

INTRODUCTION OF THE CHARITABLE DRIVING TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2007

HON. THOMAS E. PETRI

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. PETRI. Madam Speaker, today, I am introducing the Charitable Driving Tax Relief Act of 2007 to remove a serious disincentive that limits the participation of many in charitable activities. Charitable organizations play an important role in our society, and it is important that Congress not stand in the way by penalizing those who wish to offer their services to these groups.

Under current law, individuals that volunteer their time and energy by driving their personal vehicles on behalf of a charitable group can end up with an unpleasant surprise in the form of an unanticipated tax bill. Specifically, volunteer drivers receiving reimbursement for the use of their vehicle are taxed on these payments to the extent that they exceed 14 cents per mile. This treatment stands in stark contrast to the 48½ cent allowance for reimbursement for the business use of that same vehicle.

The Charitable Driving Tax Relief Act will equalize the tax treatment of charitable reimbursements with those received for business driving because the point of the payment is essentially the same, that is, to cover the cost of operating a personal vehicle while performing an important service in the pursuit of a greater good.

To achieve this end, my legislation would exclude from gross income any reimbursement received for the use of a volunteer's car while assisting a charitable group, limited only by the cap the Internal Revenue Service sets each year regarding business driving. This treatment would be available only for services provided without compensation and drivers would be required to maintain sufficient records to substantiate the charitable use of their vehicles. Finally, this bill drops the requirement that charitable groups report these reimbursements to the IRS, removing an administrative and paperwork burden that detracts resources from their larger purpose.

Each day, thousands of Americans lend a hand in providing transportation services to a multitude of organizations engaged in good works. These activities include assisting individuals with their routine grocery shopping, providing the use of a four-wheel drive vehicle to transport home-visit nurses during inclement weather, delivering meals as part of a holiday food drive, helping individuals to keep their medical appointments, and many more similar activities.

These volunteer drivers are donating their time and their talents, not their vehicles, and accepting reimbursement for the use of that car, incidental to their time and talent donation, is a reasonable act, which should not result in an additional tax liability. Today, when it comes to driving a personal vehicle, our tax code makes a distinction between business and charitable uses. This distinction is a mistake; it serves as a serious disincentive to charitable activities, and it should be corrected. I encourage my colleagues to support the continued efforts of our charity-minded constituents by cosponsoring the Charitable Driving Tax Relief Act of 2007.

TRIBUTE TO THE CRUSADERS OF MOELLER HIGH SCHOOL

HON. JOHN A. BOEHNER

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. BOEHNER. Madam Speaker, on March 24, 2007, the Crusaders of Moeller High School in Cincinnati, Ohio, won the state basketball title, defeating Cincinnati's St. Xavier High School by the score of 43–40 in the state title match. This is Moeller High School's third state basketball title in the past decade.

Under the guidance of Coach Carl Kremer, the Moeller Crusaders have won three state basketball championships—in 1999, 2003, and now in 2007. The 2007 Crusader basketball team ends its season with a record of 25–2, which the school's longtime athletic director, Barry Borman, notes is the best record in the history of the Moeller High School basketball program.

As a proud graduate of Moeller High School and a member of the class of 1968, I congratulate Coach Kremer, Athletic Director Borman, Principal Blaine Collison, and all the faculty, students, and alumni of the Moeller Family on this tremendous achievement. I know the gentlewoman from Ohio, Representative Schmidt, who represents Moeller High School in Ohio's 2nd Congressional District, joins me enthusiastically in offering these sentiments.

Moeller High School has provided a center of learning in the finest Marianist tradition for generations of young men from my congressional district and the Greater Cincinnati area. A Catholic school, Moeller has established a reputation for excellence in academics, athletics, faith, and community service, a reputation that is renewed and reinforced by this latest achievement.

On behalf of the United States Congress, I proudly salute Coach Kremer, the 2007 Crusader basketball team, and the entire Moeller Family for this memorable victory.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW MIDDLE EAST INITIATIVE

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I would like to share with our colleagues additional information on the new initiative for the Middle East that I announced at a press conference on March 22. I submit to the RECORD the remarks of former Ambassador David Abshire, who in his capacity at the Center for the Study of the Presidency will be administering this initiative. I also submit observations on the Middle East from Dr. Robert Cooley, President Emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

REMARKS FROM DR. DAVID ABISHIRE BEFORE THE MARCH 22, 2007 PRESS CONFERENCE ON NEW MIDDLE EAST INITIATIVE

We are grateful to Congressman Wolf for his leadership, and encouragement of this initiative facilitated by the non-partisan Center for the Study of the Presidency. This initiative on Israel and Palestine is based on

recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, which Congressman Wolf also helped launch: "The United States will not be able to achieve its goals in the Middle East unless the United States deals directly with the Arab-Israeli conflict." The Secretary of State, when in Ramallah, said "I have heard a clear call for deeper American engagement, and we are absolutely committed."

