

The American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, the largest federal employee union, has been vigilant in urging Congress to provide the needed redress to the injustices in the Federal Wage System. My legislation, the Federal Wage Worker Pay Fairness Act of 2001, does so and is supported by AFGE.

First, the bill would guarantee wage grade workers an annual pay raise.

Unlike their white-collar co-workers, wage grade employees are not guaranteed any annual pay raise. The nationwide General Schedule (GS) and locality pay raise we in Congress approve every year are not given to federal employees in blue-collar occupations.

It is unfair for the federal government to single out one segment of its workforce for impoverishment. A basic across the board pay adjustment each year is necessary to offset increases in their federal health care premiums as well as general increases in the cost of living. No employee of the U.S. government should see steady decreases in purchasing power from persistent wage stagnation.

Wage grade workers have seen their paychecks purchase less and less. For example, from 1984 to 1999, the pay of a General Schedule-11, step 4, employee at Warner Robins Air Force Base, in Georgia, kept pace with inflation. The pay of a Wage Grade-10, step 2, employee fell by about half. In other words, the wage grade employee's wage increases only made up for half of the increase in prices measured by the Consumer Price Index. And this loss of purchasing power doesn't even reflect the skyrocketing costs of federal health care premiums, which rose by 30 percent in the past few years.

Providing all federal blue collar workers with a minimum annual wage adjustment equal to General Schedule increases is budget neutral because of the federal government's budget assumes that wage grade workers would be awarded the GS pay raise.

Second, the legislation would lift the caps on blue-collar pay increases.

On top of not being guaranteed an annual GS pay raise, any raise blue collar workers can receive is capped at the average nationwide GS pay raise. This is unfair and wrong. If federal agencies are to remain competitive we must stop imposing an artificial and arbitrary cap on blue-collar pay raises.

Third, my legislation would end the discriminatory practice of paying Department of Defense wage grade employees less than their counterparts in VA by restoring Monroney requirements to DoD.

The "Monroney amendment" to the Federal Wage Schedule requires the government to look outside the relevant wage survey area if there is an insufficient number of analogous private sector jobs to calculate blue-collar pay. This requirement is logically necessary to ensure that the prevailing wages are based on comparable work.

In 1985, the law was amended to exclude DoD from the Monroney amendment's requirement. As a result, in San Antonio, a Wage Grade-11, step 5 blue-collar worker in the VA or other federal departments earn \$18.26 an hour but his or her counterpart in DoD earns \$.69 less an hour, or \$17.57. On overtime, that 69 cent differential becomes \$1.04 an hour in lost pay. While 69 cents an hour or \$1.04 an hour more may not seem much, it adds up for individual employees who are trying to support their families.

Fourth, the legislation would simplify the data collection and administration of the Federal Wage Schedule.

The bill would consolidate the areas surveyed for wage rates from the current 133 localities in the Federal Wage Schedule to the 32 localities drawn by the federal salary council used to set the pay for virtually every other federal employee under the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA). These 32 regions are a more modern and accurate reflection of contemporary labor markets and commuting patterns. Simplifying the areas of data collection used to calculate wage schedules from 32 localities rather than 133 would yield considerable savings.

The legislation would also transfer responsibility for data collection from the lead agency, the Department of Defense, to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This federal agency collects data used for other federal pay systems, most notably the GS white collar system. It already conducts data collection in the relevant localities, matching federal and non-federal jobs. While this change would impose new costs on the BLS, the consolidation of localities means that the cost of data collection to the government will go down overall.

Mr. Speaker, the single most important measure of a pay-setting system—for either white or blue-collar workers—is whether it allows workers to earn sufficient income to support a family in a decent fashion. Does it produce at least a stable standard of living? Does it hold out the hope that in good economic times, improvements in the standard of living are possible? Our current system does not.

The Federal Wage Worker Pay Fairness Act of 2001 would correct the fundamental errors in the current pay-setting system for federal blue-collar workers to ensure that they have a chance at a decent and stable standard of living. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation on behalf of our nation's federal workforce.

IN TRIBUTE TO JADE MANSFIELD

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Jade Allison Mansfield, a woman who lived a rich and service-filled life before suddenly passing away at the age of forty-one. Uniformly described as a pillar of the community, Jade's drowning on February 19 is a very unfortunate loss to south Monterey County. Jade personified the best in civic spirit and was well-known throughout south Monterey County for the many diverse causes she undertook in order to better her community.

