

benefit equal to 75% of the combined benefits the couple had been receiving prior to the death of one spouse.

The widow's guarantee would provide higher benefits than widows receive under current law—which only provides benefits equal to what the husband had been receiving prior to his death. Under current law, widows are effectively limited to only 50–67 percent of what the couple had been receiving. Yet under federal guidelines, a one-person household is estimated to need 80 percent of the income of a two-person household. This bill would reduce the drop in Social Security income that would otherwise occur upon the death of a spouse.

For example, the average retired worker on the rolls today receives a benefit of \$874 per month. If that worker has a spouse who is entitled to Social Security spousal benefits, their combined benefit is \$1311. Under current law, the widow would receive \$874 after her husband dies. Under the 75% widow's guarantee, the widow would get a benefit of \$983 a month—an increase of \$109 a month, or 12 percent more than she would receive under current law.

To assure that the increased benefits are concentrated on those with the greatest need, the increase would be subject to a dollar cap of \$1000 a month, which would be indexed in 2003 and later years.

The benefit increase is estimated to help 5 million widows and widowers, one million of whom are currently living in poverty.

This bill also includes benefit improvements to help certain groups of disabled widows, elderly widows whose husbands died shortly after retirement, and divorced spouses. Over 120,000 beneficiaries would see increases as a result of this section of the bill.

Finally, this is fully financed through general revenue transfers to Social Security. This makes the Trust Funds whole for the cost of these vital benefit improvements.

This legislation promotes the needs of our poorest and most vulnerable elderly. It improves and strengthens Social Security's guaranteed, dependable monthly income. It assures that widows and widowers will have at least a minimally decent standard of living in old-age. I am pleased to introduce the Social Security Widow's Benefit Guarantee Act.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO FRANA ARAUJO MACE

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Frana Araujo Mace and thank her for her extraordinary contributions in the Colorado General Assembly. Her dedication to both her job and the people of Colorado deserves the recognition of this body of Congress, and, indeed, this nation. She will be remembered as a State Representative with the utmost dedication to her constituents, and as she moves on in her career, I would like to thank her for all of her hard work in the Colorado Legislature.

Frana was appointed to the Colorado State House of Representatives in 1995 to fill a vacancy, and was subsequently elected in 1996,

1998 and 2000. During her tenure in the State House, she served as the House Minority Whip and was a member of the House Services, Local Government, Transportation, and Energy committees. She was the mayoral appointee to the Denver Board of Adjustment and Zoning Appeals from 1976 through 1986, was the Governor's appointee to the Commission on Aging, and served as the party finance chair from District 4A.

Not only has Frana served the community effectively as a member of the Colorado General Assembly, she has also done her part as an active humanitarian. She served as the President and Chairman of the Northside Community Center, and on the Servicios de la Raza cooperative endeavor. For her hard work and dedication, Frana was named the Hispanic Woman of the Year/Political Division in 1995. In addition to her community endeavors, Frana is married to Gilbert Mace, and is the proud mother of five children.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain that Frana's colleagues and constituents will sorely miss the leadership and compassion that she consistently gave to the State of Colorado, and I thank her for all that she has done for the state. I am honored to bring her accomplishments to the attention of this body of Congress, and wish her all the best in the future. Her hard work and dedication truly embodies the spirit of the State, and it is with a great deal of pride that I thank her for her many years of public service.

ON THE DEATH OF MSGR. GEORGE HIGGINS

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to a man who devoted his life to social justice.

Today we say goodbye to Monsignor George G. Higgins, who headed the Social Action Department of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for 35 years. Msgr. Higgins died May 1, and was buried today in his home town of LaGrange, Illinois. He was 86 years old.

Msgr. Higgins fought for the rights of workers, whether they were auto workers in Detroit, farm workers in California or steelworkers on the Iron Range of Minnesota. He wrote nearly 3,000 columns on social issues for Catholic newspapers across the country from 1945 until September 2001, when he could no longer continue because of failing eyesight.

Msgr. Higgins held a doctorate in economics and political science from Catholic University of America. He was awarded the University of Notre Dame's highest honor, the Laetare Medal, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Last year he was honored as one of the great pioneers in promoting dialogue between Catholics and Jews by the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee.

Msgr. Higgins made a lasting imprint on the Church's approach to social policy in America: feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, clothing the poor.

