

Fattah, PA; and Mr. Doug King of St. Louis, MO.

Yours Very Truly,  
RICHARD A. GEPHARDT.

#### REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 3

Mr. EWING. Mr. Speaker, I am a cosponsor on H.R. 3, and I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of that legislation.

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

There was no objection.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

#### KEEPING THE PROMISE TO OUR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call the attention of the House to five bills I have introduced to address some major concerns of our Nation's service members, military retirees and veterans.

The first is H.R. 363, the Military Survivor's Equity Act. It is hard to believe that we continue to condone a system that penalizes the aging widows of our Nation's veterans, but that is exactly what the Military Survivors Benefits Plan does. When a member of the military retires, he or she may join the Survivors Benefits Plan, known as the SBP. After paying a premium for many, many years, the retiree expects that his or her spouse will receive 55 percent of the retired military pay.

Most of the survivors who receive SBP benefits are military widows. You may not realize that when these widows who are receiving SBP benefits turn 62, a Social Security offset causes their benefits to be reduced from 55 percent to 35 percent of their husband's military retiree pay. This occurs even when the Social Security comes from the wife's employment.

What does this reduction mean to our Nation's military widows? I have received many letters on this subject. Let me just read from one. I am quoting:

"My husband, who served in the Army for 20 years, was on Social Security disability because of heart problems and could no longer work. He died in July, 1995. I was then 61 years old. I received Social Security income plus my SBP. With both of these incomes, I was doing fine paying my monthly bills and having enough left for groceries. When I turned 62, I was notified that my SBP was reduced from \$476 to \$302. What a shock. This was my grocery money that they took away from me."

It is time to change this misleading, unfair law. We must provide some equity to the surviving spouses of our military retirees. My bill would fix this problem by eliminating the callous and absurd reduction in benefits and give what is expected and what is deserved: 55 percent of the military retired pay. To put it simply, no offset. A simple solution to a difficult problem, an equitable solution to a mean-spirited practice.

The second bill is H.R. 364, the Veterans' Training and Employment Bill of Rights Act. This would ensure that service-disabled veterans and veterans who serve in combat areas will be first in line for federally funded training-related services and programs. Under current law, veterans are often underserved by national programs such as the Job Training Partnership Act because it sometimes mistakenly assumes that the veterans receive the same services from the VA Department. My bill would reinforce our commitment to provide special training assistance for veterans and make it clear that eligible veterans have earned a place at the front of the line.

The bill would also establish the first effective appeals process for veterans who believe their rights have been violated under veterans' employment-related programs. The Secretary of Labor would be required to help veterans who believe that Federal contractors have not met their obligation to hire veterans and to help veterans who believe they were not given preference for enrollment in Federal training programs. This bill would provide the teeth that have been missing from some veterans' training programs and would go a long way toward ensuring that veterans' rights are respected.

A third bill is H.R. 366, the Veterans' Entrepreneurship Promotion Act.

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Many veterans have told me that they would like to own a small business, and our national economy would certainly be strengthened if more veterans were able to establish their own companies. This bill is designed to do just that, by establishing a program to help disabled and other eligible veteran-owned small businesses compete for Federal contracts. Also included is a program of training, counseling and management assistance for veterans interested in starting a small business. Veterans who want to pursue self-employment should be supported and encouraged.

H.R. 365 is the Let Our Military Buy a Home Act. Under this plan, the Department of Defense, in cooperation with Veterans Affairs, would be permitted to test a program designed to relieve the military housing crisis. Military personnel stationed in areas where the supply of suitable military housing is adequate, as in my hometown of San Diego, could purchase homes for themselves and their families at reduced interest rates. This

practice would reduce the cost of building on-base housing and would expand opportunities for service members to own their own homes.

Initially introduced in the 104th Congress by our good friend and former colleague, the honorable and legendary G.V. Sonny Montgomery, and included in Public Law 104-106, this program was inexplicably not implemented by the Department of Defense. Sonny's idea is a good one and I encourage you to join in pursuing this creative approach to dealing with the military housing program.

Finally, a bill to Extend Commissary and Exchange Store Privileges, H.R. 362. This legislation would allow veterans with service-connected disability to use commissary and exchange stores on the same basis as the members of the Armed Forces entitled to retired pay. I believe that these veterans have earned the right to commissary privileges.

#### REJECT THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, if one were to believe the White House and all they are saying regarding the debt of our Nation, one would be convinced that the President's recently released FY 2000 budget is good fiscal policy for future generations. Unfortunately, the exact opposite is true.

The White House would like the American people and this Congress to believe that the national debt is going down under their budget, but page 389 of the President's own budget from his Office of Management and Budget shows a very different picture.

Looking at the chart, we see that the total national debt goes up from \$5.394 trillion in 1998 to \$5.576 trillion in 1999, and to almost \$5.8 trillion in the Year 2000, and the red ink continues to rise every year under Clinton's budget.

The truth is, the total Federal debt under the Clinton plan does not go down, as the President would like the American people to believe. In fact, the total Federal debt goes up to the tune of over \$1.3 trillion over the next five years.

I asked the President's Budget Director, Jacob Lew, during a recent Committee on the Budget hearing about this discrepancy, and he was evasive about the fact that the President's own budget called for a \$1.3 trillion more in debt on our children and grandchildren.

I then asked Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin the next day during a Ways and Means hearing the same question, and Secretary Rubin refused to answer a simple yes or no question about whether the total debt is going up.

Regardless of where the debt is placed, it will still need to be paid, and guess who will pay it? The answer is

the American taxpayer. Debt is debt is debt. The Clinton Administration only wants to speak in terms of the publicly held debt going down.

