

Rosa Parks receive the Congressional Gold Medal.

But I must add Mr. Speaker, that today, our nation continues to call for equality and freedom. There are still issues in our America that were issues in 1955. There are still Americans who do not enjoy the promises enumerated in the constitution. So, if we are to truly honor this great woman, we must do so, not only with a Gold Medal, but also with actions that further her purpose. We must all become individuals working to end the discrimination and inequalities that exist in our great nation.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and honor the mother of the civil rights movement, Mrs. Rosa Parks.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 573. At the same time, I rise in great respect for the courage and high ideals of Rosa Parks who stood steadfastly for the rights of individuals against unjust laws and oppressive governmental policies. However, I oppose the Congressional Gold Medal for Rosa Parks Act because authorizing \$30,000 of taxpayer money is neither constitutional nor, in the spirit of Rosa Parks who is widely recognized and admired for standing up against an overbearing government infringing on individual rights.

Because of my continuing and uncompromising opposition to appropriations not authorized within the enumerated powers of the Constitution, I must remain consistent in my defense of a limited government whose powers are explicitly delimited under the enumerated powers of the Constitution—a Constitution, which only months ago, each Member of Congress, swore to uphold.

Perhaps we should begin a debate among us on more appropriate processes by which we spend other people's money. Honorary medals and commemorative coins, under the current process, come from allocated other people's money. We should look for another way.

It is, of course, easier to be generous with other people's money.

Mr. LAFALCE. Mr. Speaker, I offer my enthusiastic support to H.R. 573, a bill to authorize the President of the United States to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress to Rosa Parks in recognition of her contribution to the nation.

In recent years, the Congress has bestowed this important honor to Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa and Frank Sinatra. In their own way, each of these individuals has made significant social contributions. Moving beyond their basic roles as a political figure, a nun, and a musician, these Congressional Medal recipients have, by deed and example, influenced history.

The life of Rosa Parks and her heroic act of defiance on a Montgomery, Alabama bus on December 1, 1955, have forever changed history for millions of Americans. Few Americans can be more deserving of the Congressional Gold Medal. Rosa Parks's contribution to our society goes far beyond what she did one day in Montgomery, Alabama. From that day on, Rosa Parks has spent her life fighting for equity and justice, including her roles as the founder of the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development to offer guidance to young African-Americans in preparation for leadership careers.

Having recently celebrated her 86th birthday, Rosa Parks deserves the thanks of the

American public for decades of dedication to the cause of racial equality. By her own admission, the "mother of the civil rights movement" is still uncomfortable with the accolades she has received over the years. In remains, however, our obligation as the elected representatives of our nation to single out those among us who deserve special recognition as role models for our society. Today, we have such an opportunity. By supporting the resolution before us we honor the principles that are the foundation of the American democracy.

I am pleased to cast an "aye" vote on the legislation before us and honor a most deserving recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Mr. DIXON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues in honoring Mrs. Rosa Parks. As we approach the millennium, it is fitting that we bestow the Congressional gold medal on a woman whose simple, but profound response to unfairness marked a defining moment in our American century.

I offer the words of another of this century's courageous Americans as a tribute to Rosa Parks. As he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had this to say:

"I [have] an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history. I refuse to accept the idea that the 'isness' of man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal 'oughtness' that forever confronts him. I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life, unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him."

Mrs. Parks' courage to reach up for the "oughtness" before her continues half a century later to inspire others who refuse to accept the "ambiguities of history." Mrs. Parks, we thank you for your profound contribution to our nation.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues in recognizing Rosa Parks, whom by her brave action became a catalyst in the Civil Rights Movement. When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus on December 1, 1955, no one realized the national impact her actions would have. Rosa Parks was simply one courageous woman who did what she believed was fair and right. She is a testament to the power of one individual willing to fight for her beliefs.

"Ms. Parks' actions set the Civil Rights Movement in motion and set a precedence for protest without violence. I would like to thank Rosa Parks for her contribution to freedom and justice for all men and women in this country. Her actions changed the course of history. Today Rosa Parks will take her rightful place among the legends of history when Congress presents her with the Congressional Medal of Honor."

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in tribute to Rosa Parks and in support of a bill introduced by Congresswoman JULIA CARSON of Indiana to authorize President Clinton to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Rosa Parks.

Rosa Parks was the spark that lit the fire in the civil rights movement. In 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama Ms. Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man. She was arrested and ordered to pay \$14. Her actions

led other civil rights leaders to protest bus desegregation creating a city-wide boycott. Martin Luther King, Jr. became a household name when he became involved in the boycott by preaching to others about the injustice of the bus segregation policy.