As columnist E.J. Dionne wrote in today's Washington Post, "It is one of the highest callings of spiritual leaders to force those who

live happy and comfortable lives to consider their obligations to those heavily burdened by injustice and deprivation." Msgr. Higgins answered that calling.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when a dark cloud of scandal hangs over the Catholic Church, it is important to note that the priesthood is full of good men doing God's work. Msgr. Higgins was such a priest. All of us who believe in the fair treatment of working men and women, compassion for the poorest among us, and brotherhood with those of other faiths, will miss him deeply.

Mr. Speaker, I ask to submit the full text of E.J. Dionne's column for the RECORD.

[Washingtonpost.com, May 7, 2002]

THE GREAT MONSIGNOR

(By E. J. Dionne, Jr.)

There is no such thing as a timely death. But just when you thought all the stories on American priests were destined to be about evil committed and covered up, one of the truly great priests was called to his eternal reward.

Monsignor George G. Higgins was the sort of Catholic clergyman regularly cast as a hero in movies of the 1940s and '50s. He was an uncompromising pro-labor priest who walked picket lines, fought anti-Semitism, supported civil rights and wrote and wrote and wrote in the hope that some of his arguments about social justice might penetrate somewhere.

He got attached to causes before they became fashionable, and stuck with them after the fashionable people moved on. Cesar Chavez once said that no one had done more for American farm workers than Monsignor Higgins. In the 1980s, he traveled regularly to Poland in support of Solidarity's struggle against communism and became an important link between American union leaders and their Polish brethren.

As it happens, even the day of Monsignor Higgins' death, at the age of 86, was appropriate. He passed from this world on May 1, the day that many countries set aside to honor labor and that the Catholic Church designates as the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker.

If Higgins had been there when that famous carpenter was looking for a place to spend the night with his pregnant wife, the monsignor would certainly have taken the family in. He would also have handed Joseph a union card, told him he deserved better pay and benefits, and insisted that no working person should ever have to beg for shelter.

Yes, Higgins sounds so old-fashioned—and in every good sense he was—that you might wonder about his relevance to our moment. Let us count the ways.

One of the most astonishing and disturbing aspects of the Catholic Church's current scandal is the profound disjunction—that's a charitable word—between what the church preaches about sexuality and compassion toward the young and how its leaders reacted to the flagrant violation of these norms by priests.

Higgins, who spent decades as the Catholic Church's point man on labor and social justice issues, hated the idea of preachers' exhorting people to do one thing and then doing the opposite. And so he made himself into a true pain for any administrator of any Catholic institution who resisted the demands of workers for fair pay and union representation.

"These men and women mop the floors of Catholic schools, work in Catholic hospital kitchens and perform other sometimes menial tasks in various institutions," he once wrote. "They have not volunteered to serve the church for less than proportionate compensation."

"The church has a long history of speaking out on justice and peace issues," he said. "Yet only in more recent times has the church made it clear that these teachings apply as well to the workings of its own institutions."

Where some religious leaders complain that they get caught up in scandal because they are unfairly held to higher standards, Higgins believed that higher standards were exactly the calling of those who claim the authority to tell others what to do.

It bothered Higgins to the end of his life that the cause of trade unionism had become so unfashionable, especially among well-educated and well-paid elites. For 56 years, he wrote a column for the Catholic press, and he returned to union issues so often that he once felt obligated to headline one of his offerings: "Why There's So Much Ado About Labor in My Column."

His answer was simple: "I am convinced that we are not likely to have a fully free or democratic society over the long haul without a strong and effective labor movement."

To those who saw collective bargaining as outdated in a new economy involving choice, mobility and entrepreneurship, Higgins would thunder back about the rights of those for whom such a glittering world was still, at best, a distant possibility: hospital workers, farm workers, fast-food workers and others who need higher wages to help their children reach their dreams. He could not abide well-paid intellectuals who regularly derided unions as dinosaurs, and he told them so, over and over.

It is one of the highest callings of spiritual leaders to force those who live happy and comfortable lives to consider their obligations to those heavily burdened by injustice and deprivation. It is a great loss when such prophetic voices are stilled by scandal and the cynicism it breeds. Fortunately, that never happened to Higgins. He never had to shut up about injustice and, God bless him, he never did.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO BILL WEBSTER

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Bill Webster and thank him for his contributions in the Colorado General Assembly. His hard work and dedication is greatly appreciated, and I am honored to pay tribute to him today in front of this body of Congress. He will long be remembered as an effective State Representative, and will continue to be known as a leader in the community. As he moves on in his career, let it be known that I, along with people of Colorado, am grateful for all that he has done for the Colorado General Assembly.

During his two terms in the Colorado State House of Representatives, Bill has served on a number of committees, including his two current committees, Agriculture, Livestock & Natural Resources, where he serves as vice-chairman, and Local Government. In addition, Bill served for eight years as the Weld County Commissioner, and worked at the Webster Land & Cattle Company.

