

THE DREAM ACT IS A MORAL ISSUE

(Mrs. NAPOLITANO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, in the 38th Congressional District of California, we have had many exceptional, bright students struggling because of their status.

Sam, a political science degree graduate, came to the United States at the age of 2.

Abe, a psychology major who would like to become a university professor.

Nate, another psychology major, aspires to be a psychologist. We need male psychologists.

John, a chemical engineering major whose mother recently became a citizen, got killed at a bus stop while waiting for the I-130 to have him become a citizen.

Robert, a civil engineering major, lives 34 miles away from college and travels at least 7 hours to and from school so he can get educated.

This is just a microcosm of the 800,000 youngsters who were brought to the United States as infants. It is a necessity for us to be able to ensure that these young people who have been trained and educated in the U.S. remain and become our own leaders of tomorrow.

DREAM Act is a moral issue. It is the right thing to do. We must pass the DREAM Act.

THE DREAM ACT

(Ms. CLARKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. CLARKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in full support of the DREAM Act.

The immigrant children and young adults that are affected by our broken immigration laws are as diverse as this country. My district, the 11th Congressional district of New York, is home to a significant and diverse immigrant population. According to the Census Bureau, 47 percent of the immigrant population that settled in my district between 1980 and 2008 has yet to obtain naturalized citizenship. Many of those individuals are documented legal residents and some are not.

With such a large population, my office has been inundated with instances of young people who are either facing the threat of deportation to a country they have never known or had no choice in leaving, or they are forced into an immigration purgatory whereby the opportunities to obtain higher education and gainful employment are curtailed by the immigrant status. Many of these young people have considered themselves Americans, having never truly known their land of birth.

We cannot delay passing the DREAM Act any longer. We cannot continue to punish a community of young people that came to this country at no fault

of their own. Many communities across this Nation have nurtured these young people.

I support the DREAM Act, and urge my colleagues to do the same.

THE DREAM ACT

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

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, the DREAM Act would not only benefit undocumented students, but it would benefit the country as well. It is estimated that about 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school after living in the United States for at least 5 years. Unfortunately, because of current law, only five to 10 percent of these students attend college. The remaining 90 to 95 percent remain unable to find employment appropriate to their level of academic potential, and become victims of the criminal justice and social welfare system.

Earlier this year, my home State of New Jersey passed a State version of this law recognizing that these students deserve to be rewarded for their hard work and allowed opportunity just as their peers. Furthermore, acknowledging the fact that more than 40 percent of the State's scientists and engineers with advanced degrees were foreign born in 2006, the economic benefit was taken into account. It was understood that, beyond this measure being morally just, it is an economic measure as well.

I ask that we support the DREAM Act.

THE DREAM ACT

(Mr. ORTIZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my unconditional and complete support for the American DREAM Act.

This bill is intended to address the situation faced by such young people among us who were brought to the United States years ago as undocumented immigrant children. In fact, some of these children didn't even know that they were born in a foreign country.

These children have grown up and stayed here, stayed in school. They kept out of trouble. They dream of becoming a full-fledged American, but are prevented from doing so because they lack the legal status. The American DREAM Act would provide an avenue for these young people to acquire legal status, pursue a college degree or join the military, and give back to the communities and to the country that they consider home.

I've worked with these students. I represent a border State. These children are intelligent. They're smart and, not only that, they love this country.

As a veteran and as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I

recognize the benefits that the DREAM Act can bring to this Nation. And I would ask my colleagues to support this bill. This is a good bill.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

SENIORS PROTECTION ACT OF 2010

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5987) to ensure that seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities who receive Social Security and certain other Federal benefits receive a one-time \$250 payment in the event that no cost-of-living adjustment is payable in 2011, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5987

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 "Seniors Protection Act of 2010".

SEC. 2. PAYMENT IN LIEU OF A COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT TO RECIPIENTS OF SOCIAL SECURITY, SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME, RAILROAD RETIREMENT BENEFITS, AND VETERANS DISABILITY COMPENSATION OR PENSION BENEFITS.

(a) AUTHORITY TO MAKE PAYMENTS.—

(1) ELIGIBILITY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (5)(B), the Secretary of the Treasury shall disburse a \$250 payment to each individual who, for any month during the 3-month period ending with the month which ends prior to the month that includes the date of the enactment of this Act, is entitled to a benefit payment described in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) of subparagraph (B) or is eligible for a SSI cash benefit described in subparagraph (C). In the case of an individual who is eligible for a payment under this subparagraph by reason of entitlement to a benefit described in subparagraph (B)(i), no such payment shall be made to such individual unless such individual was paid a benefit described in such subparagraph (B)(i) for any month in the 12-month period ending with the month which ends prior to the month that includes the date of the enactment of this Act.