Ms. Parks continued to be a national civil rights leader even after the success of the bus boycott. She lectured about the civil rights movement and attended demonstrations. She worked for Congressman JOHN CONYERS of Detroit, Michigan until 1988.

Congress should recognize Ms. Parks for her actions that defied the policies of separation and humiliation. Through this legislation, Congress should salute Ms. Parks for her current work in combating racism at the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute of Self Development which teaches young people about the legacy of the civil rights movement.

Because of Rosa Parks' courage, I stand before you here today. Because of her courage, America is a stronger nation.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation. I am proud to serve in a Congress that recognizes the importance of the civil rights movement and is willing to honor a woman who ushered in the movement. Our past should not be forgotten and our heroines should be honored.

I hope that this legislation will serve to bring America together. That is Ms. Parks' legacy.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 573, as amended.

The question was taken.

Ms. WATERS. 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. BACHUS. 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. 573.

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

There was no objection.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

ALLOWING FOR CONTRIBUTIONS OF CERTAIN ROLLOVER DISTRIBUTIONS TO ACCOUNTS AND ELIMINATING CERTAIN WAITING-PERIOD REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the

bill (H.R. 208) to amend title 5, United States Code, to allow for the contribution of certain rollover distributions to accounts in the Thrift Savings Plan, to eliminate certain waiting-period requirements for participating in the Thrift Savings Plan, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 208

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

SECTION 1. ELIGIBLE ROLLOVER DISTRIBUTIONS.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Section 8432 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(j)(1) For the purpose of this subsection—

“(A) the term ‘eligible rollover distribution’ has the meaning given such term by section 402(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; and

“(B) the term ‘qualified trust’ has the meaning given such term by section 402(c)(8) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

“(2) An employee or Member may contribute to the Thrift Savings Fund an eligible rollover distribution from a qualified trust. A contribution made under this subsection shall be made in the form described in section 401(a)(31) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. In the case of an eligible rollover distribution, the maximum amount transferred to the Thrift Savings Fund shall not exceed the amount which would otherwise have been included in the employee’s or Member’s gross income for Federal income tax purposes.

“(3) The Executive Director shall prescribe regulations to carry out this subsection.”.

(b) *EFFECTIVE DATE.*—The amendment made by this section shall take effect on October 1, 2000, or such earlier date as the Executive Director (as defined by section 8401 of title 5, United States Code) may by regulation prescribe, but not before September 1, 2000.

SEC. 2. IMMEDIATE PARTICIPATION IN THE THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN.

(a) *ELIMINATION OF CERTAIN WAITING PERIODS FOR PURPOSES OF EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS.*—Paragraph (4) of section 8432(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(4) The Executive Director shall prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to carry out the following:

“(A) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A) of paragraph (2), an employee or Member described in such subparagraph shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to first make an election under this subsection beginning on the date of commencing service or, if that is not administratively feasible, beginning on the earliest date thereafter that such an election becomes administratively feasible, as determined by the Executive Director.

“(B) An employee or Member described in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (2) shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to first make an election under this subsection (based on the appointment or election described in such subparagraph) beginning on the date of commencing service pursuant to such appointment or election or, if that is not administratively feasible, beginning on the earliest date thereafter that such an election becomes administratively feasible, as determined by the Executive Director.

“(C) Notwithstanding the preceding provisions of this paragraph, contributions under paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (c) shall not be payable with respect to any pay period before the earliest pay period for which such contributions would otherwise be allowable under this subsection if this paragraph had not been enacted.

“(D) Sections 8351(a)(2), 8440a(a)(2), 8440b(a)(2), 8440c(a)(2), and 8440d(a)(2) shall be

applied in a manner consistent with the purposes of subparagraphs (A) and (B), to the extent those subparagraphs can be applied with respect thereto.

“(E) Nothing in this paragraph shall affect paragraph (3).”.

(b) *TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.*—(1) Section 8432(a) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in the first sentence by striking “(b)(1)” and inserting “(b)”;

(B) by amending the second sentence to read as follows: “Contributions under this subsection pursuant to such an election shall, with respect to each pay period for which such election remains in effect, be made in accordance with a program of regular contributions provided in regulations prescribed by the Executive Director.”.

(2) Section 8432(b)(1)(B) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting “(or any election allowable by virtue of paragraph (4))” after “subparagraph (A)”.

(3) Section 8432(b)(3) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking “Notwithstanding paragraph (2)(A), an” and inserting “An”.

