business owners.

One way in which we can do this is to support the Women's Business Center Program at the U.S. Small Business Administration. Women's business centers play a major role in empowering women entrepreneurs with the tools necessary to succeed in business. Right

now there are more than 60 women's business centers operating in almost 40 States.

□ 1115

Whether it is targeting low income women, assisting women to focus their business plans through courses on workshops, or providing information on access to capital, these centers tailor their services to the communities they serve.

The bottom line is that women's business centers contribute to the success of thousands of women entrepreneurs by enhancing their management capacity and capability and offering the critical community infrastructure necessary for them to succeed in today's business climate.

The women's business center program is funded through the Small Business Administration. It began as a demonstration program in 1988. In 1993, the program received only \$1.5 million per year. By 1997, Congress recognized the program's growth and success and made the program permanent. It also increased the program's authorization level to \$8 million per year.

In the 106th Congress, the committee has continued its interest and oversight in the program. As part of this process, it became clear that while the program was expanding to States that do not currently have centers, existing centers were experiencing obstacles to their own growth. We also found that the existing authorization level did not adequately meet the needs of the program.

H.R. 774 addresses both of these concerns. First, H.R. 774 changes the funding ratio in the fifth year of funding to ease the fund-raising burden on centers entering their final year of Federal funding. In the past, federally funded centers had to raise two non-Federal dollars to obtain one Federal dollar in their fifth and final year of funding.

Some sites, particularly those located in rural areas, have limited access to foundations, corporations and banks that provide the private funds used to match the Federal funds. H.R. 774 eases this fund-raising burden by changing the ratio of funding to one non-Federal dollar for every one Federal dollar.

Second, H.R. 774 increases the authorization of appropriations to \$11 million in order to support expansion of the program in fiscal year 2000. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 774 is not controversial legislation. The bill was passed by the Committee on Small Business unanimously.

I would like to thank the chairman, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT) for his efforts on this legislation. I would also like to again thank the ranking member, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and the entire Committee on Small Business for their bipartisan work on this legislation. I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 774.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 774, the Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999, legislation that I introduced in committee with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY), the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. SCHAKOWSKY), the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. BONO), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL), the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. MC CHRISTENSEN), the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA). It is fitting that this bill, which will help America's women entrepreneurs succeed, is before the House during Women's History Month.

I thank the Members of the Committee on Small Business for their support of this bill. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the chairman of the Committee on Small Business, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT), for all of his hard work on this legislation and for being such a strong supporter of the women's business center program.

My colleagues, the face of American business is changing. Over the past 2 decades, we have seen phenomenal growth in the number of women-owned businesses. In 1976, women owned just 6 percent of this country's businesses. Today, that number has grown to over 35 percent. That is over 8 million businesses nationwide. By the year 2000, it is expected that one out of every two businesses will be owned by a woman. That is a remarkable transformation and one which will help more Americans achieve the American dream.

In order to help women achieve this goal, however, we must provide them with the skills necessary to compete in the global economy of the 21st century. This is why the women's business center program is so important. These centers provide a broad range of services, including training and counseling, to women in the area of finance, management and marketing. Currently, the program serves an average of 2,000 women in 36 states and results in economic development, new jobs, increased earning potential and a larger pool of skilled entrepreneurs. Thanks to this program, countless women entrepreneurs have opened or expanded their own business.

The women's business center program becomes even more important when you realize its potential for helping women move from welfare to work. Women on public assistance often want to start their own business but lack the training and support necessary to accomplish this goal. Women's business centers show them how to turn their skills and knowledge into a viable business. By providing business counseling and technical assistance, women's cen-

ters are helping women entrepreneurs break the cycle of poverty and become economically self-sufficient. This is one of the many remarkable stories of this program.

Today's legislation, H.R. 774, does two important things to help the women's business center program. First, it increases the authorization level to \$11 million for fiscal year 2000. This increase of \$3 million over the previous authorization level will ensure the continued growth of this initiative. One of the original goals of this program was to give women in all 50 states access to the business training and programs that they need to become their own boss. By providing an additional \$3 million, not only will we be helping existing centers but we can open new facilities in currently underserved areas. That means that more women will be able to work toward the goal of self-employment.

