

Much has been written about how the classy woman from Austin was a calming influence on our 37th President, Lyndon B. Johnson. When President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, Lady Bird stepped in and provided comfort to the Kennedy family and a grieving Nation. When civil rights legislation looked to be stalled in the Congress in 1964, the devoted mother of two took to the road on her own whistle-stop tour across the country, defending the administration's policies and goals.

However, her most lasting legacy can be seen anytime you see the flowers bloom in the Capital or the colorful landscapes as you travel the Nation's roads. In addition to leading clean-up efforts of parks and natural habitats in and around the DC area, her advocacy helped push through the \$320 million Highway Beautification Act in 1965. The Federal legislation provided money and other incentives to reduce the number of billboards and other eyesores along Federal highways and expanded local programs to plant wildflowers and other native plants.

Active well into her 90s, Lady Bird Johnson was a role model for future generations. She broke the mold of what a First Lady could do, both during and after the White House. Her achievements and efforts with the National Wildlife Research Center that she helped establish in 1982 expanded the Nation's interest in the environment, providing a foundation for today's current green movement.

Her activism and graceful presence will be missed. Yet, her smile and charm will always be remembered any time anyone looks at the beautiful landscapes and wildflowers that she championed all across this great land.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

Mr. WALSH of New York. Madam Speaker, on rollcall vote No. 712, which would have prohibited funds in the fiscal year 2008 Transportation-HUD Appropriations Act from being used to implement provisions of the Davis-Bacon Act, I was unavoidably detained and unable to vote. Had I been present I would have voted "no."

RECOGNIZING MATTHEW JAMES BRAMMEIER

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Matthew James Brammeier, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 1360, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Matthew has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Matthew has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned

numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Matthew James Brammeier for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD NETWORK TO FREEDOM AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. AL GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 23, 2007

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, an important program that keeps alive the memory of the Underground Railroad and the spirit of freedom, justice and equality encompassed therein.

The Underground Railroad stood as a beacon of hope during a time of slavery and oppression for millions of African-Americans. Tens of thousands of enslaved individuals used the network of clandestine routes, safe houses, meeting points and secret codes known as the Underground Railroad to escape to freedom during the first half of the 19th century.

In 1998, Congress established the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. This network of 300 affiliate sites across the United States has done an excellent job over the last decade in increasing public awareness of the Underground Railroad, the amazing individuals who made it possible, and its numerous accomplishments. However, this tremendous program has faced persistent underfunding since its inception and is projected to face a budgetary shortfall of nearly 80 percent by 2011 unless its funding is increased.

The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Reauthorization Act presents a sensible and important solution to this challenge. This bill will authorize \$2.5 million annually for the operation of the Network to Freedom program, an increase from the \$500,000 currently authorized. This modest increase will provide the program with sufficient funding to allow it to retain the staff and resources necessary to continue educating the American public about this shining example of truly American values.

Mr. Speaker, I believe strongly in the values embodied by the Underground Railroad and the people who made it a reality. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Reauthorization Act, which I believe is a crucial step in keeping alive the memory of the Underground Railroad. I commend my friend and colleague, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, for introducing this important legislation.

MOURNING THE PASSING OF FORMER FIRST LADY, LADY BIRD JOHNSON

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 23, 2007

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of Mrs. Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson. Her humble and steadfast devotion to public service combined with her passionate concern for environmental issues made her an icon within the environmental movement. Modest and kind, dedicated and courageous, her contribution to American politics will not soon be forgotten.

As an advocate of natural habitat and wildlife protection, I greatly admired Lady Bird's commitment to preserving and beautifying America's lands. My father, Stewart Udall, was Secretary of the Interior under President Johnson, and he credits Lady Bird's several trips to the American West and the Rocky Mountains with igniting her love of the environment. Her campaigns to beautify our cities and highways, clean our lakes and rivers, and preserve our natural resources catalyzed many of the environmental campaigns politicians now pursue. Lady Bird transformed Washington D.C. while her husband was in office by planting thousands of tulips and daffodils in parks across the city and creating a national roadside planting program. For Lady Bird, wildflower beautification was not simply cosmetic; by expanding and bolstering diverse habitats, her projects inspired reverence for nature and the inherent splendor of our earth. She reminded us that to enjoy life, we must sometimes stop to smell the roses.