(4) Section 8439(a)(1) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting “who makes contributions or” after “for each individual” and by striking “section 8432(c)(1)” and inserting “section 8432”.

(5) Section 8439(c)(2) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following: “Nothing in this paragraph shall be considered to limit the dissemination of information only to the times required under the preceding sentence.”.

(6) Sections 8440a(a)(2) and 8440d(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code, are amended by striking all after “subject to” and inserting “this chapter.”.

(c) *EFFECTIVE DATE.*—

(1) *IN GENERAL.*—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on October 1, 2000, or such earlier date as the Executive Director (as defined by section 8401 of title 5, United States Code) may by regulation prescribe, but not before September 1, 2000.

(2) *SAVINGS PROVISION.*—Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, until the amendments made by this section take effect, title 5, United States Code, shall be applied as if this section had not been enacted.

SEC. 3. ADDITIONAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTIONS FOR RETIREMENT.

(a) *FEDERAL EMPLOYEES’ RETIREMENT SYSTEM.*—Section 8423(a) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(5) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, effective with respect to contributions for pay periods beginning on or after October 1, 2000, the normal-cost percentage used for purposes of any computation under this subsection shall be equal to—

“(A) the percentage that would otherwise apply if this paragraph had not been enacted, plus

“(B) .01 of 1 percentage point.”.

(b) *SUPPLEMENTAL LIABILITY.*—For purposes of applying section 8423(b) of title 5, United States Code, and section 857(b) of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (22 U.S.C. 4071f(b)), all amounts shall be determined as if this section had never been enacted.

(c) *LIMITATION ON SOURCE OF ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS.*—Notwithstanding section 8423(a)(3) of title 5, United States Code, or any other provision of law, the additional Government contributions required to be made by reason of the amendment made by subsection (a) shall be made out of any amounts available to the employing agency involved, other than any appropriation, fund, or other amounts available for the payment of employee salaries or benefits.

(d) *CONFORMING AMENDMENT.*—Section 307 of the Federal Employees’ Retirement System Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-335; 5 U.S.C. 8401 note)

is amended by inserting “, including the additional amount required under section 8423(a)(5)(B) of such title 5,” after “Federal Employees’ Retirement System”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill, H.R. 208.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 208. H.R. 208 would achieve two worthwhile objectives. First, it would allow newly hired Federal employees to begin contributing their own money to the Thrift Savings Plan, the Federal Government’s 401(k) plan, almost immediately. Second, Federal employees would be able to consolidate their retirement funds in the Thrift Savings Plan.

I believe the policy underlying H.R. 208 is sound. I commend the gentleman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA) for introducing this legislation and for all of her hard work to advance this bill.

I also would like to thank the distinguished gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Civil Service, for his strong support for this legislation. I thank the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), the chairman of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, and the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) for expediting this very important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, in light of all the uncertainty surrounding Social Security, Congress should encourage everyone, including Federal employees, to assume more responsibility for their own retirement. H.R. 208 does exactly that.

According to the Congressional Research Service, each \$1,000 employees contribute their first year will increase their Thrift Savings Plan balances after a 30-year career by almost \$19,000. That is assuming a 10 percent rate of return, which is very good. It is a very good incentive to save.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA) and I have been working closely together to help offset and pay for this benefit, and I greatly appreciate her cooperation in this process. As a result of this work, H.R. 208 fully offsets the cost of this benefit without raising taxes on the American people.

I encourage all Members to support this very important bill.

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

□ 1530

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

Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague, the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA), for sponsoring H.R. 208. I also want to thank our subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH), the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), the full committee chairman, and certainly our ranking member, the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), for bringing this bill up so quickly.

H.R. 208 makes significant reforms in the Thrift Savings Plan. This bill contains proposals that are contained in President Clinton's fiscal year 2000 budget. It would permit new Federal employees to begin contributing to their TSP immediately rather than waiting a year, as required under current law, and would let Federal employees transfer balances from other tax deferred savings plans, including private sector 401(k) accounts, to their TSP accounts.

Early participation in the Federal Employees Retirement System, particularly in the Thrift Savings Plan, is critical if an employee is going to maximize the amount of savings earned for his retirement.

The importance of saving for one's retirement is more evident to me as the Subcommittee on Civil Service of the Committee on Government Reform considers legislation to offer long-term care insurance as a benefit option to Federal and postal employees and military personnel and retirees. A study released at the beginning of this month shows that baby boomers are concerned about their retirement security, but are not saving adequately for their long-term care needs. H.R. 208 is one initiative that will help the Federal work force save money for their golden years.