The second part of this legislation reduces the requirement in the fifth year of funding. Currently, women's business centers are required to raise two non-Federal dollars for every Federal dollar they receive. In some cases, centers have been forced to cut back on valuable services because they have not been able to raise the money needed to drawdown the full amount. Reducing the fifth year match to a one-to-one ratio, one Federal dollar for every one non-Federal dollar, will allow these valuable entrepreneurial training services to continue without interruption. This is a step that will benefit everyone.

The legislation before us today represents an important investment in the future of our country. As more and more women decide to become their own boss these centers will provide them with the resources and training they need to achieve this goal. No one can deny that women have come a long way in this country, but more needs to be done. With women entrepreneurs playing a critical role in the economic health of our Nation, we must make sure that they have access to the tools they need for success. The public-private partnership of the women's business center program helps meet this critical need and today's legislation represents an important step in making sure that we continue to move forward with this program and empowering our Nation's women. I strongly support this legislation and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. BONO).

Mrs. BONO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 774, the Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999. As a business woman, I share a kindred spirit with the entrepreneurial females of today. Anyone, be it a man or a woman, who strikes it on their own takes a certain amount of risk.

Not only can you lose your investment if your business does not succeed but also your pride and spirit. So it is comforting to know that there is a resource for women to turn to when they choose to start or expand their business.

With women owning nearly 40 percent of all firms in the United States, it is obvious we have come a long way towards achieving equity in the business world. Through programs such as the women's business centers and the hard work of the business women themselves, maybe government assistance will not even be necessary in the near future. Congress can play a vital role in helping women help themselves and achieve this goal of self sufficiency. Currently, women's business centers must raise two non-Federal dollars to obtain one Federal dollar in their fifth and final year of funding. By changing the ratio to one Federal dollar for one non-Federal dollar, we can help these centers achieve an even higher level of success.

While we must continue to reassess this program and how it is best administered, I am confident that at this point the women's business centers need and deserve our support.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to pass this important piece of legislation.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, the good news in our economy today is the booming sector of women-owned businesses. We are seeing a dramatic increase. Let me give you a couple of numbers from the State of Illinois, my State.

As of 1996, there were nearly 337,000 women-owned businesses in Illinois employing nearly 950,000, almost a million people, and generating \$119.8 billion in sales.

During the period of 1987 and 1996, the National Federation of Women-Owned Businesses estimates that the number of women-owned firms in Illinois has increased by 75 percent, and that employment has grown by 201 percent and sales have risen 252 percent, a pretty good record.

In Chicago, we have the Women's Business Development Center, an organization that I have worked with for many years and watched the kind of nurturing they do of women-owned businesses. They provide counseling, entrepreneurial training, financial assistance, loan packaging, certification of women business enterprises, procurement assistance at the State and local and Federal levels and they also do advocacy on women's economic empowerment.

The majority of the clients of the Women's Business Development Center are low income women. Fifty-three percent are women of color and much of their work helps women with self-employment and microenterprise de-

velopment, and they also provide assistance to women who have formerly been on welfare. So we are saying that they are providing women the ladder of economic opportunity.

In my own town, I have an example of a business that was assisted by the Women's Business Development Center. It is not really a very dramatic story but it is the kind of work that they do every single day. A woman named Victoria Fonseca came to the Women's Business Development Center in November of 1997 with a desire to open an establishment that is a wine bar, a bistro and a wine retail store. She had some experience in the business but had not worked for herself at all, had not established her own enterprise.

She went to the Women's Business Development Center, who assisted her in developing a business plan and the development of realistic projections. The women's business development center packaged the loan for the Small Business Administration women's pre-qualification loan program, and they got that. There were many bumps along the road in finding a location, in finding a bank that would accept it, and all the way the Women's Business Development Center was holding her hand and leading her through the process.

