

continued competitive position of all U.S. companies. I anticipate that we will bring such a bill to the floor in the very near future.

Mr. HOYER. I presume, as well, that when and if that is brought to the floor, because there has been some real disagreement on who that bill ought to advantage and focus on as the gentleman knows in terms of domestic manufacturers as opposed to manufacturers who do a lot of work overseas, and hopefully we will be able to offer alternatives to certainly the bill that was reported out last year, if it is the same bill. As the gentleman knows, we would have an alternative to that. Can the leader give us assurance that we will have that option?

Mr. DELAY. The gentleman knows that it is the tradition of the House to keep Ways and Means tax bills very tight. We have always as a tradition discouraged amendments, but we have encouraged substitutes. I cannot speak for the Committee on Rules; but if there are alternatives in the form of substitutes, then they will be taken into consideration.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for that observation. One additional observation. That is obviously an important option. I think the gentleman states correctly the practice of the House under both Democrats and Republicans.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOYER. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. If I could ask the gentleman from Texas, I like to keep up with new trends in the House. I was struck when the gentleman from Texas, the majority leader, said he could not speak for the Rules Committee.

Is that a new development we had not previously known about?

Mr. DELAY. That tradition remains the same, I would say to my friend from Massachusetts.

Mr. HOYER. I thought of that question, Mr. Leader, but I thought it was probably not worth asking because I knew the answer. But to the other question, with respect to offering substitutes, very frankly, what happens is you can offer a substitute, but if it is not germane and you do not receive a waiver when you are granted the right to offer the substitute, obviously on the one hand you have the ability to offer a substitute, but you do not really have the ability to offer an alternative. There is a very substantial difference.

I do not necessarily expect an answer today, but I really would hope, because we are talking about very significant, important issues, where there are differences in a bipartisan fashion on either alternative, that alternatives should be allowed that are consistent with the objective, although, as the leader well knows, from time to time because of what is or is not included in the committee product may or may not

be germane even though it is pointed to the subject. I offer that as food for thought because I think it is fair and I think it would be good for the American public to have a broader spectrum of options than is sometimes allowed to us, notwithstanding the fact that theoretically a substitute is made available.

I think the gentleman understands my point, and I thank the gentleman for the information.

PERMISSION FOR COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY TO HAVE UNTIL MIDNIGHT, FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 2004, TO FILE A REPORT ON H.R. 339, PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN FOOD CONSUMPTION ACT

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary may have until midnight on Friday, March 5, 2004, to file a report to accompany H.R. 339.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2004

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at noon on Monday, March 8, 2004.

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

There was no objection.

HOUR OF MEETING ON TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 2004

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns on Monday, March 8, 2004, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 9, for morning hour debates.

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

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

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

There was no objection.

COURT RULING UPHOLDS INTENT OF CONGRESS IN PASSING TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1996

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, like many of my colleagues, I was delighted to see that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia issued a ruling yesterday that upholds the intent of Congress in passing the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The court found that the FCC did not comply with the Telecom Act when it voted 3 to 2 last year to adopt its highly controversial Triennial Review Order. This marks the third time since 1996 that the FCC's rules have been rejected by U.S. courts.

In its ruling, the appeals court pointed to the commission's failure, after 8 years, to develop lawful unbundling rules and its apparent unwillingness to adhere to prior judicial rulings. FCC Chairman Michael Powell, who was one of the two commissioners to oppose the Triennial Review Order, has voiced his opposition to any appeal of the court's decision and has said, appropriately, that the FCC should expeditiously get to work to produce a set of judicially sound rules once and for all. I fully support the position taken by Chairman Powell and urge the commission to prepare rules to provide the needed clarity and guidance to restore the health and economic vitality of our Nation's telecommunications sector.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that I may proceed out of order and do my 5 minutes now.

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

There was no objection.

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES BRINGS FOOD AND EDUCATION TO THE CHILDREN OF BENIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, right now there are more than 300 million chronically hungry children in the world. 130 million, mainly girls, do not attend schools. The other 170 million go to school on an empty stomach, stunting their ability to learn. I want

to describe how one U.S. organization, Catholic Relief Services, is making a difference in the lives of such children in the African nation of Benin.

We can all be proud of the work that Catholic Relief Services does in our name around the world. CRS is known for its integrated approach to development, weaving together programs that help poor nations address the challenges of hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, and poverty. At the same time, CRS promotes community participation, empowerment, and economic opportunity.

In 2001 and 2002, CRS received funding through the United States Department of Agriculture's McGovern-Dole food for education pilot program to begin school feeding programs in six districts in northwestern Benin. The problems facing Benin are daunting. It ranks extremely low on the United Nations human development index, at number 147 out of 162 countries. In the region where CRS is carrying out this program, families engage mainly in farming and fishing, with annual incomes of around \$175. During the long dry season, the food security situation becomes very tight, even by Benin standards. Only about 30 percent of parents send their children to school.