At the full committee markup of this bill, the Republicans offered an amendment to pay for the cost of the legislation by requiring agencies to divert money from their already hard-pressed salaries and expense accounts into the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Trust Fund. The Democrats strongly opposed this provision and worked in a swift and bipartisan manner to formulate an acceptable alternative that would require agencies to pay for the cost, but prohibit them from using salaries and benefit accounts for this purpose.

I support this prohibition, Mr. Speaker, because Federal employees have been squeezed enough. Inadequate pay raises, increasing costs in health insurance premiums, and the constant threat of layoffs and contracting out have caused serious problems in Federal agencies. Enough is enough.

I am pleased now to be able to support this legislation because it helps Federal employees save for their re-

tirement and removes the possibility that any of them would have to lose their jobs to pay for it.

Again, I congratulate the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA), my colleague, and I urge all Members to join me in supporting this legislation.

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

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA), who is, of course, a great champion of Federal employees and who is the architect of this bill.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the subcommittee for yielding me this time, and I am really delighted this important legislation is coming before the House today.

I certainly want to thank the chairman of the Committee on Government Reform, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Civil Service, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH), as well as the committee's ranking minority member, the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), and of course we have just heard from the subcommittee's ranking minority member, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), my colleague, for all their strong support throughout.

Mr. Speaker, when I thank my colleagues I know that I also speak for the thousands of Federal employees with whom I have met and who have written and called my office and the offices of others in support of this legislation.

This legislation would bolster two critical components of Federal employees' retirement benefits, the Thrift Savings Plan. The Thrift Savings Plan is critical for all Federal employees but is particularly important for those employees hired in the last decade who, under the Federal Employees Retirement System, receive smaller civil service benefits and need to invest more to enhance their retirement income.

Currently, employees can elect to begin contributing to the TSP only during two semiannual election periods that are established by law. Newly hired employees are first eligible to participate during the second election period after being hired. Now, what that means is that these employees must wait from 6 to 12 months, depending upon their dates of hire, before they may contribute their own funds.

Allowing employees to begin contributing to the Thrift Savings Plan immediately makes it more likely that employees will get into or continue the habit of saving for retirement through payroll deduction. Early saving is especially important in order to maximize the effect of compound earnings and to take full advantage of the benefit of pretax savings accorded to tax deferred retirement plans.

This bill would eliminate all waiting periods for employee contributions to

the TSP for new hires and rehires. Employees who are hired or rehired would be eligible to contribute their own funds immediately.

Further, ensuring the portability of retirement savings is important because portable retirement savings can follow employees as they change jobs. It also would preserve the special tax status accorded to these funds. So while the Internal Revenue Code currently allows transfers of retirement savings between 401(k) plans, such transfers are not authorized for the Thrift Savings Plan. There is no justification for this limitation.

H.R. 208 would authorize employees to transfer funds from certain tax deferred savings plans from a previous job to their TSP accounts. The funds so transferred would be subject to the rules governing the plan which accepts the transfer.

Mr. Speaker, during the committee markup of H.R. 208, I offered an amendment in the nature of a substitute to this bill to provide offsets to the anticipated decrease in Federal Government general tax revenues that would result from employees taking advantage of the benefits offered by H.R. 208. Because H.R. 208 would eliminate all waiting periods for employee contributions to the TSP for new hires and rehires, it is estimated that about 400,000 employees hired over the 1999-2003 period would participate in the TSP. As a result, the Federal Government would forgo tax revenues over that period, 1999-2003.

The amendment I offered will provide funding to compensate the Federal Government for these lost revenues. And I want to make it clear, this amendment does not require agencies to use any of their salary and expense account funding to accomplish these goals. In fact, it makes clear that they may not use funding intended for employees' salary and expense accounts for those expenses. The amendment assures Federal employees that the legislation is designed to improve benefits for Federal employees, and it will not unintentionally result in furloughs or reductions in force at Federal agencies.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to stress that H.R. 208 is a sensible way to encourage Federal employees to take personal responsibility and increase their savings for retirement, something we want all Americans to do. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important measure, and again I thank the committee chair, the ranking member, the subcommittee chair, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), for their support throughout the way.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), my distinguished colleague who has constantly been at the forefront of protecting the rights of Federal employees, and who has been constantly sensitive to their needs and their concerns.

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished ranking member, my colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), for his kind comments and for his leadership on this bill, and in particular for his leadership on ensuring the fact that we did not rob from Peter to pay Paul as it related to employee pay and benefits.