Finally, a location was found in downtown Evanston and it required redoing the projections to ensure that the original loan amount was sufficient.

Finally, last month the Sustained Glass, an enterprise in Evanston, was opened up and opened for business and, again, is just one example of the many businesses that have been assisted by the Women's Business Development Center.

□ 1130

So I would encourage support of this bill, the increase in funding, the increase in ability to access these dollars, so that we can see more good news for our economic sector, and business development.

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

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would again urge my colleagues to support H.R. 774, the Women's Business Center Amendments Act.

As we stand at the dawn of the 21st century and think about the future, this bill embodies the potential that the next millennium holds for all of us. It is a bill that will help women continue to realize their full potential and take a bold step into the future, and now is the time to act.

As our economy continues to bloom, the need for more and more skilled businesswomen and entrepreneurs becomes of paramount importance. Women's business centers are vital in assuring that all segments of our economy are able to take advantage of the current time of prosperity.

By providing women entrepreneurs with the training they need to move to economic independence, we help communities throughout our country grow. In my district in North Brooklyn, many women entrepreneurs and small businesses are poised to start or expand their businesses. All they need is access to some of the technical information and training services that are available through SBA. Today, by expanding the women's business centers, we will take a step toward unlocking that untapped potential in neighborhoods throughout the country.

The type of work done by women's business centers is a catalyst for success. Women's business centers take the promise of potential and turn it into the reality of results, and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this measure. It is an initiative that will have a lasting positive impact for the economic strength of our communities, both now and in the future.

Mrs. McCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my support for the Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999. This important piece of legislation will continue to help women business owners obtain the necessary tools needed to succeed in the competitive business environment.

Women business owners have historically been under-served, or even excluded, from past legislation aimed at assisting small businesses. This is unfortunate because women are starting businesses at twice the rate of all businesses. They employ over 23 million people within the United States and contribute well over \$3 trillion to the economy. Yet they still encounter obstacles when trying to foster their growth.

The Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999 directly addresses this concern by providing the technical assistance, and training needed to gain access to credit and capital needed to launch a new business. Since 1988 these centers have proven their usefulness by tailoring their services to the particular needs of the community. Even today, they continue to find more effective ways to serve aspiring women entrepreneurs, from inner cities to rural areas across the country.

Given the proven success of this program, and the positive impact it has on surrounding communities, I fully support the need to increase funding for this program, along with changing the fifth year matching requirement for federal support. The SBA has stated that it is their goal to have a Women's Business Center in every state. Voting in support of this legislation will greatly enhance the chances of this becoming a reality.

Mr. PHELPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 774, the Women's Business Center Amendment Act. This valuable program provides women entrepreneurs with assistance in running their business, receiving access to capital and other support they need to succeed.

The number of women business owners is increasing—by the year 2000 it is expected that one out of every two businesses will be owned by a woman. As women continue to open businesses at twice the rate of men, those numbers are only expected to grow. It is vital that we strengthen this program to help

create opportunities for women across the country and ensure they can take advantage of them.

H.R. 774 improves the Small Business Administration's Women's Business Center Program by increasing the authorization for funding by \$3 million for Fiscal Year 2000, and reducing the amount of private funding that centers are required to have in their fifth and final year of operation. These two changes will strengthen this valuable program by providing additional funds so more Women's Business Centers can be opened and existing centers can continue to offer a variety of services in their fifth year.

This legislation will benefit the nineteenth district of Illinois by helping rural women business owners and promoting economic development, and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important measure.

Mrs. CAPPES. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in strong support of H.R. 774, the Women's Business Center Amendments Act.

In addition to reauthorizing this important program, this bill will increase funding for the Small Business Administration's Women's Business Center program by \$3 million. I strongly support the vision of this program as well as the increase in funding levels.