(B) BENEFIT PAYMENT DESCRIBED.—For purposes of subparagraph (A):

(i) TITLE II BENEFIT.—A benefit payment described in this clause is a monthly insurance benefit payable (without regard to sections 202(j)(1) and 223(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 402(j)(1), 423(b)) under—

(I) section 202(a) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 402(a));

(II) section 202(b) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 402(b));

(III) section 202(c) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 402(c));

(IV) section 202(d)(1)(B)(ii) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 402(d)(1)(B)(ii));

(V) section 202(e) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 402(e));

(VI) section 202(f) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 402(f));

(VII) section 202(g) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 402(g));

(VIII) section 202(h) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 402(h));

(IX) section 223(a) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 423(a));

(X) section 227 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 427); or

(XI) section 228 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 428).

(ii) RAILROAD RETIREMENT BENEFIT.—A benefit payment described in this clause is a monthly annuity or pension payment payable (without regard to section 5(a)(ii) of the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 (45 U.S.C. 231d(a)(ii))) under—

(I) section 2(a)(1) of such Act (45 U.S.C. 231a(a)(1));

(II) section 2(c) of such Act (45 U.S.C. 231a(c));

(III) section 2(d)(1)(i) of such Act (45 U.S.C. 231a(d)(1)(i));

(IV) section 2(d)(1)(ii) of such Act (45 U.S.C. 231a(d)(1)(ii));

(V) section 2(d)(1)(iii)(C) of such Act to an adult disabled child (45 U.S.C. 231a(d)(1)(iii)(C));

(VI) section 2(d)(1)(iv) of such Act (45 U.S.C. 231a(d)(1)(iv));

(VII) section 2(d)(1)(v) of such Act (45 U.S.C. 231a(d)(1)(v)); or

(VIII) section 7(b)(2) of such Act (45 U.S.C. 231f(b)(2)) with respect to any of the benefit payments described in clause (i) of this subparagraph.

(iii) VETERANS BENEFIT.—A benefit payment described in this clause is a compensation or pension payment payable under—

(I) section 1110, 1117, 1121, 1131, 1141, or 1151 of title 38, United States Code;

(II) section 1310, 1312, 1313, 1315, 1316, or 1318 of title 38, United States Code;

(III) section 1513, 1521, 1533, 1536, 1537, 1541, 1542, or 1562 of title 38, United States Code; or

(IV) section 1805, 1815, or 1821 of title 38, United States Code,

to a veteran, surviving spouse, child, or parent as described in paragraph (2), (3), (4)(A)(ii), or (5) of section 101, title 38, United States Code, who received that benefit during any month within the 3-month period ending with the month which ends prior to the month that includes the date of the enactment of this Act.

(C) SSI CASH BENEFIT DESCRIBED.—A SSI cash benefit described in this subparagraph is a cash benefit payable under section 1611 (other than under subsection (e)(1)(B) of such section) or 1619(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1382, 1382h).

(2) REQUIREMENT.—A payment shall be made under paragraph (1) only to individuals who reside in 1 of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or the Northern Mariana Islands, or who are utilizing a foreign or domestic Army Post Office, Fleet Post Office, or Diplomatic Post Office address. For purposes of the preceding sentence, the determination of the individual's residence shall be based on the address of record, as of the date of certification under subsection (b) for a payment under this section.

(3) NO DOUBLE PAYMENTS.—An individual shall be paid only 1 payment under this section, regardless of whether the individual is entitled to, or eligible for, more than 1 benefit or cash payment described in paragraph (1).

(4) LIMITATION.—A payment under this section shall not be made (or, in the case of subparagraph (D), shall not be due)—

(A) in the case of an individual entitled to a benefit specified in paragraph (1)(B)(i) or paragraph (1)(B)(ii)(VIII) if—

(i) for the most recent month of such individual's entitlement in the 3-month period described in paragraph (1), or

(ii) for the month (as determined by the Commissioner of Social Security) in which such individual would, but for this paragraph, have been certified under subsection (b) to receive a payment under this section, such individual's benefit under such paragraph was not payable by reason of subsection (x) or (y) of section 202 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 402) or section 1129A of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1320a–8a);

(B) in the case of an individual entitled to a benefit specified in paragraph (1)(B)(iii) if, for the most recent month of such individual's entitlement in the 3-month period described in paragraph (1), such individual's benefit under such paragraph was not payable, or was reduced, by reason of section 1505, 5313, or 5313B of title 38, United States Code;

(C) in the case of an individual entitled to a benefit specified in paragraph (1)(C) if—

(i) for such most recent month of such individual's eligibility in the 3-month period described in paragraph (1), or

(ii) for the month (as determined by the Commissioner of Social Security) in which such individual would, but for this paragraph, have been certified under subsection (b) to receive a payment under this section, such individual's benefit under such paragraph was not payable by reason of subsection (e)(1)(A) or (e)(4) of section 1611 (42 U.S.C. 1382) or section 1129A of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1320a–8a); or

(D) in the case of any individual whose date of death occurs—

(i) before the date of negotiation of a check payment to an individual certified under subsection (b) to receive a payment under this section; or

(ii) in the case of a direct deposit, before the date on which such payment is deposited into such individual's account.