Facing these realities, the CRS-Benin school feeding program began by strengthening or creating parent-teacher associations in order to increase local commitment to education. These PTAs became involved in providing meals to schools, reaching out and encouraging local families to send their children to school, and determining how to meet basic needs regarding the number and quality of teachers. In 61 schools, the CRS-Benin program provided daily school breakfasts and lunches to nearly 9,000 children each day. It also targeted 3,500 female students for take-home rations as an incentive to increase school attendance by girls. Additional rice and soybean oil were awarded to girls who achieved at least an 85 percent attendance rate each quarter. Summer school and other programs were initiated to meet the needs of displaced or otherwise crisis-affected children.

As part of its integrated approach to development, the CRS-Benin program monetized USDA-provided soybeans to fund a number of other critical interventions for these students, including micronutrient supplements to improve student health; hygiene, health and nutrition education for parents and teachers; school latrines and other sanitation infrastructure; training for teachers and school directors in improved teaching and school management methods; and community awareness campaigns on the importance of education for girls.

□ 1315

The CRS-Benin program also works with the World Health Organization and other NGOs to administer deworming pills to the students in these schools.

In just 2 years, the program has achieved increased student attendance and enrollment, especially for girls; decreased dropout rates; and increased community participation in the schools, including contributions of local foods by families to supplement the U.S.-provided commodities. Some schools have started school gardens or farms in support of the school kitchens. And parents have showed new and improved problem-solving skills tackling such matters as teacher recruitment, improving school classrooms and buildings, and lobbying local Education Ministry officials for more teachers.

Last year the CRS-Benin program received 2 more years of funding through the McGovern-Dole program. CRS-Benin received approximately \$4.1 million in rice, lentils, and sunflower oil from farmers in Colorado, Texas, Tennessee, and Kansas. The program now reaches 12,500 school children, and its achievement can only expand and solidify.

Under the McGovern-Dole pilot program, CRS once carried out similar programs in Albania, Bosnia, Guatemala, and Honduras. Deep funding cuts in the McGovern-Dole program, however, resulted in the survival of only the Benin program. Sadly, more than 95,000 children in the other four countries are now cut off from these vital food, education and health services.

I want to express my admiration and respect for the national and field staff of the Catholic Relief Services and their partners, who carry out these important programs in Benin and elsewhere. They deserve our support and they require more funding.

Madam Speaker, there is no better investment we can make for a more stable world than in the education and well-being of our children, both here at home and around the globe. I urge the congressional leadership of this House to significantly increase the fiscal year 2005 funding for the USDA McGovern-Dole program and for other USDA and USAID food programs.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my special order at this time.

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

There was no objection.

FIGHTING FOR AMERICA'S VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, some military retirees, individuals who are eligible for military retirement benefits as a result of a full-service career, are also eligible for disability compensation from the VA based on a medical problem they incurred while in the service. Due to a 19th Century law, these service-disabled retirees must surrender a portion of their retired pay if they want to receive the disability compensation to which they are entitled.

Nationwide more than 550,000 disabled military retirees have been required to give up their retired pay in order to receive their VA disability compensation. For nearly 2 decades, Madam Speaker, I have introduced legislation to correct this longstanding problem, commonly known as concurrent receipt, in the House of Representatives.

Last year our Republican Congress and President George W. Bush reached an historic agreement that changes the 100-year-old practice of having disabled veterans pay for their VA disability out of their military retirement. The new law greatly expands the Combat-Related Special Compensation Program, which we refer to as CRSC, by repealing the 60 percent minimum disability requirement which was set forth in the 2003 Defense Authorization Act. Effective January 1, 2004, earlier this year, CRSC is payable to any military retiree, including personnel who qualify for reserve retirement, who has at least 20 years of service, a Purple Heart and/or injuries sustained while performing military duty in a combat situation or with military equipment or during military training. Retirees must apply to their military service for CRSC payments, but there is no phase-in period for the CRSC benefit.

The new law also phases in full concurrent receipt benefits over the next 10 years for those who have service-connected disabilities rated 50 percent or higher. In addition, the law extends concurrent receipt and CRSC coverage to Reserve and National Guard retirees who were inadvertently excluded from the CRSC program when it was originally enacted. I am pleased to report that on February 1 approximately 150,000 disabled retirees began receiving their new benefits.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the issue of concurrent receipt has become something of a "political football." Some of my Democratic colleagues have been working hard to convince our Nation's veterans that they are truly dedicated to keeping America's promise to them. I find it highly ironic that these Members are now commending themselves for their recent leadership on an issue that I have been