

the numbers for any purposes not related to Social Security Administration. Social Security numbers issued before implementation of this bill shall no longer be considered valid federal identifiers. Of course, the Social Security Administration shall be able to use an individual's original Social Security number to ensure efficient administration of the Social Security system.

Mr. Speaker, Congress has a moral responsibility to address this problem as it was Congress which transformed the Social Security number into a national identifier. Thanks to Congress, today no American can get a job, open a bank account, get a professional license, or even get a drivers' license without presenting their Social Security number. So widespread has the use of the Social Security number become that a member of my staff had to produce a Social Security number in order to get a fishing license!

One of the most disturbing abuses of the Social Security number is the congressionally-authorized rule forcing parents to get a Social Security number for their newborn children in order to claim them as dependents. Forcing parents to register their children with the state is more like something out of the nightmares of George Orwell than the dreams of a free republic which inspired this nation's founders.

Congressionally-mandated use of the Social Security number as an identifier facilitates the horrendous crime of identity theft. Thanks to the Congressionally-mandated use of the Social Security number as a uniform identifier, an unscrupulous person may simply obtain someone's Social Security number in order to access that person's bank accounts, credit cards, and other financial assets. Many Americans have lost their life savings and had their credit destroyed as a result of identity theft—yet the federal government continues to encourage such crimes by mandating use of the Social Security number as a uniform ID!

This act also forbids the federal government from creating national ID cards or establishing any identifiers for the purpose of investigating, monitoring, overseeing, or regulating private transactions between American citizens, as well as repealing those sections of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 that require the Department of Health and Human Services to establish a uniform standard health identifier. By putting an end to government-mandated uniform IDs, the Identity Theft Prevention Act will prevent millions of Americans from having their liberty, property and privacy violated by private-and-public sector criminals.

In addition to forbidding the federal government from creating national identifiers, this legislation forbids the federal government from blackmailing states into adopting uniform standard identifiers by withholding federal funds. One of the most onerous practices of Congress is the use of federal funds illegitimately taken from the American people to bribe states into obeying federal dictates.

Mr. Speaker, of all the invasions of privacy proposed in the past decade, perhaps the most onerous is the attempt to assign every American a "unique health identifier"—an identifier which could be used to create a national database containing the medical history of all Americans. As an OB/GYN with more than 30 years in private practice, I know well the importance of preserving the sanctity of the physician-patient relationship. Oftentimes,

effective treatment depends on a patient's ability to place absolute trust in his or her doctor. What will happen to that trust when patients know that any and all information given to their doctor will be placed in a government accessible data base?

Many of my colleagues will claim that the federal government needs these powers to protect against fraud or some other criminal activities. However, monitoring the transactions of every American in order to catch those few who are involved in some sort of illegal activity turns one of the great bulwarks of our liberty, the presumption of innocence, on its head. The federal government has no right to treat all Americans as criminals by spying on their relationship with their doctors, employers, or bankers. In fact, criminal law enforcement is reserved to the state and local governments by the Constitution's Tenth Amendment.

Other members of Congress will claim that the federal government needs the power to monitor Americans in order to allow the government to operate more efficiently. I would remind my colleagues that in a constitutional republic the people are never asked to sacrifice their liberties to make the job of government officials a little bit easier. We are here to protect the freedom of the American people, not to make privacy invasion more efficient.

Mr. Speaker, while I do not question the sincerity of those members who suggest that Congress can ensure citizens' rights are protected through legislation restricting access to personal information, the only effective privacy protection is to forbid the federal government from mandating national identifiers. Legislative "privacy protections" are inadequate to protect the liberty of Americans for several reasons. First, it is simply common sense that repealing those federal laws that promote identity theft is more effective in protecting the public than expanding the power of the federal police force. Federal punishment of identity thieves provides cold comfort to those who have suffered financial losses and the destruction of their good reputation as a result of identity theft.

Federal laws are not only ineffective in stopping private criminals, they have not even stopped unscrupulous government officials from accessing personal information. Did laws purporting to restrict the use of personal information stop the well-publicized violation of privacy by IRS officials or the FBI abuses by the Clinton and Nixon administrations?

Second, the federal government has been creating property interests in private information for certain state-favored third parties. For example, a little-noticed provision in the Patient Protection Act established a property right for insurance companies to access personal health care information. Congress also authorized private individuals to receive personal information from government databases in the copyright bill passed in 1998.

Perhaps the most outrageous example of phony privacy protection is the Clinton Administration's so-called "medical privacy" proposal, which allow medical researchers, certain business interests, and law enforcement officials' access to health care information, in complete disregard of the Fifth Amendment and the wishes of individual patients! Obviously, "privacy protection" laws have proven greatly inadequate to protect personal information when the government is the one providing or seeking the information.

