

hearing we held on January 23, 2004, in Los Angeles, CA, the subcommittee heard from a witness who explained the simple yet weighty impact the use of government property would be for groups like his. Keith Phillips is the founder and president of World Impact, a non-profit, faith-based organization "designed to transform the lives of the urban poor." For groups like Mr. Phillips', the use of buses for weekend trips can be the difference in helping the children of the urban poor. He suggested at our hearing that the Federal Government allow groups like his to use their buses on the weekend. He explained that government can help World Impact help other Americans, "Give us facilities where we can run clinics, thrift stores, recreational activities. Help us provide better transportation for the urban poor to camps, conferences and schools by giving us the use of government vehicles like buses on weekends."

Mr. Speaker, our Department of Defense, not to speak of other federal departments, operate hundreds, probably thousands of buses. The first legal step has been taken to prevent these buses from ever being used by the Boy Scouts or by groups like World Impact. I hope this House takes leaps toward helping groups like these. I hope this House takes steps to help DOD and other branches of the Federal Government help these people help their fellow Americans. I hope we stand up for the religious liberty of Americans against those who would discriminate against religiously oriented Americans.

I rise with my colleagues of the House in recognizing the good service of the Boy Scouts of America. Though H. Res. 853 would appear to be a simple resolution for this body to consider, I believe we are forced to defend the Boy Scouts and all other service organizations that would be falsely challenged in their service of other Americans. Let us unanimously pass H. Res. 853, and honor the ideals of the Scout Oath:

On my honor I will do my best
To do my duty to God and my country
and to obey the Scout Law;
To help other people at all times;
To keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake, and morally straight.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield back my time.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 853.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays. The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN OPEN ELECTIONS ACT OF 2004

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules

and pass the bill (H.R. 4324) to amend title 5, United States Code, to eliminate the provisions limiting certain election opportunities available to individuals participating in the Thrift Savings Plan, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4324

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. ELECTIONS FOR THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN CONTRIBUTIONS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Thrift Savings Plan Open Elections Act of 2004".

(b) IN GENERAL.—Section 8432(b)(1)(A) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the first sentence—

(A) by inserting "(i)" before "The Executive Director"; and

(B) by striking "shall be afforded a reasonable period every 6 months to elect to" and inserting "may";

(2) by striking the second sentence; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

"(i) An election to make contributions under this paragraph—

"(I) may be made at any time;

"(II) shall take effect on the earliest date after the election that is administratively feasible; and

"(III) shall remain in effect until modified or terminated."

(c) CONTINUATION OF NOT MAKING IMMEDIATE AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.—Section 8432(b)(4)(C) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting "(i)" after "(C)"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

"(ii) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A) or (B), contributions under paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (c) shall not begin to be made with respect to an employee or Member described under paragraph (2)(A) or (B) until the date that such contributions would have begun to be made in accordance with this paragraph as administered on the date preceding the date of enactment of the Thrift Savings Plan Open Elections Act of 2004."

(d) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT SYSTEM PARTICIPATION.—Section 8351(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking "only during a period" and inserting "as".

(2) CONTRIBUTIONS BY PREVIOUSLY INELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES.—Section 8432(b)(2) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking "second period" and inserting "date";

(B) in subparagraph (C), by striking "second period" and inserting "date"; and

(C) in subparagraph (D) by striking "other than during a period afforded" and inserting "as provided".

(3) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—Section 8439(c)(2) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking "at least 30 calendar days before the beginning of each election period under section 8432(b)(1)(A) of this title" and inserting "on a regular basis".

(4) JUSTICES AND JUDGES.—Section 8440a(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking "only during a period" and inserting "as".

(5) BANKRUPTCY JUDGES AND MAGISTRATE JUDGES.—Section 8440b(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking "only during a period" and inserting "as".

(6) COURT OF FEDERAL CLAIMS JUDGES.—Section 8440c(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking "only during a period" and inserting "as".

(7) JUDGES OF THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS.—Section 8440d(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking "only during a period" and inserting "as".

(8) MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES.—Section 8440e(b)(2)(A) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by striking "only during a period" and inserting "as"; and

(B) by striking all after section "8432(b)" and inserting a period.

SEC. 2. ENHANCING FINANCIAL LITERACY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (in this section referred to as the "Board") shall periodically evaluate whether the tools available to participants provide the information needed to understand, evaluate, and compare financial products, services, and opportunities offered through the Thrift Savings Plan. The Board shall use these evaluations to improve its existing education program for Thrift Savings Plan participants.

(b) REPORT ON FINANCIAL LITERACY EFFORTS.—The Board shall annually report to the Committee on Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Government Reform of the House of Representatives on its Thrift Savings Plan education efforts on behalf of plan participants.

(c) STRATEGY.—As part of the retirement training offered by Office of Personnel Management under section 8350 of title 5, United States Code, the Office, in consultation with the Board, shall—

(1) not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, develop and implement a retirement financial literacy and education strategy for Federal employees that—

(A) shall educate Federal employees on the need for retirement savings and investment; and

(B) provide information related to how Federal employees can receive additional information on how to plan for retirement and calculate what their retirement investment should be in order to meet their retirement goals; and

(2) submit a report to the Committee on Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Government Reform of the House of Representatives on the strategy described under paragraph (1).

SEC. 3. TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.