The current effort that we are announcing today, which Secretary Rice supports, observes this recommendation, and we are honored that our Center, which examines the American Presidency, has been asked to contribute to such an important initiative. Eleven U.S. Presidents have had to deal with this challenge. We are therefore delighted that Ambassador Dennis Ross of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy will serve as a Senior Advisor at the Center, and bring his extensive experience to this endeavor.

In terms of exchanges, health is essential to the economy, well-being, national security, and future of the Middle East region. The goal of this part of the initiative is to foster collaboration and facilitate interactions between medical and scientific experts in Israel and Palestine to improve health. Our Center has the advantage of the leadership and experience of Senior Advisor, Rear Admiral Susan Blumenthal, M.D., who is an expert on a broad range of public health and medical issues. She served as Assistant Surgeon General in the US Department of Health and Human Services, where her work in global health included fostering a Middle East health initiative with Israel, Palestine, Egypt and Jordan.

We also will encourage more academic and scientific exchange and cooperative efforts in the model of the Israeli-Palestinian Science Organization—a non-political, non-profit organization which is dedicated to nurturing and supporting cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian scientists and scholars in joint research ventures. In doing so, IPSO brings about dialogue between the two sides, even in these highly explosive times.

On a separate track, we enthusiastically welcome the leadership of former Democratic Congressman Tony Hall, also former Ambassador to the UN Agencies for Food and Agriculture. Tony has written a truly remarkable book on his experiences here—*Changing the Face of Hunger*. Ambassador Hall and his team of diverse lay and religious leaders will seek to build better understanding between religious leaders. The Holy Land is common to the three religions that find their beginning in Abraham, and this initiative is indeed appropriate at the time when we seek peace and understanding throughout the Middle East.

REMARKS ON THE MIDDLE EAST FROM DR. ROBERT COOLEY, PRESIDENT EMERITUS, GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

First, a little background on my experience in the Land and at home, as well. My doctoral studies were in the fields of the Ancient and Modern Near East with special interest in Hebrew Studies and Syro-Palestinian Archaeology. I have excavated at five buried sites in the three countries of Jordan, Egypt and Israel. During these past 48 years, I have had the privilege of working with Palestinian Moslems, Palestinian Christians and Israelis in a variety of roles, most notably as the director of 75 study tours and as an archaeologist. Further, I have served as the Annual Professor, William Foxwell Albright Institute of Archaeology and Visiting Professor at the Jerusalem University College. Many of the citizens of the Land have become personal friends over these many years

and we continue to communicate and visit with each other. In all of these associations, I have sustained an apolitical stance, having personal values and feelings for all of the people based upon my own faith commitment and understanding of their own aspirations and vision.

In the USA, I have been a professor at Wheaton College, Evangel University, Dropsie University, Missouri State University where I served as the Director of the Center for Archaeological Research. Most recently, I served as president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary until my retirement in 1997.

I join Congressman Wolf in underscoring the strategic role that people of faith have in creating the mood for meaningful dialog toward a lasting peace. It is time that such persons have a voice in framing the peace conversation and the solution that will allow all to have lives of dignity, freedom and tranquility. The roots of religion run very deep into the region's antiquity and cannot be separated from matters that we in the West would call secular or merely political. After all, the three major groups in the Land are Sons of Abraham and share a common understood relationship that serves as a basis for living together in harmony today. The past 50 years of failed politics have undermined communal harmony and allowed outside forces to enter and to modify relationships. Now, differences in a culture of hatred are about to fragment the greater society and turn the region into a quagmire of despair. An approach that takes seriously the Abrahamic factor can bring the parties back to his tent for conversation and where participants can look each in the eye and see each other's humanity and aspirations. The God of Abraham unifies through His promises and mercy.

It is true that religion can divide a society. This is no more true than in the Holy Land and the Middle East. Religious differences are sharp and numerous. The majority of the people are Muslims. But, within Islam, there are at least 72 sects with the Sunni and the Shi'a being the most populated. Christians tend to be identified along four lines: Eastern Orthodox Churches, Oriental Churches, Roman Catholics, and Protestants. Judaism has its own deep divides—Orthodox, Conservative and Reformed, along with other lesser groups. Of course, there are several other religious groups, due to the history of the region and they represent a variety of mixtures, such as, The Druzes, The Yazidis, The Sabians and The Bahais. Superimposed over these religious groups are the interests of politics and geo-economics.

One cannot speak about peace on the political level without taking into account the religious roots of the people. The veneration of holy sites and places is fundamental to identities, and they are multiple. The only solution is an open and free society that must be the goal of peace.