The primary reason why any action short of the repeal of laws authorizing privacy violations is insufficient is because the federal government lacks constitutional authority to force citizens to adopt a universal identifier for health care, employment, or any other reason. Any federal action that oversteps constitutional limitations violates liberty because it ratifies the principle that the federal government, not the Constitution, is the ultimate judge of its own jurisdiction over the people. The only effective protection of the rights of citizens is for Congress to follow Thomas Jefferson's advice and "bind (the federal government) down with chains of the Constitution."

Mr. Speaker, those members who are unpersuaded by the moral and constitutional reasons for embracing the Identity Theft Prevention Act should consider the overwhelming opposition of the American people toward national identifiers. The overwhelming public opposition to the various "Know-Your-Customer" schemes, the attempt to turn drivers' licenses into National ID cards, the Clinton Administration's Medical Privacy proposal, as well as the numerous complaints over the ever-growing uses of the Social Security number show that American people want Congress to stop invading their privacy. Congress risks provoking a voter backlash if we fail to halt the growth of the surveillance state.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I once again call on my colleagues to join me in putting an end to the federal government's unconstitutional use of national identifiers to monitor the actions of private citizens. National identifiers threaten all Americans by exposing them to the threat of identity theft by private criminals and abuse of their liberties by public criminals. In addition, national identifiers are incompatible with a limited, constitutional government. I, therefore, hope my colleagues will join my efforts to protect the freedom of their constituents by supporting the Identity Theft Prevention Act.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MILITARY RETIREE HEALTH CARE TASK FORCE ACT

HON. JO ANN EMERSON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 3, 2001

Mrs. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to introduce the Military Retiree Health Care Task Force Act of 2001. This legislation will establish a Task Force that will look into all of the health care promises and representations made to members of the Uniformed Services by Department of Defense personnel and Department literature. The Task Force will submit a comprehensive report to Congress which will contain a detailed statement of its findings and conclusions. This report will include legislative remedies to correct the great injustices that have occurred to those men and women who served their country in good faith.

Let us not forget why we are blessed with freedom and democracy in this country. The sacrifices made by those who served in the military are something that must never be overlooked. Promises were made to those who served in the Uniformed Services. They were told that their health care would be taken

care of for life if they served a minimum of twenty years of active federal service.

Well, those military retirees served their time and expected the government to hold up its end of the bargain. They are now realizing that these were nothing more than empty promises. Those who served in the military did not let their country down in its time of need and we should not let military retirees down in theirs. It's time military retirees get what was promised to them and that's why I am introducing this legislation.

HONORING JUNE PINKNEY ROSS

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 3, 2001

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, today I salute and honor the indomitable June Pinkney Ross of Galveston, Texas.

I was recently honored to have contributed to the "Book of Letters" being presented next week to Ms. Ross in celebration of her twenty-seven year career as Executive Director of the Galveston County Community Action Council.

The residents of Galveston County, particularly the disenfranchised and the children who could not speak for themselves, have been well served by June Ross' unselfish acts of caring, sharing, kindness and understanding of their plight.

It is well known that June Ross will literally fight to the bitter end for the right thing, is bluntly and sometimes frighteningly honest about how to address the needs of the poor and does not mind sharing her unedited opinion on any subject that is placed on the table. We who know her and have been privileged to work with her always knew that we could count on her to go after grants for which her agency qualified and, once the money was received, to disburse it where it was most needed. I have enjoyed working with June Ross and always felt that she would make a fair assessment of any situation that she was confronted with and react accordingly.

My one regret during our relationship is that I never got a chance to sample her cooking. Ms. Ross' radio cooking class was quite successful and listeners would bombard the station for her recipes. I am sure that she approached that job with the same diligence and commitment that she has given to the State of Texas and Galveston County throughout the years. I want to also take this opportunity to let her know that I am grateful for her service to our great nation as a member of the United States Military.

Mr. Speaker, I salute June Ross for all she has done to make the community better (United Way, one of the original founders of Hospice) and hope she knows how much she is respected and loved.

CHIEF PHILLIP MARTIN—CHAMPION OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY

HON. TOM DeLAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 3, 2001

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce to the RECORD the following editorial

that appears in Indian Country Today. As the piece points out, Chief Phillip Martin of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians has for more than a quarter of a century used the free market as a tool to better the lives of his fellow tribe members and neighbors.

Self-reliance and not government dependency is the secret to prosperity. But there is no need to tell Chief Martin that fact. He has lived his life promoting the economic vitality of his people and they have reaped the benefits of his progressive thinking. I salute Chief Martin for all he has done to further the cause of freedom—for his people and for our nation.

