

## INTRODUCTION OF THE PERSONAL HEALTH INVESTMENT TODAY ACT

**HON. JERRY WELLER**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 5, 2007*

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, as we move through the 21st Century, we are constantly facing new challenges to our public welfare that we had not previously seen.

A more recent challenge that has surfaced is the relative epidemic of obesity, and the onset of disease and health care difficulties resulting from lack of a healthy lifestyle.

I think that many agree with me that a key component of living a healthy productive life is found through regular exercise and the benefits that it brings.

The Department of Health and Human Services predicts that spending on healthcare will consume 20 percent of the nation's gross domestic product by 2015 if current trends hold true.

At this rate of growth, America is on track to spend roughly \$4 trillion on healthcare within the next ten years. This level of spending for medical treatment is unsustainable and can only be curbed through efforts to prevent disease before treatment is necessary.

Given the healthcare crisis we are facing in this country today, I strongly believe that creative solutions are necessary to improve the nation's fitness levels.

This need for creative solutions is why I am reintroducing the The Personal Health Investment Today (PHIT) Bill, (RR. 5479 in the 109th Congress).

This bill allows for expenditures for exercise and physical activity, such as health club memberships, some exercise equipment, and sports programs, to be payable out of various tax-favored investment accounts: flexible spending accounts (FSAs), health savings accounts (HSAs), medical savings accounts (MSAs) and/or medical reimbursement arrangements, up to \$1,000.

If enacted, PHIT would give parents the opportunity to pay for their children's soccer league fees out of their HSAs. They could join a fitness center and pay for the membership fees with pretax dollars or they could purchase a home gym to help them fight the onset of obesity, a primary risk factor for developing anyone of several chronic diseases which are currently fueling the frightening increase in our national healthcare expenditure.

Depending upon a consumer's individual income tax bracket, the PHIT initiative could help Americans save 25–30 percent on their exercise costs.

Health experts agree that regular physical activity substantially reduces the risk and symptoms of numerous diseases and medical conditions and is associated with fewer hospitalizations, physicians' visits, and medications, resulting in lower healthcare costs.

The PHIT tax incentive represents an important step to induce more people to get the levels of exercise they need to improve their level of fitness and help lower healthcare costs for all Americans, which is why I am proud to reintroduce this bill.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. CHARLIE NORWOOD**

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 5, 2007*

Mr. NORWOOD. Madam Speaker, on roll call no. 7; On adoption of Title 2 of the Resolution. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

## RECOGNIZING MARTHA C. STONUM

**HON. SAM GRAVES**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 5, 2007*

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Martha C. Stonum of Lawson, Missouri. Martha will celebrate her 100th birthday on January 31, 2007, and it is my privilege to offer her my warmest regards on achieving this important milestone.

Mrs. Stonum was born in Lathrop, Missouri where she began her education in a one-room school house, before ultimately attending William Jewell College. Mrs. Stonum is a loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother to two sons, one step son, four grandchildren, two step grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, three step great-grandchildren, and one step great-great-grandchild. Mrs. Stonum is still an active member of her community, visiting her beauty shop and church weekly.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in recognizing Martha C. Stonum. It is an honor to represent her in the United States Congress, and I wish her all the best for many more birthdays in the future.

## INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL BOARD-CERTIFIED TEACHERS IN LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS ACT

**HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 5, 2007*

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the National Board-Certified Teachers in Low-Performing Schools Act of 2007.

I have been pro-active in promoting professional teaching standards throughout my public service and strongly believe certification is more important now than ever.

We know that schools in the United States are falling behind in the core subject areas of math and the sciences. Teacher certification is a step toward gaining ground against other nations as well as working to close the Achievement Gap here in our own nation.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards provides America's teachers with high-quality training and professional certification. Research shows the benefits of this advanced credential.

Students of certified teachers showed year-end testing improvements averaging 7 to 15 percent more than students learning from non-certified teachers.