TRIBUTE TO KAY DINWIDDIE AND THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK AND TRUST REGENCY CLUB

HON. KENNY C. HULSHOF

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. HULSHOF. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Kay Dinwiddie and the First National Bank and Trust Regency Club, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Kay has been the director of the club since its inception. The Regency Club is open to bank

customers who are at least 50 years old, and has grown from a relatively small group to its present size of more than 3,700 members.

Although club members do receive special bank services and discounts, the primary focus of the club is on its group travel programs, which has taken them to numerous international locales. The club has traveled extensively throughout the state of Missouri, sampling the rich culture of the greatest state in the union. From Hannibal, the land of the great Mark Twain, through our fertile farm lands and national parks, the Lake of the Ozarks, to music of Branson, and the metropolises of St. Louis and Kansas City that bookend the state, Kay has shepherded her group to better know and love our great state.

But Kay has also led her fellow Missourians abroad, and has traveled to such far locales as Australia and Africa. Kay has personally visited six continents, about 40 countries and crossed the equator 12 times. I have been informed that her travels when all tabulated account for more than 600 days and over 100,000 miles. You would think all that travel would have tired her out; however, she remains steadfast in her dedication to the Regency Club.

I would like to commend and thank Kay for her commitment to the Regency Club and its extensive membership, my constituents. She has been a tireless advocate for club members and has worked for the greater benefit of the Columbia community. I hope to be voicing her praises in another twenty years.

INTRODUCTION OF THE AMERI- CARE HEALTH INSURANCE ACT OF 2007

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the American Health Insurance Act of 2007. I am joined by various cosponsors in supporting this common sense solution for the U.S. to finally achieve guaranteed, affordable, quality health insurance coverage for all.

I have often spoken before this body about the great need to reform our health care system. For too long, we have been plagued with an inadequate patchwork that today leaves 45 million Americans uninsured. Our complex system requires us to spend more than any other nation on health care—30 percent on administration alone. Health care costs continue to rise, yet year after year hardworking families are faced with less access, more paperwork, and declining quality.

Our broken health system is a tremendous financial burden on our Nation's families and businesses alike. Half of all bankruptcies can be traced to medical bills. Eighty percent of people who file for bankruptcy because of medical bills have health insurance, but their benefits do not meet their needs. General Motors spends more on health care than on steel; Starbucks spends more on health insurance than on coffee.

These problems have only worsened over time. In years past, special interests have defeated attempts to reform the health system. Today, however, calls for health reform are

being heard from unlikely voices and through strange partnerships. Wal-Mart joined SEIU, which has in turn joined AARP and the Business Roundtable, to call for government action. On March 6, the AFL-CIO abandoned its support of employer-based health care and began to push universal coverage through the expansion of Medicare. Even the for-profit hospitals have put forward a proposal.

This month, the New York Times reported that a majority of Americans would like the federal government to guarantee health insurance to every American—especially children. Nearly 80 percent think it is more important to provide universal access to health insurance than it is to extend the tax breaks of recent years. Sixty percent of Americans, including 62 percent of independents and 46 percent of Republicans, said they would be willing to pay more in taxes to guarantee access to all.

These various stakeholders may not agree on exactly which road we should travel. But they do finally all agree on our destination: guaranteed, affordable quality health coverage. The bill I am introducing today is the best way to get us there.

The AmeriCare Health Care Act of 2007 is a practical proposal to ensure that everyone has health coverage in our country. It builds on what works in today's health care system to provide simple, affordable, reliable health insurance. Under AmeriCare, people would continue to obtain health coverage through their employer—as most of us currently do—or they would be covered under the new AmeriCare system.

AmeriCare creates a new Title XXII in the Social Security Act. It uses Medicare's existing administrative infrastructure, but improves upon Medicare's benefits to address some of the current gaps in coverage, such as mental health parity, coverage for children, and family planning and pregnancy-related services for women. State Medicaid programs would remain responsible for long-term care, but AmeriCare would cover low-income children, women, and others who currently receive health care services under Medicaid.

AmeriCare is financed through premiums, paid 20 percent by individuals and families and 80 percent by employers. People with incomes under 200 percent of poverty would be fully subsidized, and premiums and cost-sharing would be phased in for those with incomes between 200 and 300 percent of poverty. General revenues and state funds would help to offset these costs.

AmeriCare limits out-of-pocket spending to ensure that no one spends a disproportionate share of their income on health care. Employers could continue to offer their own coverage, so long as it is at least as good as AmeriCare. Payment of premiums would be reconciled on our annual income tax forms.

Enacting AmeriCare would provide tremendous benefits to our Nation. A recent report by the Commonwealth Fund comparing several proposals by Members of Congress and the Bush Administration concluded that AmeriCare is the only health reform proposal that would provide for truly universal care, covering all of the nearly 45 million currently uninsured Americans.

Expanding insurance coverage to all will end the cost shifting that results from the high number of uninsured we have today. This could reduce premiums for job-based insurance by as much as \$1,000 for family coverage, according to the Institute of Medicine.