

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THE POVERTY TRAP STUDY ACT OF 2000

HON. THOMAS E. PETRI

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 6, 2000

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Poverty Trap Study Act of 2000. This legislation would create a commission to study the combined effects on low income families of effective marginal tax rates resulting from the simultaneous phaseouts of a number of welfare programs as well as payroll taxes and federal and state income taxes.

Why does this prosperous country still have millions of people living in poverty? Why, in the face of tremendous economic growth, does the poverty rate barely drop if at all? It's not because we are a selfish country; it's not because we spend too little on welfare and it's not because the minimum wage is too low. It's because we have adopted tax and welfare policies which bring about that exact result!

Not that it was the intent of those who wrote those programs to keep people in poverty. I'm sure that when the housing assistance program was created, it was thought that taking 30 percent of income as rent was not too much of a disincentive to work. Likewise, when the Earned Income Tax Credit was created and later revised, I'm sure no one thought that a 21 percent phaseout of benefits for two-child families just over the poverty level was a drastic disincentive. And when the Food Stamp Program was begun, a 24 percent phaseout didn't seem so bad. But add them up and we already have a 75 percent effective marginal tax rate from just these three programs. Now add in a 7.65 percent payroll tax, federal and state income taxes, and possible phaseouts of other state welfare programs, plus copayments for child care, and in most states families with children with earnings around the poverty level face marginal tax rates over 100 percent! Furthermore, at an income level where most of these phaseouts are still in effect, these families face the "cliff effect" of Medicaid and lose their health coverage. It's not surprising that we have a seemingly intractable problem of poverty no matter how high the economy soars. What is amazing is that some people are able to work their way out of poverty anyway.

We have created this mess by designing every program in a vacuum without ever considering the combined effects. I supported the welfare reform of 1996, sending most of the decisions back to the states. The main effect has been for states to institute work requirements for most able-bodied recipients, moving them off of AFDC and into subsidized jobs. That's good but it is only the first step. Phase II has to be to move people from subsidized jobs into self-sufficiency, and that is never going to happen until more work actually means more money in their pockets.

Likewise, I supported the recently passed marriage penalty relief act. However, as a per-

centage of income, the biggest marriage penalties have nothing to do with moving to higher tax brackets or the size of the personal exemption. In some cases in my home state of Wisconsin, a single parent with two children who marries someone with a similar income loses ALL of the spouse's income to lost benefits and taxes and the family of four has to live on less than the family of three did! Ending the poverty trap should also be considered phase II of marriage penalty relief.

It's time to look at welfare and tax policy for low income families in a coherent fashion instead of the hit or miss piecemeal approach we have been employing. That is why I have introduced the Poverty Trap Study Act of 2000. This legislation would create a commission to examine the poverty trap problem and make recommendations to fix it. I call on my colleagues who support ending marriage penalties, cutting taxes for low income families and fighting poverty, to support this bill.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INC. TO AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 6, 2000

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay special tribute to Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. during African-American history month. I would like to highlight the organization's ninety-two years of service to our nation. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority currently has over 800 chapters in the United States and the Virgin Islands and has spread to several countries abroad including: Germany, Caribbean, London, England, and Japan.

Since 1908, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. has served as an instrument to enrich social and economic conditions in the world. Alpha Kappa Alpha strives to promote high scholastics and ethical standards, vocational and career guidance, health services and the advancement of human and civil rights. Led by national Basileus, Norma S. White, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. focuses on five national targets including: education, health, the black family, economics, and the arts.

Today, the tradition of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. lives on. As we move into the 21st century, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. will continue to uplift the principles of service to all mankind.

HONORING HARCUM COLLEGE

HON. JOSEPH M. HOFFEL

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 6, 2000

Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the occasion of National TRIO day to con-

gratulate the Upward Bound Program at Harcum College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. National TRIO Day celebrates 35 years of programs aimed at expanding opportunities for disadvantaged students to attend college. Upward Bound is a wonderful, practical program that challenges and motivates students to achieve the necessary skills for higher education. TRIO's Upward Bound is essential for attainment of the critical goal of ensuring access to higher education for low-income and first-generation college students.