Another study by the University of North Carolina found that the depth of learning for

students was greater in the classrooms of certified teachers. That is, these students show greater cognitive gains overall than students of non-certified teachers.

I am convinced we must do more to encourage our dedicated teachers who are already in the classrooms.

My legislation authorizes a pilot program to give teachers with certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards a \$5,000 annual stipend when they teach in a low-income school or a school that is underperforming.

Professional teaching certification would improve education in the United States and help make our nation competitive and I am pleased for the opportunity to promote this certification in Congress.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to introduce the legislation today.

## INTRODUCTION OF THE COMBAT MILITARY MEDICALLY RETIRED VETERANS ACT

**HON. JERRY WELLER**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 5, 2007*

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, we owe our veterans a great debt of gratitude. Their sacrifices have protected the democratic ideals that are the foundation of our country, and their heroism continues to be an example for all Americans.

Perhaps now, more than any time in recent history, it is important to remember that our Nation has remained strong because of those who have fought and died for our country. By answering the call of duty and risking their lives to protect their fellow citizens, these patriots have inspired us with their courage, compassion, and dedication.

Many of these brave men and women become severely wounded due to combat related injuries, and are forced to retire as physically unfit to perform his or her duties. Once forced out of the service, many are unable to find gainful employment due to their injuries while at the same time being rated at less than their actual disability rate by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). They have little to fall back on and deserve better for their sacrifice.

That is why I am reintroducing the Combat Military Medically Retired Veterans Act, (H.R. 995 in the 109th Congress), which allows combat military medically retired veterans who received the Purple Heart to collect their pro-rated military retirement pay.

This legislation differs from the current concurrent receipt benefit because it exempts combat military medically retired veterans from the current 20-year service requirement. The benefit will match their time of service.

The Congressional Budget Office scored my bill at \$496 million over ten years, certainly a small price to pay for those who have sacrificed so much for our great nation.

I am proud to state that my bill has been endorsed by the American G.I. Forum of the United States; American Legion, Department of Illinois; American Legion, National Office; Blinded Veterans Association; Gold Star Wives of America; and the Hispanic War Veterans of America.

All military combat veterans who are military medically retired from combat related disabilities and have been awarded the Purple Heart should be exempt from the requirement of 20 years of service in order to be entitled to their prorated military retirement pay.

America's disabled combat veterans gave their all for us and should not be penalized just because they are receiving compensation from the VA. While many disabled veterans go on to enjoy happy productive lives, many are unable to due to the severity of their wounds.

Under any doctrine of fairness it is our moral obligation to "care for him who shall have borne the battle." This bill is a good step in correcting the inequity of retirement and disability benefit to our combat disabled veterans.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. CHARLIE NORWOOD

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 5, 2007*

Mr. NORWOOD. Madam Speaker, on roll call No. 6; on adoption of Title I of the Resolution, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

#### RECOGNIZING CHRISTOPHER D. ROBERTS FOR ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

### HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 5, 2007*

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Christopher D. Roberts, 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 351, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Christopher has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Christopher 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 Christopher D. Roberts for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout. I am honored to represent Christopher in the United States House of Representatives.

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL MENTORING ACT

### HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 5, 2007*

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution recognizing and honoring those who make a difference in the lives of our young people across the United States.

This January marks National Mentoring Month as proclaimed by the President of the

United States. It is a month-long celebration honoring those who are mentors and drawing attention to the great need for more mentors.

Mentors make a tremendous difference in the lives of our children. When a responsible and reliable adult becomes a mentor, the benefits to the mentee can last a lifetime. Countless stories show the great benefits of a good role model.

Chris Moran became a mentor to Joshua Becerra in my hometown of San Diego through the Big Brothers Big Sisters program when he was just 9 years old in 1999. Chris and Joshua have gotten together on a weekly basis ever since for horseback riding, chess, and other activities. The relationship has been meaningful for both.