[From Indian Country Today, Dec. 27, 2000]

MISSISSIPPI CHOCTAWS: THE BENEFITS OF PEACE CHIEFS

If a people are going to strive to achieve economic prosperity, the reduction of conflict, the acceptance and understanding of peace, is a most useful strategy. Mutual understanding, common cause and unity of action become possible. Little ever improves from virulent conflict and nothing moves forward in war. Leadership with vision often works actively to reduce conflict while putting its major efforts toward the positive building of fair community governance and efficient enterprises. At this moment of shifting political climates, when the future of Native nations is clouded by uncertainties on the national level, it seems proper to salute a consistent peace chief, one who led his own people from severe poverty and obscurity to sustained prosperity and regional political prominence.

He is Phillip Martin, long-time chief of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. A man of great perseverance, the 75-year-old Martin has led and guided his 6,000-member Choctaw tribe since 1959. Periodically, yet consistently reelected to the tribe's highest office for more than 40 years, Phillip Martin is universally credited for the success of the Choctaw, who are well posed to enter the 21st century as a self-determined people. While other, more conflictive tribes have deepened their economic dependencies and allowed spirals of violence to weaken their body politic, the Mississippi Choctaws have built steadily for more than 30 years. A well-entrenched tradition remembers the attitude of historical chief, Pushmataha, who in 1811 reasoned against war with their neighbors while Tecumseh appealed to the Choctaw warriors to join his war parties. While he had been a great warrior as a young man, Pushmataha opted for peace as he aged as a chief.

While Tecumseh has come down through the history as the greater leader, and Pushmataha is the lesser known. Interestingly, the response of Pushmataha, who coolly analyzed the horrible suffering war would bring, was actually quite sophisticated and just as completely dedicated to the preservation and survival of his people. He pointed out how his own tribe had painstakingly worked out friendly relations with their white neighbors. Their relations were reciprocal and as a result, things were going well. To start killing their neighbors with whom they had such relations did not seem a good idea to Pushmataha, who kept his people out of the war and guided them for another 14 years.

Like Pushmataha, Phillip Martin came home from war to embark in a career that would build education and civic action and economic opportunity for his people. He was one of those from what has been called "the greatest generation." A World War II Air Force combat veteran who lost a brother in the war, Martin served in the military until 1955. When he returned home, his people had their pride and their language, but little

else. They were among the poorest sharecroppers in a poor state, acutely discriminated against. They were basically just holding on to a tribal base, having come through a very dark historical period as a people of color in a racially polarized South. Suffering from 80 percent unemployment, 90 percent lived in poverty and the tribe averaged a sixth-grade education.

Appreciably, Martin returned home of sound mind and character and applied himself to the betterment of his people through self-sufficient enterprise. Martin led an early flight to construct and operated the first high school on the reservation in 1963, beginning a trend that has seen consistent improvement in the educational level of the reservation population. He began the planning that would lay out a modern community infrastructure with good housing. He pursued and constructed an industrial park and after 10 years of chasing contracts, began a successful 20 years of economic growth. General Motors, Ford Motor Co., Oxford Speakers and other companies have located manufacturing plants in the Choctaw's 80-acre industrial park, which boasts 500,000 square feet of manufacturing space.

By 1994, the year when their enterprises diversified and accelerated with construction of a casino and entertainment center, the nation ran a total payroll topping \$84 million. It had sound management and was ready to take on the complexity of gaming. The nation's Chahta Enterprises is now one of the 10 top employers in Mississippi. Its entertainment complex receives more than 2.5 million visitors a year and the tribe has built more than 1,000 new houses, constructed a major hospital, schools, nursing home, shopping center and day care center.

In what used to be the poorest county in the poorest state in the United States, in one of the most conservative states in the union, the Choctaws led an economic revolution. Today, with nearly universal employment, only 2.7 percent of household income comes from social services and this mostly involves elderly and handicapped. The tribe's manufacturing plants, still going strong, consistently win high quality awards. They employ some 8,000 people, mostly non-Natives.

Most interestingly, a stroll down the reservation's main elementary school will reveal a lot of students speaking fluent Choctaw.

"Tell the other tribes" Martin says, "we can all do this. If you really want to do it, and get your act together, you can do it." This is a generous thought, but such progress will also require vision, and political acumen. To Martin's credit, when the political winds turned right in 1994, he was positioned to solidify friendships with such Republican powerhouses as Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss.

Hiring quality lobbyists as their new wealth allowed, the Choctaw leader persuaded a good sector of Republicans to the righteousness of the Native nations sovereignty from taxation. In particular, the Choctaw initiative convinced the country's major anti-tax organization—Americans for Tax Reform, whose 500-plus organizations network and 90,000 activists supported the Indian case as an anti-tax strategy.

Politics is the art of achieving your group's self-interest, and it certainly makes for diverse bedfellows. But always the proof is in the pudding. The Choctaw strategy, precise and proper for their geopolitical context, is pragmatically brilliant. In the hold of the old South, this Mississippi tribe provides a welcome signal, an example of where visionary leadership can make a huge difference to the future of a people. An appreciation and salutation is due Choctaw chief and statesman, Phillip Martin, visionary, quiet building, steady helm.