In the case of any individual whose date of death occurs before a payment under this section is negotiated (in the case of a check) or deposited (in the case of a direct deposit), such payment shall not be due and shall not be reissued to the estate of such individual or to any other person. In no case shall payment be made to, or on behalf of, an individual who is not alive at the time of issuance or reissuance.

(5) TIMING AND MANNER OF PAYMENTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall commence disbursing payments under this section at the earliest practicable date in 2011 prior to June 1, 2011. The Secretary of the Treasury may disburse any payment electronically to an individual in such manner as if such payment was a benefit payment or cash benefit to such individual under the applicable program described in subparagraph (B) or (C) of paragraph (1).

(B) DEADLINE.—No payments shall be disbursed under this section after December 31, 2011, regardless of any determinations of entitlement to, or eligibility for, such payments made after such date.

(b) IDENTIFICATION OF RECIPIENTS.—The Commissioner of Social Security, the Railroad Retirement Board, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall certify the individuals entitled to receive payments under this section and provide the Secretary of the Treasury with the information needed to disburse such payments. A certification of an individual shall be unaffected by any subsequent determination or redetermination of the individual's entitlement to, or eligibility for, a benefit specified in subparagraph (B) or (C)

of subsection (a)(1) (except that such certification shall be affected by a determination that an individual is an individual described in subparagraph (D) of subsection (a)(4) during a period described in such subparagraph), and no individual shall be certified to receive a payment under this section if such individual has at any time been denied certification for such a payment by reason of subparagraph (A)(ii) or (C)(ii) of subsection (a)(4) (unless such individual is subsequently determined not to have been an individual described in either such subparagraph at the time of such denial).

(c) TREATMENT OF PAYMENTS.—

(1) PAYMENT TO BE DISREGARDED FOR PURPOSES OF ALL FEDERAL AND FEDERALLY ASSISTED PROGRAMS.—A payment under subsection (a) shall not be regarded as income and shall not be regarded as a resource for the month of receipt and the following 9 months, for purposes of determining the eligibility of the recipient (or the recipient's spouse or family) for benefits or assistance, or the amount or extent of benefits or assistance, under any Federal program or under any State or local program financed in whole or in part with Federal funds.

(2) PAYMENT NOT CONSIDERED INCOME FOR PURPOSES OF TAXATION.—A payment under subsection (a) shall not be considered as gross income for purposes of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

(3) PAYMENTS PROTECTED FROM ASSIGNMENT.—The provisions of sections 207 and 1631(d)(1) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 407, 1383(d)(1)), section 14(a) of the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 (45 U.S.C. 231m(a)), and section 5301 of title 38, United States Code, shall apply to any payment made under subsection (a) as if such payment was a benefit payment or cash benefit to such individual under the applicable program described in subparagraph (B) or (C) of subsection (a)(1).

(4) PAYMENTS SUBJECT TO OFFSET AND RECLAMATION.—Notwithstanding paragraph (3)—

(A) any payment made under this section shall, in the case of a payment of a direct deposit, be subject to the reclamation provisions under subpart B of part 210 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations (relating to reclamation of benefit payments); and

(B) any payment made under this section shall not, for purposes of section 3716 of title 31, United States Code, be considered a benefit payment or cash benefit made under the applicable program described in subparagraph (B) or (C) of subsection (a)(1), and all amounts paid shall be subject to offset to collect delinquent debts.

(d) PAYMENT TO REPRESENTATIVE PAYEES AND FIDUCIARIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In any case in which an individual who is entitled to a payment under subsection (a) and whose benefit payment or cash benefit described in paragraph (1) of that subsection is paid to a representative payee or fiduciary, the payment under subsection (a) shall be made to the individual's representative payee or fiduciary and the entire payment shall be used only for the benefit of the individual who is entitled to the payment.

(2) APPLICABILITY.—

(A) PAYMENT ON THE BASIS OF A TITLE II OR SSI BENEFIT.—Section 1129(a)(3) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1320a–8(a)(3)) shall apply to any payment made on the basis of an entitlement to a benefit specified in paragraph (1)(B)(i) or (1)(C) of subsection (a) in the same manner as such section applies to a payment under title II or XVI of such Act.

(B) PAYMENT ON THE BASIS OF A RAILROAD RETIREMENT BENEFIT.—Section 13 of the Railroad Retirement Act (45 U.S.C. 231f) shall apply to any payment made on the basis of

an entitlement to a benefit specified in paragraph (1)(B)(ii) of subsection (a) in the same manner as such section applies to a payment under such Act.