Mr. Speaker, President Clinton and his administration are misleading the American people when they say the public debt is going down. They are telling half a truth. The President and his administration are correct in saying the public debt will go down over the next few years, but what they are not telling you is that the debt held by the Social Security and other trust funds is going up, and that it is going up at a faster rate than the public debt is going down, which means the total debt goes up by, yes, \$1.3 trillion over the next five years under President Clinton's budget. No matter if debt is held by the public or in the various trust funds, it is still debt, and must still be paid back at some future point.

The Clinton Administration is telling future generations no favors in this budget. It is dishonest and disingenuous for the Clinton-Gore administration to tout huge surpluses on the one hand, when on the other their budget places even more debt on the shoulders of our children and grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress and this President have not achieved true fiscal discipline and responsibility until our total national debt begins to go down.

Furthermore, as if forcing \$1.3 trillion in more debt on future generations was not enough, the President's budget called for a net tax increase of \$45.8 billion and requests \$150 billion in new spending over the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, it is the duty of this Congress to stop this assault on our future generations and all taxpayers. I urge my colleagues to reject the President's budget.

#### PRESERVING SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I want to spend my time this afternoon talking about Social Security, one of America's great all-American programs. It is in a class by itself, except for Medicare, of course. But, like so many programs, its beneficiaries vary according to race, sex or class, even given the universality of this extremely popular program.

When people say that they think it will not be there for them, they also say that they do not want it changed much because they want it to be there for them.

There are proposals floating around for private accounts where people would invest in equities in the stock market themselves. In considering these proposals, I ask only that this body consider that women are hugely, disproportionately affected by whatever we decide to do to Social Security. Twice as many women who live past 65

are poor as men, and so, in its wisdom, the Congress has structured the Social Security program to reflect this basic reality.

Proposals for private accounts thus far do not take into account two characteristics that are unique to women: One, that they have less earnings over their lifetime, much of it due to discrimination, some of it due to family responsibilities; and, second, that they simply live longer. Personal savings accounts would, therefore, adversely affect them, because they have had less time in the workforce and because they have had lower earnings when they have been there.

So what does Social Security do? Recognizing this feature, instead of giving a benefit that looks the same for everybody, we have created a progressive Social Security benefit structure. The higher benefits go to the lower earnings, and I do not think there is anybody in America who would want that any different.

Let us look at two groups of women so as to make my point, housewives and widows.

Let us take a woman who has spent her life taking care of her family and has not gone near the workforce. She will get 50 percent of her spouse's benefit. She has never had and could never have a personal account in the stock market, no matter what we do for her.

Let us take an older woman whose husband dies. She gets 100 percent of her husband's benefit. Now, the majority has typically shown particular concern for these women, women who have taken care of their families and have not gone in the workforce at all, and older women whose husbands have died and do not have any income. These are the women that must be in our mind's eye if we toy with the Social Security System.

The great majority, 63 percent of women over age 62 have their own income, as to opposed wives and widows who get pensions. Thirty-seven percent have had no earnings history at all, no personal savings account of their own, and cannot control what a husband shall have done with the personal savings account that he may have. They are in our hands, and we have taken that responsibility through the Social Security system.

I ask this body to measure any proposal that comes before it, not by looking at the American population as if they were some big glob, but to look at who is likely to be most affected by whatever we do. Overwhelmingly, those most affected are going to be women. It is women who have the most to lose. It is women who are most vulnerable.

I ask the majority who call to the floor any discussion of changes in Social Security, especially discussion of personal savings account, to call to the floor the women whose lifelong work has been for their families and the women who have only their husband's pensions. Those women are in our hands and are dependent upon our

doing the right thing with Social Security, bearing in mind that any personal savings account is not in their lexicon, has not been in their lives, and they need us to remember that salient fact.

#### FEDERAL FUNDING FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NETHERCUTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the issue of federal funding for biomedical research. Over the past four years, this Congress has led the effort to double the budget for biomedical research at the National Institutes of Health and other federal agencies which do scientific research to help cure diseases.

This effort has already begun to show results in areas such as Parkinson's disease, cancer, Alzheimer's's disease, and many others. It is a worthwhile undertaking for our federal tax dollars.

Now, while the President wants to take credit for this research effort, unfortunately his budget would severely impede the progress we have made and would jeopardize future advances.

The NIH budget has begun to grow exponentially, because it is the right thing to do for people who are sick with chronic diseases. For the next fiscal year, however, the President has requested an increase of \$320 million, or 2.1 percent, for the National Institutes of Health.

Now, by comparison, last year this Congress increased NIH by \$1.99 billion, or 15 percent, and that is still inadequate funding when you look at all of the opportunities for research grants that come before the NIH and those which are able to be accepted. There just is not enough money to do all of the good research that needs to be done.

The President was recently reported to have remarked to a member of the other body, a Democrat, the President said, "Don't worry about our budget. The Republicans will increase NIH funding." Well, certainly we will. So much for honesty in the President's budget.

A 2.1 percent growth rate is two-tenths of a percentage point less than the projected rate of inflation. That is a growth rate less than inflation, which is in the President's budget, for attempting to cure our Nation's diseases and improve the lives of millions of Americans who suffer from disease.

What the President does under this budget game is put in a low number for NIH and put a high number for other spending, new federal spending programs that he puts in to satisfy special interests, and then criticizes those of us who say "no" to such excess spending, for budget-busting spending, and then politically the President seems to want to take credit. In reality, the President's budget says to people who