At age 70, she founded the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. She said it was her way of paying back rent for the space she occupied in the world. This center now leads the nation in wildflower research, education, and project development.

Environmental work, however, was only part of Lady Bird's public service campaign. As the first First Lady to have a press secretary and a chief of staff, she cultivated her own agenda. A staunch supporter of civil rights, Lady Bird's strength, intelligence, and good judgment served as a guide and comfort for President Johnson. She also pushed for federal legislation restricting billboards on federal highways and fought for the Head Start program. The projects she undertook always reflected her compassion, graciousness, and determination to make a difference.

Lady Bird's compassion not only infused her political career but also permeated her personal life. Mother of two beautiful daughters, Luci Baines and Lynda Bird, Lady Bird cared for her family with same exquisite grace she exhibited as First Lady. Luci and Lynda have inherited their mother's dedication to public service. They have supported a variety of organizations, including Reading Is Fundamental, the American Heart Association, and the Center for Battered Women. Lady Bird's family and those close to her admired and emulated her loving patience, tender poise, and unending strength.

An environmental pioneer, a behind the scenes supporter and advisor for her husband, a loving mother, and a gentle soul, Lady Bird

will be sincerely missed. Lady Bird was a friend of my father's, and our family will always celebrate the life of the extraordinary woman who gave so much of herself. In her various efforts to spread beauty and tranquility across the country, Lady Bird has left this world a better place for us all.

INTRODUCTION OF THE EQUAL JUSTICE FOR OUR MILITARY ACT OF 2007

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Equal Justice for Our Military Act of 2007—a bill that will give our servicemembers equal access to the United States Supreme Court. We all know that when American men and women decide to serve their nation in the Armed Forces, they make many sacrifices—from lost time with their families to irreplaceable losses of lives and limbs. However, most Americans are not aware that active-duty servicemembers also sacrifice one of the fundamental legal rights that all civilian Americans enjoy.

Under current law, members of the military who are convicted of offenses under the military justice system do not have the legal right to appeal their cases to the U.S. Supreme Court. It is unjust to deny the members of our Armed Forces access to our system of justice as they fight for our freedom around the world. They deserve better.

As the Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, a long-time advocate for servicemembers, and a representative of San Diego, one of the largest military communities in the nation, I feel an obligation to fight to ensure that the members of our military are treated fairly. Current law weights the playing field in favor of the government, granting the automatic right to Supreme Court review to the Department of Defense whenever a servicemember wins his or her case, but denying servicemembers that same right when the government wins a conviction against them in almost all situations. This is just unfair. In the 109th Congress, I introduced legislation to grant our men and women in uniform access to the Supreme Court in certain situations.

Today, I am re-introducing this legislation in expanded form, to allow service members in a broader set of circumstances the right to Supreme Court appeal. This approach has been endorsed by the American Bar Association, the Military Officers Association of America, and many other advocates. I believe strongly that it is fundamentally unjust to deny those who serve on behalf of our country in the military one of the basic rights afforded to all other Americans. I hope that you will stand with me in support of this legislation to attain equal treatment for those who fight for us.

INTRODUCTION OF CAPITAL GAINS AND ESTATE TAX RELIEF ACT

HON. HARRY E. MITCHELL

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, earlier today I introduced, along with my colleague CHRIS SHAYS, the Capital Gains and Estate Tax Relief Act, a bill to extend key tax cuts that are critical to middle class families in my district and across the country.

If enacted, the Capital Gains and Estate Tax Relief Act would preserve the lower tax on capital gains as well as the reduced estate tax which are both set to expire in 2011.