(C) PAYMENT ON THE BASIS OF A VETERANS BENEFIT.—Sections 5502, 6106, and 6108 of title 38, United States Code, shall apply to any payment made on the basis of an entitlement to a benefit specified in paragraph (1)(B)(iii) of subsection (a) in the same manner as those sections apply to a payment under that title.

(e) APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) CARRYOVER OF EARLIER APPROPRIATION.—Any sums appropriated under section 2201(e) of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for the Secretary of the Treasury, the Commissioner of Social Security, the Railroad Retirement Board, or the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and which have not been expended as of the date of the enactment of this Act shall also be available for the Secretary of the Treasury, the Commissioner of Social Security, the Railroad Retirement Board, or the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, respectively, for the period of fiscal years 2010 through 2012, and shall remain available until expended, to carry out this section.

(2) ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION.—Out of any sums in the Treasury of the United States not otherwise appropriated, the following sums are appropriated, in addition to sums referred to in paragraph (1), for the period of fiscal years 2010 through 2012, to remain available until expended, to carry out this section:

(A) For the Secretary of the Treasury, \$7,000,000 for administrative costs incurred in carrying out this section.

(B) For the Commissioner of Social Security—

(i) such sums as may be necessary for payments to individuals certified by the Commissioner of Social Security as entitled to receive a payment under this section; and

(ii) \$52,000,000 for the Social Security Administration's Limitation on Administrative Expenses for costs incurred in carrying out this section.

(C) For the Railroad Retirement Board—

(i) such sums as may be necessary for payments to individuals certified by the Railroad Retirement Board as entitled to receive a payment under this section; and

(ii) \$670,000 for the Railroad Retirement Board's Limitation on Administration for administrative costs incurred in carrying out this section.

(D)(i) For the Secretary of Veterans Affairs—

(i) such sums as may be necessary for the Compensation and Pensions account, for payments to individuals certified by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs as entitled to receive a payment under this section; and

(II) \$981,000 for the Information Systems Technology account and \$447,000 for the General Operating Expenses account, for administrative costs incurred in carrying out this section.

(ii) The Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation and Pensions account shall hereinafter be available for payments authorized under subsection (a)(1)(A) to individuals entitled to a benefit payment described in subsection (a)(1)(B)(iii).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Dakota.

□ 1030

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 5987, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In October, the Social Security Commissioner announced there would be no cost-of-living adjustment—or COLA—for Social Security benefits in 2011. This is the result of economic conditions. It is not due to action or inaction on the part of Congress. Congress enacted legislation in 1975 to provide for an automatic cost-of-living adjustment so seniors would not face year after year of rising prices for daily expenses with no increase in benefits. Unfortunately, due to the formula, next month will mark the first time since 1975 when the automatic COLA will not increase for the second year in a row. Because the recovering economy is slowly turning around, prices tracked by those bureaucrats measuring these items find that it has not reached the peak of inflation in 2008 caused by the spike of energy prices. So it is an anomaly within the formula providing no cost-of-living adjustment.

Any of us visiting with our senior citizens across this great land understand something quite different has occurred within the life of our seniors: they are experiencing higher prices. In fact, this is causing a hardship for so many, given the fact that Social Security benefit levels are really very modest. They are \$14,000 for the average retiree. It is \$13,000 on average in North Dakota. We estimate that some more than 30 million Americans get most of their income from Social Security, and many millions of Americans get all of their income from Social Security.

So, basically, they have their benefit levels flatlined at a time when they are encountering higher costs, reducing their quality of life experience, and disappointing them greatly about Social Security.

The bill before us would provide 54 million Americans with a \$250 payment in lieu of COLA. Now, for those at the very bottom, this means a lot—about a \$20 a month cost-of-living adjustment to help them with those higher costs.

I want us to think for just a moment, Mr. Speaker, about this very modest \$250 payment, \$20 a month, in contrast to some of the relief measures being tossed around as negotiations proceed to conclude this session. We heard about a deal the White House has been discussing with the Senate that would provide, for example, an estate tax provision representing a windfall to the wealthiest few families in this country. At a time when Congress is considering measures that would provide vast

amounts of relief to the wealthiest who need it the least, you would think that we might be able to measure support for \$250 to seniors living on Social Security checks unable to meet their expenses in light of higher costs but no COLA.

The bill before us should pass under any sense of fairness, particularly at this time of the holidays. The bill is supported by AARP, the Alliance for Retired Americans, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, the Strengthen Social Security Campaign, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Wider Opportunities for Women organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 5897, the Seniors Protection Act of 2010.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, you know, I hate references to what we are doing today to this. Bipartisan congressional efforts established the cost-of-living adjustment or COLA formula beginning in 1975 to make sure that Social Security benefits retain their purchasing power for our Nation's seniors. The COLA formula is designed to achieve a simple goal. Increases in consumer prices trigger an increase in Social Security benefits.