I also want to thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH), the distinguished chairman of the subcommittee, for his leadership in facilitating this bill to the floor. He is motioning that Mr. Nesterczuk made him do it, but for whatever reasons, he did it. We are pleased; I want him to know that.

I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate my colleague, the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. CONNIE MORELLA), who, as the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH) said, is always in the forefront of advocating on behalf of our Federal employee work force.

Mr. Speaker, I would simply add this. The bill has been explained by the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA) herself, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH), the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), and many Members on this floor talking about the necessity to recruit and retain good people. This will be a major recruitment tool, in my opinion, for the Federal Government because it will give the ability to Federal employers to say that first of all its employees can transfer whatever savings they now have in a 401(k) or similarly situated program from a tax standpoint and switch that into the Thrift Savings Plan.

The Thrift Savings Plan, which, by the way, was the creation of Senator TED STEVENS from Alaska and Congressman Bill Ford from Michigan, has been an extraordinarily good program for Federal employees. It was created in 1984 and took effect in 1987 as the integrated retirement system that we now have dealing with retirement and Social Security and the Thrift Savings Plan. Those three components now make up a Federal employees retirement benefit package.

So not only will we allow them to put their money in from previous programs, but in addition to that, we will let them do so from the very beginning of their employment. I think that is a critical aspect of this legislation. I think it will be an incentive for employees to come on board; and I congratulate the committee for bringing this legislation to the floor and will certainly support it enthusiastically.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON).

We are very pleased, Mr. Speaker, at this point to recognize my distinguished colleague from the District of

Columbia, and a member of our subcommittee who, too, has been at the forefront of protecting the rights of Federal employees, and one who has put forth her own legislation from time to time to make sure that those rights are protected. I am just so glad that she is on our subcommittee because she makes sure that we keep an institutional memory of the things that we should have been doing for Federal employees and the things that we must do.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland for his very kind remarks and for yielding me this time, and I congratulate him for his consistent hard work and vigilance on behalf of Federal employees, especially for his particular contribution to this bill and seeing how it was paid for.

I congratulate the gentlewoman from Maryland for writing this bill, and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH) for his hard work in making sure that the bill was shaped in a bipartisan manner and reached the floor here today.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is, first and foremost, a richly deserved benefit for Federal employees who have fallen way behind the private sector in state-of-the-art benefits, but it has a more important implication for the Federal Government itself.

Mr. Speaker, the Federal Government seems not to have heard that there is a labor shortage out there, and it is a shortage that goes from the top to the bottom of the work force.

There is a fierce competition for labor at all levels. The Federal Government has literally not joined this competition. It is as if this were 1960, when college graduates and skilled workers automatically gravitated to Federal employment. That has not been the case now for a long time, and it is going to show in our Federal work force. Therefore, the implications of this bill are larger than the modest benefit it provides to our employees in eliminating the waiting period for when an employee can make a contribution to the Thrift Savings Plan and in allowing transfers from a 401(k) savings account.

A way to understand the importance of this bill, if we mean to attract good people to work for the Federal Government, is to imagine an employee looking around among her options and seeing that she could not transfer her 401(k), and seeing that she would have a 6-to-12-month break in engaging in tax-exempt savings herself. It seems to me she might well move on to almost any large employer today where we will find such benefits to be state-of-the-art. There are plenty of alternatives. No large, smart employer would fail to have comparable benefits to those which this bill modestly affords.

□ 1545

Social Security is the most important issue facing the 106th Congress.

The President and the Republican majority together are encouraging private savings and investment. If we are serious about encouraging Americans to engage in private saving and our savings are at a low point, then it is time we took care of home first, and the Thrift Savings Account is the place to begin.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time we have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) has 10½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH) has 12½ minutes remaining.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. We have no additional speakers.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, I am very, very pleased that this legislation is before us. I think it sends a very strong statement to our Federal employees and those who are considering possibly coming into the Federal Government, and that is that the Congress of the United States of America cares about them and cares about their security in retirement.

Mr. Speaker, I just urge all of my colleagues to vote for this very, very important legislation.

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

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

H.R. 208 is a sound bill, and it is fully paid for. Once again, I want to commend the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA) for her hard work on this bill, as well as the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), the ranking member, and I urge all Members to support it.

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 Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 208, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONDEMNING MURDER OF ROSEMARY NELSON AND CALLING FOR PROTECTION OF DEFENSE ATTORNEYS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 128) condemning the murder of human rights lawyer Rosemary Nelson and calling for the protection of defense attorneys in Northern Ireland, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 128

Whereas on September 29, 1998, Rosemary Nelson, a prominent defense attorney in Northern Ireland, who testified before the