Subchapter III of chapter 84 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in section 8433(d)(1), by striking "paragraph (3)" and inserting "paragraph (2)"; and

(2) in section 8440b(b)—

(A) in paragraph (2), by striking "bankruptcy judge's or magistrate's" and inserting "bankruptcy judge's or magistrate judge's"; and

(B) in paragraphs (4)(B) and (8), by striking "bankruptcy judge or magistrate" each place it appears and inserting "bankruptcy judge or magistrate judge".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4324.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 4324, a bill that eliminates the open season for employee contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan. This legislation was reported from the Committee on Government Reform by a voice vote on July 31, and I am pleased to see it considered by the whole House today.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues know, the TSP offers Federal employees the same retirement savings opportunities that private companies afford their employees under traditional 401(k) plans.

The TSP is the largest defined contribution retirement plan in the world, with nearly three and a half million participants and over \$143 billion in assets.

This legislation will allow TSP participants to make or modify their salary contributions at any time. Currently, Federal employees and members of the uniformed services who participate in the TSP are only provided two biannual periods to begin, adjust or end their contributions. This bill will give much-needed flexibility to participants of the Federal Government's retirement plan.

Every day, Federal employees across the Nation and around the globe perform critical duties to keep this Nation running smoothly.

Away from work, they experience all of life's events, births and deaths in the family, new homes, new jobs, salary adjustments and so on. With enactment of H.R. 4324, TSP participants can adopt their retirement savings to meet their changing circumstances.

Next year, I intend to offer additional legislation that will abolish the TSP open seasons entirely, but today, during the second open season after beginning Federal service, participants can earn matching funds up to 5 percent of their salary from their employing agencies. I believe allowing participants to secure these matching funds immediately is an important and deserved incentive for Federal employees to save. The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, which administers the TSP, supports that change, and the Board supports H.R. 4324 as well.

The Committee on Government Reform, the committee of jurisdiction for Federal employee issues, was limited by budget constraints this Congress from moving a bill that would totally eliminate open seasons. Nevertheless, I am pleased to see H.R. 4324 advancing today.

I want to recognize the efforts of my distinguished counterpart in the other body, the gentlewoman from Maine, chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee. She has worked very closely with me on today's bill to ensure that Federal employees will have the same retirement savings flexibilities enjoyed by many in the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the Thrift Savings Plan, TSP, is a retirement savings and investment plan for Federal employees that is governed by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board. The TSP has approximately 3 million participants. It is the largest retirement savings and investment program in the Nation.

H.R. 4324 would make two significant changes to the rules that govern participation in the TSP. First, it would allow Federal employees to alter their TSP contributions at any time instead of limiting such changes to biannual open-season periods.

Secondly, the bill would require the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, the agency that administers the TSP, to evaluate and report on efforts to increase education programs for TSP participants.

Overall, H.R. 4324 would allow TSP enrollees to have more control over their investments and financial future. With better education initiatives, participants would be better informed when changing contributions to their TSP.

With these changes designed to be helpful to those who would participate, I am pleased to join the chairman, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS), and the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS) in supporting this legislation and urge its passage.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4324, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend chapter 84 of title 5, United States Code, to provide for Federal employees to make elections to make, modify, and terminate contributions to the Thrift Savings Fund at any time, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COMPREHENSIVE PEACE IN SUDAN ACT OF 2004

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 2781) to express the sense of Congress regarding the conflict in Darfur, Sudan, to provide assistance for the crisis in Darfur and for com-

prehensive peace in Sudan, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 2781

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Comprehensive Peace in Sudan Act of 2004".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term "appropriate congressional committees" means the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives.

(2) GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN.—The term "Government of Sudan" means the National Congress Party, formerly known as the National Islamic Front, government in Khartoum, Sudan, or any successor government formed on or after the date of the enactment of this Act (other than the coalition government agreed upon in the Nairobi Declaration on the Final Phase of Peace in the Sudan signed on June 5, 2004).

(3) JEM.—The term "JEM" means the Justice and Equality Movement.

(4) SLA.—The term "SLA" means the Sudan Liberation Army.

(5) SPLM.—The term "SPLM" means the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

SEC. 3. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) A comprehensive peace agreement for Sudan, as envisioned in the Sudan Peace Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 note) and the Machakos Protocol of 2002, could be in jeopardy if the parties do not implement and honor the agreements they have signed.

(2) Since seizing power through a military coup in 1989, the Government of Sudan repeatedly has attacked and dislocated civilian populations in southern Sudan in a coordinated policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide that has cost the lives of more than 2,000,000 people and displaced more than 4,000,000 people.

(3) In response to two decades of civil conflict in Sudan, the United States has helped to establish an internationally supported peace process to promote a negotiated settlement to the war that has resulted in a framework peace agreement, the Nairobi Declaration on the Final Phase of Peace in the Sudan, signed on June 5, 2004.

(4) At the same time that the Government of Sudan was negotiating for a comprehensive and all inclusive peace agreement, enumerated in the Nairobi Declaration on the Final Phase of Peace in the Sudan, it refused to engage in any meaningful discussion with regard to its ongoing campaign of ethnic cleansing and genocide in the Darfur region of western Sudan.

(5) The Government of Sudan reluctantly agreed to attend talks to bring peace to the Darfur region only after considerable international pressure and outrage was expressed through high level visits by Secretary of State Colin Powell and others, and through United Nations Security Council Resolution 1556 (July 30, 2004).

(6) The Government of the United States, in both the executive branch and Congress, has concluded that genocide has been committed and may still be occurring in the Darfur region, and that the Government of Sudan and militias supported by the Government of Sudan, known as the Janjaweed, bear responsibility for the genocide.

(7) Evidence collected by international observers in the Darfur region between February 2003 and November 2004 indicate a coordinated effort to target African Sudanese