Several years ago, these tax cuts were championed by President Bush and a Republican Congress. Clearly the political winds have changed. But in the race to distance ourselves from the former congressional leadership, I implore my colleagues to give careful consideration to these tax cuts before dismissing them.

They are sensible. They help millions of middle class Americans. They encourage investment and make our tax code more fair and more predictable.

After careful consideration, I believe they should be made permanent and bipartisan.

They affect small businesses. They affect the stock holders. They affect anyone who owns a home.

While, a generation ago, these may have sounded like the lofty concerns of the wealthy elite, today, these are mainstream, middle-class experiences.

In 1983, less than 20 percent of Americans owned stock. Now, between IRAs, 401(k)s, and education savings accounts, more than half of Americans do.

And after a decade and a half of low interest rates, more than two-thirds of Americans are now homeowners. By 2011, the year that these tax cuts expire, economists predict that number will reach 70 percent.

When it comes time to sell your home or trade your stock, capital gains taxes prevent you from making optimal financial decisions. This is bad for sellers, bad for buyers, and bad for our economy.

Decisions like these should be based on personal and financial needs, such as paying for college or planning for retirement, not the needs of the IRS.

While it would be impractical for us to eliminate the tax on capital gains, I believe we can take steps to minimize its harmful effects. Most notably, we can make the temporary cut from 20 percent to 15 percent permanent.

The estate tax is equally troublesome. Before the temporary tax cuts went into effect, anyone with assets of more than \$675,000 at the time of his or her death was subject to the estate tax. In calculating this amount, the government didn't just count the amount of money in your bank account. It also counted the value of your home and the value of your investments. And if you owned a small business, the government counted the value of that business as well.

As home values began to rise and the number of small businesses continued to grow,

more and more middle-class tax payers began exceeding this exemption.

This was a particular problem in Arizona, where home prices have increased by more than 150 percent in the past decade. But there are many States where the growth of real estate has outpaced Arizona's.

In other words, if a taxpayer purchased a \$250,000 home in the 1990s and this home increased in value to \$625,000, the owner was only allowed \$50,000 in additional assets before the Federal Government started taking away 55 percent of everything else that person owned upon his or her death. If that taxpayer was self-employed, owned a small business, or had money saved in a retirement account, it is easy to see how quickly his or her estate could exceed \$675,000.

Home ownership and small businesses are things we want to promote. Over the past decade, small businesses have created more than 60 percent of new jobs in the United States. In Arizona, small businesses account for 97 percent of employer businesses.

But home ownership and small business development are precisely the things that are hurt by the estate tax. It makes it harder for family businesses to transfer their assets down from one generation to another. When combined with capital gains, it makes it harder for parents to realize the benefit of the recent housing boom and share that benefit with their children.

I believe we need an estate tax that takes inflation into account, so the value of your property today will be the same as what you would like to pass onto your children. H.R. 3170 would permanently reduce the estate tax by establishing a system for future increases in the estate tax exemption based on inflation.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates the combined costs of making these tax cuts permanent to be \$332 billion over 10 years. To put this in perspective, we are currently spending \$124 billion a year on the war in Iraq. If we can find that much to help Iraqis with their economy, I believe we can find \$332 billion to help our own.

In March, I voted against the Budget Resolution, H. Con. Res. 99, in part, because it failed to extend cuts to the estate and capital gains taxes. At the time, I expressed frustration with both Democrats and Republicans for failing to work together to create a budget that incorporates good ideas from both sides of the aisle.

When I ran for Congress last year, the one thing I heard over and over again from voters was how sick and tired they were of partisan bickering in Washington that was getting nothing done.

I believe we can do better. So today I challenge my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, to do the right thing. Consider this legislation, not through a caustic, partisan lens, but on its merits. The middle class wants Congress to make these key tax cuts permanent, and working together, I know we can make that happen.