

Mr. Moya has been constantly harassed and arrested for his pro-democracy activities. In December, 1999, Mr. Moya was detained after participating in a peaceful demonstration to celebrate the 51st anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One year later, in December, 2000, Mr. Moya was sentenced to one year in the Cuban gulag and 10 years confinement to his home province, Matanzas. According to Amnesty International,

The sentence was reportedly imposed because, in the course of a mass celebrated at his home in November 2000, prayers were said for political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, including calls for them to be amnestied.

Following his release from the totalitarian gulag, Mr. Moya resumed his peaceful quest to guarantee fundamental human rights for every citizen of Cuba. On August 15, 2002, Mr. Moya received the second annual Pedro Luis Boitel Freedom Award for his courage in carrying out nonviolent civic resistance in totalitarian Cuba.

As part of the Cuban tyrant's brutal March, 2003 crackdown against pro-democracy activists, Mr. Moya was once again arrested. In a sham trial, Mr. Moya was sentenced to 20 years in the totalitarian gulag.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Moya is languishing in the wretched filth of Castro's totalitarian gulag, simply because he is an advocate for freedom. My Colleagues, we must demand the immediate release of Angel Juan Moya Acosta and every prisoner of conscience in totalitarian Cuba.

COMMENDATION OF THE JAVITS-WAGER-O'DAY (JWOD) PROGRAM

HON. DENISE L. MAJETTE

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 11, 2004

Ms. MAJETTE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with my colleagues a startling statistic—the 50 percent unemployment rate of people with disabilities in America. For those with severe disabilities, the number is even more—it is 70 percent. People with disabilities face many barriers to employment, including everything from transportation to contending with the prevailing attitude surrounding the disabled, but many of them want to work. They want the opportunity.

All too often, people focus on the disability of a person, not the *ability*. But people with disabilities *want* to work, and *can* work. It's up to us to recognize the potential of all Americans and provide the opportunities needed to reverse this statistic and to allow people with disabilities to become self-sufficient, independent, tax-paying citizens.

To that end, I am proud to support employment opportunities for people with disabilities, particularly through the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program. The JWOD Program uses the purchasing power of the Federal Government to buy products and services from participating, community-based nonprofit agencies dedicated to training and employing individuals with disabilities. The JWOD Program provides people who are blind or who have other severe disabilities the opportunity to acquire job skills and training, receive good wages and benefits and gain greater independence and

quality of life. Through the JWOD Program, people with disabilities enjoy full participation in their community and can market their JWOD-learned skills into other public and private sector jobs.

In the United States, the program serves 40,000 people in the disability community and generated approximately \$280 million in wages earned and nearly \$1.5 billion in products sold. In Georgia alone, some 972 people with disabilities earned nearly \$3 million in wages last year as a result of JWOD. 972 lives were changed. For many out of that 972, it was the first time they had a job, drew a paycheck, had the experience of being independent. These are things many of us take for granted, but for some—particularly people with disabilities—it means the world.

It is with great pleasure that I recognize the great contributions of American workers with disabilities and I encourage others to do so on February 26th, which is National Disability Day. More importantly, let us all remember everyday that everyone has an ability—everyone has something to share for the greater good. America truly works best when all Americans work. I commend the JWOD Program, its supporters, and its participants for making a difference where it is needed most.

HONORING JOHN A. CANNING, JR.

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 11, 2004

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a friend, colleague and leader of Chicago's business community, John A. Canning, Jr.

On February 1, 2004, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan made an exemplary choice when he appointed John A. Canning, Jr. as a Director of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

John A. Canning, Jr. is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Madison Dearborn Partners. Based in Chicago, Madison Dearborn Partners is one of the largest and most experienced private equity investment firms in the United States.

Prior to co-founding Madison Dearborn Partners, John spent 24 years with First Chicago Corporation, most recently as Executive Vice President of The First National Bank of Chicago and President of First Chicago Venture Capital. Mr. Canning has more than a quarter century of experience in private equity investing.

John's service to Chicago's business community is matched only by his commitment to Chicago's philanthropic community. He currently serves on the Boards of Directors of Jefferson Smurfit Group plc, Norfolk Tides Baseball Club, LaSalle National Bank, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, and Children's Inner City Educational Fund.

In addition, John lends his vast experience to the Boards of Trustees of The Big Shoulders Fund, The Chicago Community Trust, Denison University, Dublin City University Educational Trust, The Field Museum, and Northwestern University. A common thread among John's contributions and the goals of these organizations is their shared dedication to community service.