Not only has Bill served the community effectively as a member of the Colorado General Assembly, he has also done his part as an active humanitarian. He is the past presi-

dent of the Greeley Chamber of Commerce, Greeley Rotary Club and the Boys and Girls Club of Greeley. He is also a past director of Safeway Stores, Inc., Colorado Water Congress and the National Cattlemen's Association, and serves on the Colorado Agriculture Commission and the Greeley Planning Commission. Perhaps most importantly, Bill is married to his wife Sylvia, and they have three children.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Bill Webster has served his state well by providing significant service during his distinguished tenure in the Colorado General Assembly. I am honored to be able to bring his hard work and dedication to the attention of this body of Congress. It is my privilege to be able to express to him, and to this country, my gratitude for all that he has done for our wonderful state, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

NOTIFYING TAXPAYERS REGARDING THEIR POSSIBLE ELIGIBILITY FOR EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I introduced H.R. 4632 to help more low income workers seek tax rebates under the Earned Income Tax Credit program.

Under the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) provisions, a person at least 25 years old, earning \$1 up to \$10,709 may qualify for a refundable tax credit of \$1 to \$364 depending on income earned.

A single parent, at least 25 years old, with one child, earning \$1 to \$28,280 may receive a refundable tax credit of \$3 to \$2,428 depending on income earned.

A single parent, at least 25 years old, with two children, earning \$1 to \$32,120 may receive a refundable tax credit of \$2 to \$4,008 depending on income earned.

In the year 2000, about 19 million low income families received Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) refunds. The total refunds paid out in 2000 was \$30 billion.

28% of the families who received EITC had incomes below \$10,000. The refund for a single parent with two children earning \$10,000 was \$4,008.

In 1999 over 25% of the low income taxpayers who were eligible did not file for EITC.

With a million single parents being forced off welfare to work, it is of great concern that many, if not most, are not aware of the refund that they could apply for. The vast majority of the welfare mothers who are forced to work earn less than \$8,000 per year. The Administration and other defenders of the welfare to work program argue that in addition to the meager earnings, these poor families receive \$4,000 under EITC. The tragedy is that most don't.

H.R. 4632 is offered to make sure that information is given to these poor families informing them that this refund is due them.

If welfare to work is justified on the basis that low wages can be buffered by \$4,000 in EITC refunds, then we need to make sure that these monies are received.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM G. SWENSON

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute today to a man who has embodied the spirit of the State of Colorado through his life-long dedication to serving his state. A member of the Colorado General Assembly, the hard work and dedication of William Swenson, known as Bill, is a testament to the Western pride and character of my state and its citizens. Bill is now leaving the Colorado State House of Representatives after selflessly serving since 1994, and I can think of no better way to celebrate Bill's retirement than to honor his many achievements before this body of Congress and this nation.

A resident of Longmont, Colorado, Bill has served in various local government positions before his election to the House, notably as a City Councilman and Mayor of Longmont. Elected to the Colorado State House of Representatives in 1994, he has served several committees, recently as a member of the Local Government committee and Chairman of the Transportation and Energy committee. During this time, he has been a valuable proponent for local government, tax relief, and water and natural resources conservation.

Bill is regarded as a loving husband and devoted father of four as well as a key member of the community. He is currently a member of Rotary International, the First Lutheran Churchmen and serves as the church treasurer. His work ethic is reflected in his membership in the IBM Quarter Century Club, an honorarium for his thirty-four years of service to the company.

Mr. Speaker, Bill has been a valued member of our Colorado community, both as an elected official and as a citizen. While I am sure he will be missed in the Colorado State House of Representatives, I know that he will undoubtedly succeed in his future endeavors, and will continue to serve his fellow Coloradans. Thank you Bill, for all of your hard work and efforts.

A WELL DESERVED TRIBUTE TO HEITOR SOUSA

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. FRANK. Mr. Speaker, last month, in Fall River, Massachusetts, a very impressive tribute was paid to Heitor Sousa, one of the leaders in the Portuguese American community. Heitor Sousa came to the U.S. in 1981 from the Azores, and he is an example of the way in which immigration enriches our country economically, culturally, and socially. I have been privileged to benefit from Heitor Sousa's friendship, advice, and wisdom for 20 years, during the time I have represented parts of Southeastern Massachusetts in this body. I want to add my own personal gratitude to him for the extraordinary service he has performed both for the people of Southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island and for the residents of Portugal in general and the Azores in