Jade, a lifelong resident of Monterey County, was born in Salinas on December 9, 1959. She served for four years in the United States Air Force as a crew chief and aircraft mechanic for the F4 fighting jet. While managing a successful bakery in Palo Alto, Jade earned a degree in Political Science from California State University San Francisco and a Doctor of Jurisprudence Law from Monterey College of Law.

Upon completion of her law degree, Jade embarked on an impressive career of commu-

nity service, volunteering her services to low-income senior citizens at a local non-profit legal services office. She eventually became Legal Service's for Seniors' full time attorney, assisting dozens of clients a year in her work to protect seniors against elder abuse and financial scams.

In addition to her work on behalf of the elderly, Jade ran a law practice assisting low-income clients in south Monterey County, providing much-needed legal assistance to those least able to obtain it. Prior to earning her law degree, she worked in the Monterey County government, helping those who needed aid.

Her generosity of spirit and her commitment to her community are further demonstrated by the active role she undertook in her neighborhood, and the answering support she showed towards her grandmother. Jade worked hard in her role as President of her rural homeowners association, and was tireless in ensuring that her neighbors had clean water and in providing other small services. She happily took on the responsibility of managing her grandmother's affairs when her grandmother was no longer able to care for herself; in this service she donated many hours each week to visiting and caring for her grandmother.

Jade deeply touched the lives of those around her; her intelligence, wit, and absolute joy in life were truly remarkable. Her commitment to assisting others was manifest in all aspects of her life. Jade's passing is a terrible loss throughout Monterey County, but especially to her friends and family, the legal community, the elderly, and the countless others who knew or were assisted by her. Her energy, tenacity, and kindness will be deeply missed by all who knew her.

INTRODUCTION OF "THE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS ACT"

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the International Competitiveness Act, along with my colleagues Congresswoman JENNIFER DUNN, Congressman ADAM SMITH, and Congressman RICHARD HASTINGS. This legislation would eliminate an irrational provision in our tax code that reduces the amount of foreign capital flowing into the United States, and redirects some of the capital that flows in away from U.S.-based mutual funds toward foreign-based mutual funds.

Under present law, most kinds of interest income and short-term capital gains received directly by a foreign investor or received through a foreign mutual fund are not subject to the 30 percent withholding tax on investment income. However, interest income and short-term capital gains earned by a U.S. mutual fund on its holdings are recharacterized as dividend income when distributed to a foreign investor and is therefore subject to the withholding tax.

Mutual funds are very popular tools for investors. Many foreign investors, like U.S. investors, prefer to rely on professional managers of mutual funds in choosing an appropriate portfolio, rather than having to do the research themselves. However, a foreign investor looking to invest in the U.S. currently

has two options. The first option is to pay a steep withholding tax on all income and short-term capital gains earnings from a U.S. mutual fund, or invest through a foreign mutual fund. Few foreign investors are willing to bear a 30 percent withholding tax, and so they either invest through the foreign mutual fund or forego investing in the United States. Either way, the real loser is the United States.

As Chairman of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on International Trade, I also look at this issue from a trade policy perspective lens. And this lens shows me that we have in this tax provision an artificial barrier to the free flow of trade in the form of financial services and to the free flow of capital. In this respect the current income tax clearly gives foreign mutual funds as competitive advantage with no compensatory advantage gained by any American interest whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this legislation makes good sense as tax policy, trade policy, and economic policy, and I urge my colleagues to lend it their support.

IN HONOR OF MS. QUEENEICE
GANISON

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a young Mississippi student from my district who has achieved national recognition for exemplary volunteer service in her community. Queeneice Ganison of Greenville, Mississippi has just been named one of my state's top honorees in The 2001 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program, an annual honor conferred on the most impressive student volunteers in each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Ms. Ganison is being recognized for coordinating a project to combat underage drinking, which included developing and presenting workshops and slide shows to area middle school and high school students.

In light of numerous statistics that indicate Americans today are less involved in their communities than they once were, it's vital that we encourage and support the kind of selfless contribution this young citizen has made. People of all ages need to think more about how we, as individual citizens, can work together at the local level to ensure the health and vitality of our towns and neighborhoods. Young volunteers like Ms. Ganison are inspiring examples to all of us, and are among our brightest hopes for a better tomorrow.

The program that brought this young role model to our attention—The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards—was created by The Prudential Insurance Company of America in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1995 to impress upon all youth volunteers that their contributions are critically important and highly valued, and to inspire other young people to follow their example. Over the past six years, the program has become the nation's largest young recognition effort based solely on community service, with nearly 100,000 youngsters participating since its inception.