In 2009, seniors received the largest COLA since 1982, 5.8 percent, because of a temporary spike in energy prices. Since then, energy prices fell, and even though the inflation rate used to determine the COLA was negative between 2008 and 2009, benefits were not reduced in 2010. Instead, they remained constant. That is because the law prevents benefits from being reduced when prices decline, and that helps seniors in these tough economic times.

Since prices have remained short of the peak they reached back in 2008, the Social Security Administration announced there will not be a COLA in 2011 either. Though seniors are understandably disappointed, the COLA formula is working as intended. The good news is that most seniors do not face an increase in their Medicare part B premium when there is no COLA due to hold harmless protections in current law. Also, last year seniors received a \$250 economic recovery payment through the stimulus. While many seniors are hurting, so too are American working families.

Doing an end-run around a current bipartisan COLA formula without even one hearing to examine whether it is working or the many options for change our colleagues have offered is wrong. Sending out \$250 checks to people like Ross Perot or Warren Buffett, or to the Members of this House who may be eligible for them, as this bill does, is wrong. Sending \$250 checks to prisoners or dead people, as Social Security has done in the past, is wrong.

Increasing our Nation's crushing deficit on the backs of our children by an additional \$14 billion is wrong. Unfortunately, our side is unable to right

these wrongs as we are prohibited from offering any amendments to this bill. I urge my colleagues to vote "no."

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS).

Mr. HIGGINS. I thank my colleague for the time and for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Seniors Protection Act. Since 1975, seniors have depended on a cost-of-living adjustment to meet their rising expenses. Through an automatic formula, they have received a cost-of-living adjustment every year, without fail, until last year.

Now, for a second year in a row, at a time when seniors have seen their savings and home values drop and prices for their prescriptions and other bills rise, they will also see their benefits frozen yet again. I believe we must examine the COLA formula to ensure that it meets the needs of seniors; but, in the meantime, we must provide an increase to their benefits today so they can pay their expenses.

I strongly support this legislation, which will provide a one-time payment of \$250 to Social Security recipients in the upcoming year. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LOEBSACK).

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you for yielding, Mr. POMEROY, and for your great leadership on this issue as well.

Mr. Speaker, what I hear time and again from Iowa seniors is that their expenses are rising. They pay too much for prescriptions and other health-related costs, transportation, and heating for their homes. To make matters worse, seniors' other retirement income has lost value in this recession.

Despite this fact, as was mentioned, there will be no COLA again for our seniors and veterans in 2011. This is simply unfair. No senior should retire into poverty after a lifetime of hard work. That is why I strongly support the Seniors Protection Act, which will provide our seniors with \$250 to help defray the cost increases they are experiencing that aren't recognized by the COLA formula. I am an original cosponsor of this bill, and I have strongly advocated for its passage. I plan to vote for it today because I believe it is the right thing to do for our seniors.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR).

□ 1040

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. I rise in strong support of the Seniors Protection Act, and I thank my colleague, Mr. POMEROY from North Dakota, for his tremendous leadership.

Mr. Speaker, my older neighbors throughout the Tampa Bay Area in Florida have shared with me that, since the recession hit in 2007, they have really struggled with property value declines, with swings in the values of their retirement savings, and with the rising cost of Medicare. So it was particularly troubling that the Social Security Administration announced that, for the second year in a row, there would be no cost-of-living increase. They just couldn't believe it. It appears that the COLA is not adequately taking account of the economic situation that our older neighbors are facing today.

So I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the Seniors Protection Act. Let's keep the fundamental promise of Social Security, which is: no matter what happens in a person's life, our older neighbors will continue to live in dignity.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Wisconsin, Dr. KAGEN.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to join my colleagues in support of this necessary action.

What is it that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle don't like about senior citizens? What is it that you do not understand about people being in need?

It is \$250 that is needed now to help our people, our constituents. For me, it is for my patients so they can get their necessary prescription drugs. People need help now, not next year.

I endorse this bill very strongly.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY).

Mr. COURTNEY. I want to thank Mr. POMEROY for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, here is the reality today of rising prices for America's seniors and retired veterans.

From October 2009 to October 2010, the following commodities, which consume the lion's share of a senior's household budget, saw significant increases: home heating fuel went up 13 percent, gas prices 3.8 percent, prescription drug prices 3.9 percent, medical care 3.6 percent.

Despite these relentless increases, the Labor Department's CPI formula spit out a 0 percent COLA because the cost of items which the formula counts, like flat screen TVs, personal computers, and recreation activities, went down. For seniors and veterans who are dependent on Social Security and VA pensions, the latest flat screen televisions and personal computers are not high on their shopping lists.