Harcum College has an outstanding record of success with Upward Bound for the ten years since the program began. This year, Harcum was awarded a prestigious five-year grant for scoring one hundred percent on their program proposals. Harcum College Upward Bound serves 75 students from three high schools in Philadelphia. The vast majority of participants are low-income and the first generation of their families to attend college. In the past five years one hundred percent of all high school students participating in Harcum's Upward Bound program graduated from high school and seventy-five percent were accepted to and enrolled in a four year college or university.

I applaud Harcum College's commitment to providing students from all backgrounds with an opportunity to excel in education and to prepare those students for the future.

RECOGNITION OF MR. WILLIAM C. COONCE

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 6, 2000

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to William C. Coonce—one of our Federal Government's finest public servants and a long time resident of the Commonwealth of Virginia. This April he will retire from an exceptionally distinguished career of service to his country. He has worked for the Department of Defense since 1967, first with the Navy, and for the last 19 years with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller). He has served more than 34 years of exemplary service to our nation. He has been an exceptional manager of the public's resources and his efforts have strengthened our national defense. It gives me pride to have the opportunity to honor him today for his tremendous accomplishments.

Mr. Coonce began his career at the Naval Ordnance Depot in Louisville, Kentucky as an engineer working on underwater sensors and weapons. He moved to the great Commonwealth of Virginia in 1971 to work for the Naval Sea Systems Command and later for the Comptroller of the Navy on important budget issues. He was promoted to work for the Defense Comptroller, first as a budget analyst and, for the last sixteen years, to the Senior Executive Service, where he served as

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

the Director for Military Construction and later Director for Revolving Funds. The quality of his work has been recognized by every Administration he has served, and he has received civil service awards too numerous to mention. Among the more significant, he has received the Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Service, the Secretary of Defense Medal for Meritorious Civilian Service, and the Vice President's National Performance Review Award.

Bill Coonce has served six Secretaries of Defense and six Department Comptrollers, as their key advisor on a range of budget issues. His recommendations on a wide range of vital issues were constantly sought and greatly helped the Department robustly defend the funding requirements that support U.S. forces and missions. He has a significant reputation as a budget-cutter across a wide range of national programs. Year in and year out, his wise counsel and sound advice produced the best possible, yet fiscally responsible, spending plans to satisfy the nation's national security needs.

Mr. Coonce brought exceptional insight and skill to the many diverse challenges presented to and undertaken by him. He displayed outstanding skills as a manager of budget analysts, inspiring work that was of the highest quality. He has been the Department of Defense's expert in budgeting for Military Construction, Base Realignment and Closure actions, Intelligence Community requirements, and the logistics infrastructure programs. On an extraordinary number of occasions, his sage advice assured the adoption of sound spending decisions that supported major Defense programs while remaining consistent with the President's priorities and prevailing perspectives in the Congress. His comprehensive knowledge and exceptional skills were immensely invaluable to a whole generation of Department of Defense leaders, to our Armed Forces, and to U.S. national security.

The senior U.S. leaders, both in the Congress and in the Defense Department, benefited enormously from his extensive knowledge, exceptional dedication, and wise judgment. His contributions and public service allowed the leaders of our nation to make the wisest possible allocation of declining defense resources while maintaining America's security. Mr. Coonce is retiring from a career of singular merit and has earned the profound gratitude of the American people.

**A TRIBUTE TO MONTGOMERY
COUNTY COUNCILMEMBER
BETTY ANN KRAHNKE**

HON. CONSTANCE A. MORELLA

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 6, 2000

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I pay tribute to an outstanding citizen and public servant of Montgomery County, MD. I praise the courage and determination of Montgomery County Councilmember Betty Ann Krahnke. She has served with distinction for many years, both in and out of public office. Betty Ann Krahnke is a role model for our community, and our Nation.

I am extremely proud of Betty Ann's integrity, commitment, and legislative contributions,

particularly on behalf of domestic violence victims. She has spearheaded cell phone programs for domestic violence victims and convinced the State of Maryland to implement an automated victim notification program in Montgomery County. For her leadership on victims' rights issues, Betty Ann has received the 1998 Governor's Victim Assistance Award and the 1998 leadership award from the Montgomery County Against Domestic Abuse task force. In addition, the Montgomery County Civic Federation awarded its most prestigious award, the Distinguished Public Service Citation, to Betty Ann.