Mr. Speaker, on the eve of his first board meeting, I want to wish John Canning continued success as he puts his vast knowledge and wide-ranging expertise to work for the American people. The citizens of Chicago and indeed the country are fortunate to have him at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

TRIBUTE TO CHRIS MESARIC

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 11, 2004

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise before you today to pay tribute to the life of a fellow Coloradan. After over a decade of fighting with a rare illness, Chris Mesaric from Montrose, CO, sadly passed away recently at the age of thirty-five. Chris was a loving husband, proud father, and devoted son. He will be missed by many, and I think it appropriate that we remember his life here today.

When Chris was diagnosed with severe aplastic anemia, he was given only days to live, but Chris decided that he would not accept waiting around to die, vowing to fight his ailment to the fullest. Regardless of the amount of pain that Chris may have experienced during treatments, he never let on to his suffering and instead focused on spending time with his family and those he loved. He is survived by his parents Frank and Linda, his wife Robin and two daughters.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to rise before this body of Congress to pay tribute to the life of Chris Mesaric. He was a beloved man who overcame obstacles, always lived life to the fullest, and was an inspiration to many. The Montrose community and State of Colorado will truly miss him. My heart goes out to his family during this difficult time of bereavement.

TEXAS TEACHER GPO LOOPHOLE

HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 11, 2004

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of equality in Social Security law for all working Americans. Today we're having the final round of debate on a bill that will bring about fairness and equity to a system under scrutiny. While this bill covers many other topics, for Texans, this bill is about closing an unjust loophole.

For 95 percent of America's working husbands and wives, there is a rule that says people may collect only the higher of spousal benefits or retirement benefits, but they cannot collect both. . . . That is—unless you're in the Texas Teacher Retirement System. The Texas Teacher Retirement System is a substitute for Social Security, their version of the dual entitlement rule is called the Government Pension Offset.

The dual entitlement rule applies whether a married couple works in jobs such as a nurse and a small business owner, a Social Security covered teacher and an accountant, or a lawyer and an electrical engineer, they both pay into Social Security and are both subject to

this rule. The husband and wife are each able to collect either their retirement benefits earned through their own hard work or they are able to collect spousal benefits—which ever is higher. They cannot collect both.

It is very possible that if one spouse earns significantly less than the other, for example, that nurse and small-business owner, then the nurse is going to have higher spousal benefits than her own retirement benefits. In that case, the nurse will collect the higher spousal benefit, but may end up asking herself why she had to pay Social Security taxes all those years instead of just staying home.

If a retirement benefit is \$600 per month for the nurse—but her spousal benefit is \$800 . . . she would collect \$800—but not \$1,400. For Texas teachers making use of their “last day of work” loophole, they collect spousal benefits, just like that nurse—and then they collect their retirement. By working just one last day in a school district and paying as little as \$3 into Social Security, a teacher can then qualify to receive full Social Security spousal benefits on top of her retirement benefits.

Many teachers in Texas have questioned the system because they want both Social Security spousal benefits and their Texas teacher

retirement. Again, the Texas Teacher Retirement System is a substitute for Social Security; you can do one or the other, but not both. And no one else can do both.

I want teachers to understand that the Government Pension Offset (GPO) only reduces their spousal benefit by two-thirds of their state retirement benefits rather than dollar for dollar as is the case for all other working spouses. That's right! Anyone subject to GPO gets a better deal and more bang for their buck than 95 percent of the American public. They get one-third more of their spousal benefits than any other working Americans.

The “loophole” that is being closed here today is one small part of the government pension offset meant to encourage entire school districts to join the Social Security system. The unique situation for Texas teachers is that only about 50 Texas school districts participate in Social Security and the other 1,000 school districts participate in the Texas Teacher Retirement System, which again, is a substitute for Social Security coverage.

We're closing this loophole in the law to create integrity and maintain fairness in the system and to prevent further erosion of the Social Security trust fund. This new law will also

require people to sign a notice acknowledging that employment in a job not covered by Social Security will have an effect upon possible future Social Security benefits.

It's just sad when constituents who are teachers tell me that they had no idea that a teaching job not covered by Social Security would have an effect upon possible Social Security benefits in the future. It's important we correct that.

Finally, one more area that has caused great confusion is regarding the annual benefit statements we all receive from the Social Security Administration telling us about our expected future benefits from Social Security. The IRS and SSA will begin collecting information necessary to more accurately reflect on these statements the offsets from jobs not covered by Social Security.

I am pro-teacher and in Texas they have a great state retirement system. But we cannot give special treatment to this small slice of the American population. It's just not fair—especially when it comes to Social Security and retirement savings. Today we are just making the two systems apply fairly to all Americans. It's the right thing to do.