Congress needs to intervene for the benefit of seniors and retired veterans

by passing this measure, which will provide emergency help with the real-world budgets of elderly Americans.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we are getting calls from our constituents telling us that they don't want the COLA to continue just giving money away. What they are interested in are tax decreases. I would say that this is ill-advised at this time, and we should not just throw more money at a problem that we can solve and have solved already, so I urge my colleagues to oppose this legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is recognized for 1½ minutes.

Mr. WEINER. Thank you very much. I appreciate the sponsor of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, what it comes down to is that it is not as my good friend characterized it: throwing money away or giving money away. This is whether you consider people who have helped build this country to what it is, who have paid into the Social Security Trust Fund, and who very often rely entirely on Social Security for their support. These are people who, frankly, on average, are making in the magnitude of \$16,000, \$17,000, \$20,000 for the entire year.

The Social Security COLA was passed in the 1970s with a very logical rationale, which was to allow seniors to keep up with the high cost of living. The mistake that we continually make—and perhaps it's because the law is written incorrectly or perhaps it's a misinterpretation—is that we assume for a moment that, when inflation is at a very low level like it is today, it means costs haven't risen for seniors; but if you look at the things that seniors are actually buying and if you look at the things that they need in order to survive—housing, health care, their very basics for food—all of these things are actually experiencing rising costs.

You know, it is somewhat ironic that, when I hear my good friends on the other side talk about the need for austerity, it always seems to be that it is the people who are in the middle class and struggling to make it who are the ones who are supposed to take the hit. Social Security beneficiaries are the broad cross section of this country, and we have made a contract with them.

I have to tell you that I know the new Republican Congress was elected on a platform of eviscerating Social Security as we know it. That is not a rhetorical talking point. If you look at the book quite literally, the book written by the person who is going to be the chairman of the Budget Committee on the Republican side, he suggests turning large portions of the Social Security Trust Fund to the stock market.

Yes, that is their belief. That is what they think the lesson is that was learned.

So there really is a question here about who we are fighting for. Mr. POMEROY and the people who are going to vote "yes" on this bill say we want to fight for senior citizens who are struggling to make it each and every day. They are the ones who believe that Social Security isn't some kind of bizarre Socialist plot but is a way that we have created a safety net. That's all it is.

Nobody, I say to my colleagues, collects their Social Security checks and says, "Woo-hoo, I'm rich." They collect them and say, "Oh, what a relief. I can get through to the next month. I can continue with the standard of living that I have without its being chipped away."

Well, now, after 2 consecutive years, we will see the Social Security cost-of-living increase, which is going to inch up to keep track of costs that they have elsewhere in life, be restored. We are doing the best we can. I believe, frankly, the COLA law needs to be rewritten. I believe it did not contemplate the type of scenario we have today in which overall inflation rates are going down and the costs for seniors are staying high.

As other speakers have pointed out, there are two fundamental mistakes that get made when the Social Security Trust Fund is calculated:

One, the basket of things that a senior actually buys is entirely different from what a teenager buys or from what a businessperson buys. They have very discrete costs, and those costs are going up.

It is also important to know that there are sometimes regional differences. In the part of the country that Mr. POMEROY comes from, energy costs are sometimes exceedingly high because of cold winters. In the parts of the country that I represent and that Congressman PASCRELL represents, the cost of housing is extraordinarily high. It is definitely going up more than 0 percent a year.

I would also remind my Republican colleagues of one other thing. A lot of them did not like the Social Security program from the word "go." They didn't like it even then. There is a schizophrenia inherent in the Republican position about Social Security. They really nailed, or actually got it in their bones, that having a safety net program for senior citizens was really something government should not be doing. They didn't like it. Go take a look at the debate back in 1933 when it began. Yet, from 1935, which is when the checks started coming, until today, one thing has been consistently true: month after month, year after year, this program has worked exactly how it was designed. It was designed to allow one generation to help provide a safety net for the next—year after year, generation after generation.

I want to say one other thing.

This whole idea that the apocalypse is arriving and Social Security is coming undone at the seams is wildly, wild-

ly overblown. Today, the Social Security program will add to the deficit exactly zero dollars and zero cents. That's more than I can say about the tax cuts for billionaires, which is going to add \$700 billion to the deficit over 10 years.

So what we are saying is that we Democrats, we who will vote "yes" on this bill, are standing up and fighting for senior citizens. We are standing up and fighting for every Social Security beneficiary, even the ones who are Republicans and Independents from all parts of the country, because we fundamentally believe the program works. If you believe that the Social Security program is a good and virtuous program, this is your chance to show it, by voting "yes," because this is a chance to improve it.

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If you believe that the Social Security program is some kind of hoax or a fraud or you believe what many of my Republican friends believe, that it should be privatized, dismantled, eliminated, tossed in the trash can, then you should probably vote "no" on this because this bill only strengthens Social Security.