Spending time with a young person gave Chris a healthier perspective on what is important in life—helping others, he said. Joshua, now a student at San Diego's High Tech High, is looking forward to attending college and has already visited UCLA, San Diego State University, and other campuses trying to decide where to apply. Joshua attributes his academic success in large part to his mentor.

Joshua plans to study music when he goes on to college and would like to become a professional musician. Chris is helping him locate a college with an excellent music program.

These types of relationships between reliable adults and our young people are invaluable. Millions of adults nationwide are acting as excellent role models while providing guidance and advice to our young people—many of whom face problems at home or difficulties at school. Without a good, solid role model, our kids are more likely to drop out of high school or to become involved with drugs or alcohol.

Madam Speaker, this resolution honors and recognizes the adults across the United States who are mentors to our young people. This resolution also calls on more adults to become mentors to those in need.

Unfortunately, research shows that about 15 million children across the United States are in need of a mentor and a good role model. It is crucial that we begin to reach these children.

Finally, this resolution highlights the need to support programs that teach our young people about mentoring and the need to become involved. There are programs, for example, that encourage high school students to become mentors to younger children. These types of programs will teach the great benefits of mentoring at a young age and result in adults becoming mentors later—creating a "cycle" of mentoring.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to offer a resolution honoring America's mentors on the occasion of National Mentoring Month 2007.

#### INTRODUCTION OF KIDSAVE

### HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 5, 2007*

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, commentators on the political left and right agree about one thing: There are too many political disagreements in Washington, D.C. Of course, the best way to change that would be for those of us who are lawmakers to find

common ground and begin passing legislation that virtually everyone can agree on.

Where to begin? How about with a program that has the support of moderates, liberals, and even the conservative Heritage Foundation? That program is KidSave.

This common-sense program would allow every American child—regardless of parental income—to save up tens of thousands of dollars for retirement.

KidSave is fairly simple. If it was in effect today, at birth every child would receive a loan of \$2,000 from the Social Security Administration. The initial amount would be linked to inflation, so it would increase slightly year to year. The money would be deposited into an account that couldn't be opened until the owner retires or dies.

This account would be managed by the Thrift Savings Plan, the same plan that federal employees—including those of us in Congress—use to manage our retirement funds. Right now there are three low risk, low-cost options offered through the TSP: A government-bond fund, a corporate-bond fund and a stock index fund.

The child's parents would decide which fund to deposit the initial investment in, and it would grow untapped for decades and decades. According to a study by the Heritage Foundation, the opportunity for growth is so great that, even if no money was ever added to the initial investment, that loan could still grow to \$50,000 by the time the child reached retirement age.

Parents and grandparents also could contribute additional money tax-free. They could add as much as \$500 per year every year until the child turned 19, and that money could be diverted from their own retirement plans. That's an additional \$9,500, all of it being compounded year after year until retirement.

This is one of those rare Washington programs with the power to change everyone's outlook for the better.

Wealthy people have long taken advantage of long-term investments—indeed, families such as the Rockefellers and Vanderbilts have lived for decades off the money earned by their forefathers. Today, thousands of middle-class grandparents are opening education accounts for their newborn grandchildren.

But KidSave would allow all children to enjoy the benefits of compound interest. Imagine an entire generation of working-class senior citizens with tens of thousands of dollars to spend as they wish. They'd be virtually guaranteed a secure retirement and could spend their newfound wealth on themselves or share it with their children and grandchildren.

A portion of this money would be passed from generation to generation, either as gifts to grandchildren or through donations to churches or community groups. That would help build a more secure future for generations to come.

Best of all, KidSave is a loan from Social Security, not a gift or a new government entitlement. That's one reason it enjoys such broad support. And it doesn't end up costing taxpayers anything. When the account owner reaches age 30—an age at which most people are well along in their working lives—the original loan would be repaid in five annual installments. The repayment amount would be linked to inflation, so an initial \$2,000 loan would be returned to the government as, say, \$3,500.