Providing assistance and services to women considering entrepreneurial endeavors is vital to the success of the economy of the 22nd District of Columbia and our entire nation. On the Central Coast, 80% of all business activity is generated by small business, and many of these businesses are run by women. Assisting small businesses, and ensuring that the doors of economic opportunity are open to all women, are priorities for me in Congress.

Currently, there are only 60 Women's Business Centers in 36 states, but many more are needed. At this time, women in my congressional district must travel over 100 miles to reach a center, and for many this distance precludes them from availing themselves of those resources. By increasing the funding for this program, we will be able to reach out to the many women that are now underserved on the Central Coast and throughout the nation.

Women's Business Centers assists women entrepreneurs at all levels of business development by teaching the principles of finance, management and marketing. The program has demonstrated particular success with low-income, single and minority women.

The assistance provided at Women's Business Centers enables women to fight poverty by giving them the tools to become self-sufficient, successful business owners who are leaders in their communities.

I strongly urge my colleagues to pass this bill and support the Women's Business Center program.

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

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support H.R. 774, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LINDELL). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 774, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mrs. KELLY. 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

Mrs. KELLY. 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. 774, the bill just considered.

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

There was no objection.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURT EMPLOYEES WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT OF 1999

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 858) to amend title 11, District of Columbia Code, to extend coverage under the whistleblower protection provisions of the District of Columbia Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act of 1978 to personnel of the courts of the District of Columbia.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 858

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "District of Columbia Court Employees Whistleblower Protection Act of 1999".

SEC. 2. WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION FOR PERSONNEL OF THE COURTS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 17 of title 11, District of Columbia Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 11-1733. Whistleblower protection for court personnel

"Notwithstanding any other provision of law, section 1503 of the District of Columbia Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act of 1978 (DC Code, sec. 1-616.3) shall apply to court personnel, except that court personnel may institute a civil action pursuant to subsection (c) of such section in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia or the United States District Court for the District of Columbia."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for subchapter II of chapter 17 of title 11, District of Columbia Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

"11-1733. Whistleblower protection for court personnel."

SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The amendments made by section 2 shall take effect as if included in the enactment of title XI of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. DAVIS of Virginia asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks, and include extraneous material.)

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 858 is a straightforward, bipartisan bill. It simply levels the playing field by providing employees of the D.C. Superior Court, many of whom are my constituents, the same whistleblower protections that are enjoyed by other city employees under the District's Merit Personnel Act. It is also in accordance with the protections which cover employees in the Federal court system. The only additional option we are providing for any claimants, for obvious reasons, is the possibility of seeking relief in either the local or the Federal courts.

The reason we need this bill, and we need to pass it in an expeditious fashion, is because of an ongoing GAO study of the financial and budgetary practices of the District of Columbia courts. At my request, management practices are being included in the GAO study.

On January 26, 1999, I joined with the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK), the chairman of the Subcommittee on the District of Columbia of the Committee on Appropriations, and the ranking member of that subcommittee, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN), in encouraging the Superior Court to urge employees who may have information useful to the GAO auditors to step forward without fear of retaliation. These assurances were provided in the form of administrative orders. We are grateful for such assurances. The bill is intended to provide statutory guarantees that can back up the court's order. It also plugs a loophole in the law that would help to ensure that Congress and others will continue to get the most candid and accurate information.

It is obviously very important that when Congress asks for a GAO study, that GAO auditors be in a position to get the answers that they seek. Otherwise, Congress could be basing its subsequent oversight and legislation on misleading data. H.R. 858 would help to guarantee the integrity of the information Congress will be receiving.

The D.C. Superior Court has over 1,000 employees and an annual budget of over \$128 million. Whistleblower protection is by now a time-honored method of uncovering waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement. It should also be noted that Title XI of the D.C. Code, which this bill amends, is the sole prerogative of Congress to change under the Home Rule Act.

I would emphasize that this legislation should not be misconstrued to cast any aspersions on those responsible for the sound management of the D.C. Superior Court. We are merely backing up the Court's own directives by providing routine protections which are overdue and which could help the GAO and Congress to receive the most accurate information.