Now let me make one final remark—and I thank very much Mr. POMEROY for being the sponsor of this legislation. He has never lost sight of the fact that the senior citizens that we help with Social Security are exactly the ones who helped put us in a position to build this country to what it is today.

Let me make one final point. You know, in all of the political back and forth that very often happens during campaign season, I think that we really did just see a campaign where one side operated almost entirely from a position of what they were against—they're against strengthening Social Security, they're against health care reform, they're against financial reform, they're against a reduction of taxes on the middle class.

We know precious little about what the new incoming Republican Congress is in favor of. This is an interesting test, where they are on Social Security. The chairman of their incoming Budget Committee believes in privatizing it. Many of their candidates kind of hemmed and hawed when asked. This is it, this is a good early test. And I would want to remind the American people that if you believe Social Security is one of those programs you really think should be protected and strengthened, this is the team that's fighting for you, the one that's offering this piece of legislation.

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes," and I urge my Republican colleagues to finally realize that supporting senior citizens and Social Security is a virtuous and good thing to do, even from their perspective.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Seniors Protection Act. This bill will provide a \$250 one-time payment to over 250,000 Rhode Islanders who will see no cost

of living adjustment in their Social Security payment for a second consecutive year.

The slow economic recovery has been particularly hard on Rhode Island seniors, veterans and individuals with disabilities. Social Security pays \$14,000 a year for the average retiree, a modest but crucial benefit that provides over half of all income for the majority of our elderly. People with disabilities and veterans with service-connected injuries also rely on this assistance to meet their day to day needs because they are not able to work, though it is not for lack of trying. Since this assistance will be used to make mortgage payments, pay rent, buy food or access medical care, it will be injected right back into the economy providing additional economic stimulus to our communities.

While Congress is considering extending tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires who don't really need them, I ask them to strongly consider extending a break to those that do. This \$250 payment will help seniors, veterans, railroad retirees and people with disabilities who receive Social Security make ends meet during this difficult time, when housing values are down, other retirement income is volatile, and many are facing rising costs.

I urge my colleagues to vote for the Seniors Protection Act, and support its immediate passage.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5987 was not the way to help Social Security beneficiaries deal with the financial difficulties facing so many.

There is no doubt that millions of Americans have been hurt by this recession. I am sympathetic to those who are struggling and this bill wasn't the way to address the problem. A political gesture that would never become law is not fair to anyone.

Sending a \$250 check to seniors, the disabled, and other beneficiaries of Social Security, irrespective of their needs or their income, sends the wrong message to people who are concerned about federal spending.

As part of our assessment of Social Security, we need to assure the cost of living adjustments are determined in a way that reflects the costs that seniors and others are bearing today and in the future. It also needs to be done in a fiscally responsible way that does not add to the federal deficit or threaten the future strength of the Social Security trust fund.

H.R. 5987 failed these counts and I will vote "no."

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5987, the Seniors Protection Act. When the Social Security Administration announced there would not be an automatic cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) for the second consecutive year, I urged the House leadership to bring H.R. 5987 to the floor. The bill provides a onetime payment of \$250 which equals roughly a 1.8 percent increase in retirement benefits to seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities and railroad retirees.

Social Security has been a reliable source of income for 58 million Americans living on fixed incomes. Today, six in ten seniors rely on Social Security for more than half of their income; about a third of retirees have little other than Social Security to live on. In the 12th Congressional District of Illinois I am privileged to represent, 125,810 people receive Social Security and 19,365 receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

While there was no inflation from the third quarter of 2008 to the third quarter of 2010, health care and prescription drug costs continue to significantly outpace inflation; yet seniors have not received a COLA adjustment to make up for these burdens. Swiftly enacting H.R. 5987 is necessary to ensure my constituents and Americans across the country are able to make ends meet.

Not only is this payment critical to beneficiaries during this economic discovery, the Economic Policy Institute 2010 report concluded the \$250 Social Security and SSI payment provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act increased GDP by roughly 0.5 percent in the second quarter of 2009, which translates to approximately 125,000 jobs created or saved because of these payments.

Mr. Speaker, for 75 years, Social Security has served our seniors well. They have worked hard and earned their retirement benefits. Congress must act quickly to enact H.R. 5987 to demonstrate our steadfast support for our seniors. I strongly urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, the issue we come here to address today is not a Democratic or a Republican problem, but one facing each and every one of our nation's seniors in the Social Security program. Despite any political rhetoric, the lack of a Cost-of-Living Adjustment this year was not a result of Congressional action, but a result of a formula in place since the 1970s. I have long supported a change to this formula to take into account the rising costs for seniors, but in the interim, I am here as a cosponsor of this important legislation.