During her current battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, Betty Ann has shown tremendous stamina and strength of character. She and her family have exhibited incredible bravery during this most difficult time. I have watched Betty Ann with inspiration as she continued her unfaltering commitment to Montgomery County. I praise her determination to keep making positive contributions to her community.

I have admired Betty Ann for many years as a leader and public servant, and most importantly, as a friend. I send my heartfelt appreciation for her hard work and dedicated service.

**CELEBRATING THE FIFTH ANNI-
VERSARY OF THE REPUBLIC OF
ARMENIA CONSULATE GENERAL
IN LOS ANGELES**

HON. JAMES E. ROGAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 6, 2000

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, representing the Republic of Armenia proudly in the western United States is the Consulate General, in Los Angeles—not far from my home district.

In honor of the consulate's fifth anniversary in Los Angeles, I ask my colleagues here today to join me in saluting not just this accomplishment, but the freedom this nation has cherished for nearly a decade.

There is indeed a freedom in Armenia to which I can attest. Not long ago, I spent nearly a week in Armenia. And I am proud to say that the spirit of democracy we hold so dear in the United States has taken an equally deep root in the Republic of Armenia.

Despite cultural and political annihilation at the hands of the Ottoman Turks, the Armenian people today thrive at home and abroad. Armenian-Americans have contributed greatly to our community while maintaining a strong cultural heritage. I am especially proud to claim the same home district as the largest population of Armenians in America.

Representing this community, and the Republic is the Consulate General in Los Angeles. The professional staff in this office is responsible for consular and diplomatic affairs—acting as liaison between the Republic and governments at the local, state, and national level. Their efforts guarantee that Armenia will continue to thrive: leading the region in the growth of industry, education, the arts and technology.

Mr. Speaker, five short years ago, the Republic of Armenia established a diplomatic foundation in Los Angeles, reaching out to the surrounding Armenian-American community

and the public. This work was led by the Honorable Armen Baibourtian who is now serving as the Deputy Foreign Minister in Yerevan, the Armenian Capital. His successor, The Honorable Armen Melkonian is following in this tradition, proudly representing the Republic of Armenia in the United States. I am proud not just to call these two leaders colleagues, but to call them friends.

I ask my colleagues here today to join me along with the Armenian-American community in celebration of the Consulate General's fifth anniversary in Los Angeles, and in tribute to Armenia's decade of freedom. Let us work to keep the light of freedom lit in Armenia and around the globe.

**SUPPORT OF H.R. 5, THE SENIOR
CITIZENS' FREEDOM TO WORK
ACT OF 1999**

HON. MAX SANDLIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 6, 2000

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5, the Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 1999. This legislation will finally repeal the outdated and unreasonable Social Security earnings limit that has penalized seniors for working beyond the age of 65 by reducing their monthly Social Security benefit. H.R. 5 is good for America's seniors and good for the economy.

The Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act is about basic fairness. There are numerous reasons seniors may choose to continue working past the age of 65. Many seniors would like to retire but have to continue working simply to make ends meet. It is outrageous that the government penalizes these individuals for trying to support their most basic needs. Other seniors may continue to work simply for the pleasure and pride they take in contributing a lifetime's worth of skills and knowledge to their chosen profession. The government should not deprive industry of this dedicated, skilled, and resourceful population of workers. Regardless of the reason, America's seniors deserve the benefits they earn whether or not they choose to continue working beyond the national retirement age.

I became a cosponsor of H.R. 5 last year because I feel so strongly about the merits of this legislation. According to the Social Security Administration, over 800,000 seniors lose part or all of their Social Security benefits because of the earnings limit. With the retirement of the massive baby boom generation fast-approaching, the number of seniors affected by this penalty will increase significantly over the next decade. Today, we have the opportunity to prevent that injustice.

Mr. Speaker, my district has the good fortune of holding a large population of hard-working senior citizens who stand to benefit from the repeal of the Social Security earnings limit. The communities and businesses in the First Congressional District of Texas stand to benefit as well. Retaining skilled retirees is important in meeting today's workforce needs, and Congress needs to eliminate the very real financial disincentive seniors face if they want to continue working beyond retirement age. This is a win-win situation and deserves the full support of this Congress. I urge my colleagues to vote for H.R. 5 to end the earnings penalty once and for all.