Ms. Ganison should be extremely proud to have been singled out from such a large

group of dedicated volunteers. I heartily applaud Ms. Ganison for her initiative in seeking to make her community a better place to live, and for the positive impact she has had on the lives of others. She has demonstrated a level of commitment and accomplishment that is truly extraordinary in today's world, and deserves our sincere admiration and respect. Her actions show that young Americans can and do play important roles in our communities, and that America's community spirit continues to hold tremendous promise for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me in saluting a great young role model, Ms. Queeneice Ganison.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION
SEEKING TO RESTORE THE
UNITED STATES ASSAY COMMISSION

HON. STEVEN R. ROTHMAN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2001

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce my introduction of a House Resolution designed to re-authorize the creation of the United States Assay Commission, an American institution that was initiated in 1792.

The Assay Commission was authorized by the original Mint Act of April 2, 1792 and continued to meet each year (with the exception of 1815) until about 20 years ago, when it was finally abolished in 1980. During that time, it was the oldest continually operating committee in the federal government and brought in outside people to maintain oversight over the operations of the U.S. Mint.

Originally authorized as part of the nation's first Mint Act of April 2, 1792, the purpose of the Assay Commission was to examine the nation's coins on an annual basis and certify to the President, Congress, and the American people that gold and silver coins had the necessary purity, the proper weight, and necessarily, value.

Among the earliest members, statutorily, were Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, Alexander Hamilton, and even the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Starting about 140 years ago, some members of the general public were invited to participate, and at the time that the Coinage Act of 1873 was passed, it was codified that the President had the right to appoint members of the Assay Commission from the general public at large. That practice continued for more than a century, though after 1970 there were no longer silver coins to review.

By the time that the Assay Commission was abolished in the Carter Administration as part of the President's re-organization project, it no longer served any valid function because the U.S. Mint was no longer producing gold or silver coinage—whether of a circulating or of a commemorative nature.

Starting in 1982, the Mint began anew producing contemporary commemorative coinage from .900 fine silver. By 1984, gold commemorative coins for the Olympic games were added, and since then the U.S. Mint has produced hundreds of millions of dollars worth of retail sales of gold, and silver commemorative coinage. Since 1986, the Mint began pro-

ducing gold, silver and platinum bullion coins which are now widely traded all over the world.

Mr. Speaker, I recall that in the mid-1980's, lacking outside oversight, a problem was discovered in one of the Mint's bullion products. It appears, from the official Mint records, that some fractional gold eagle coins (those weighing less than an ounce) did not have the proper fineness or weight in gold. Because of this, there was a serious marketing problem in the Far East, as confidence in this uniquely American product diminished.

Today, the United States Mint is a business that, were it in privately controlled hands, would constitute a Fortune-500 corporation.

It has come to my attention that an informal, ad hoc group of former Presidential appointees, all former Assay Commissioners, have suggested that it is time for the Mint to have the oversight of the Annual Assay commission. In fact, this distinguished group reiterated their concern this past summer at a reunion meeting held in the Assay Room of the Philadelphia Mint in conjunction with the American Numismatic Association's anniversary convention.

Service on the commission is essentially an honorary task, as the members of the committee have historically paid for all of their own expenses, including their transportation costs and overnight stay at Philadelphia's Mint when necessary.

There are obviously minor costs associated with it, but each of these is quite capable of being covered by the Mint's rotating Enterprise fund.

Mr. Speaker, an article advocating the restoration of the annual Assay Commission written by Fair Lawn, New Jersey Mayor, David L. Ganz, appeared in Numismatic News, a weekly coin hobby periodical. I would ask that this article be reprinted, in full, in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

In the course of two centuries of existence, more than a thousand individuals served on the annual Assay Commission. During the era when the Mint was active in promoting commemorative coinage, they constituted a group who not only participated in their government first hand, but also thereafter served as goodwill ambassadors for the products of the United States Mint.

The Mint has dozens of products that it offers to collectors, and since the 50 state quarter program began, the ranks of those collecting coins has grown from three to five million Americans to more than 125 million people collecting state quarters. Some of those state quarters are made of coin silver, and having citizens retain some oversight over these coins not only keeps consumer confidence in the Mint's operations high, but affords the rare opportunity for citizens to regularly, and actively, participate in their government.

I urge my colleagues to help me re-authorize the Assay Commission by cosponsoring the legislation that I have introduced today.

[From the Numismatic News, Oct. 5, 1999]

TIME TO CONSIDER REVIVING THE ASSAY
COMMISSION

(By David L. Ganz)

Let me set the stage. A quarter century ago this past February, Richard Nixon was in the final throes of his star-crossed Presidency, though no one yet suspected that Watergate was about to become his ultimate