Right now, in my district, seniors are struggling with their gas and electric bills. This \$250 dollar payment could help seniors not only with these rising costs, but also with their food, rent, medications, and more. So many of our seniors rely heavily on their Social Security checks and as costs continue to rise each year, their Social Security checks are not going as far as they used to. Today, in offering this small adjustment, we can give our seniors that extra cushion they need to meet the unexpected costs of 2011. In this time of great uncertainty and economic hardship, how can we possibly deny our seniors the extra support they need?

I rise today and ask that my colleagues support this measure for our seniors, who have given so much to our country and who deserve this much-needed relief.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5987, the Seniors Protection Act. When the Social Security Administration announced there would not be an automatic cost-of-living-adjustment, COLA, for the second consecutive year, I urged the House leadership to bring H.R. 5987 to the floor. The bill provides a onetime payment of \$250 which equals roughly a 1.8 percent increase in retirement benefits to seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities and railroad retirees.

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Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 5987, the Seniors Protection Act of 2010.

Social Security is a pillar of our society based on the premise that if you work hard and play by the rules you will in turn receive the stability and security of a minimum level of guaranteed income as you get older. While sometimes it gets pushed aside as nothing more than an entitlement program, the reality is that Social Security provides all of the retirement income for six out of ten seniors in this country.

Mr. Speaker, for 75 years, Social Security has never been a day late or a dollar short. But this year the Social Security Administration has recommended that there be no Cost of Living Adjustment—or COLA—for the second year in a row. That means that the very seniors who are struggling to make ends meet will receive a significant amount less than they were expecting for 2011.

While the lack of COLA is not a result of Congressional or Presidential action, today we have the chance to vote to make things right. The Seniors Protection Act of 2010 would simply provide a \$250 check to Social Security recipients in lieu of a Cost of Living Adjustment for 2011.

For some, a few hundred dollars may not seem like a large amount of money. But for the millions of American seniors who are making hard choices, choosing between filling their prescriptions, paying their rent, or feeding their families, a modest increase in their Social Security income could make all of the difference in the world.

Furthermore, ensuring America's seniors can make ends meet would have a broader, positive, effect on the economy as a whole. A recent study by the Economic Policy Institute shows that similar payments to Social Security recipients have proven to be an effective economic stimulus.

Mr. Speaker, we must commit ourselves to continuing to provide the foundation for Americans' retirement security. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 5987.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Seniors Protection Act. I am an original cosponsor of this crucial legislation to provide Social Security recipients with a one-

time \$250 payment in 2011 to help seniors make ends meet. This bill is in response to the Social Security Administration's October announcement that there will be no automatic Cost-Of-Living-Adjustment next year for Social Security recipients because the trigger did not come into play because of the recession.

More than 160,000 seniors in Hawaii receive Social Security benefits. Over 1,000 of them took the time to write, e-mail, or call me to share their need for a COLA this year. In Hawaii and nationwide, seniors have seen their cost of living go up, whether in medical costs, uncovered prescription drug costs, or utility bills. Meanwhile, the recession that began under President George W. Bush has hit seniors' savings in pensions, IRAs, and 401(k)s especially hard. The Seniors Protection Act will provide our seniors with a modest financial boost to help get by.

Nationwide, three out of every five seniors rely on Social Security for more than half of their income. The average retiree receives \$14,000 in Social Security benefits. This bill's \$250 payment will help seniors, veterans, railroad retirees and people with disabilities who receive Social Security.

In 1975, a majority Democratic Congress passed a law to automatically provide a cost-of-living increase for Social Security each year, using a formula based on inflation within the overall economy. For the first time in 30 years, as a result of the Bush Recession, the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) was not high enough to trigger an automatic increase for 2010. Although our economy continues to recover, the formula will once again not provide an increase in 2011.

I support efforts to improve the Social Security COLA formula using the Consumer Price Index for Elderly Workers (CPI-E). In the meantime, the Seniors Protection Act before us today will provide a one-time payment of \$250 in lieu of the 2011 increase.

The Seniors Protection Act currently has 158 Democratic cosponsors, but not one SINGLE Republican cosponsor. Instead, in recent months, leading House Republicans have called again for President George W. Bush's plan to privatize Social Security and leave seniors' hard-earned benefits up to the whims of the stock market.

I recently celebrated Social Security's 75th Birthday at an event at the Kapolei Branch of the Social Security Administration. As I said there and have said many times before, I will continue to fight to preserve Social Security benefits so seniors can help make ends meet.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a strong supporter of "The Seniors Protection Act." As we enter the second consecutive year without a cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security retirees and other beneficiaries, this legislation would have helped to provide 54 million Social Security recipients with a one-time payment of \$250 to help them make ends meet during this tough time. America has a moral and civic duty to always support our Nation's seniors, veterans, and the disabled, they may live a productive and secure life.

The Seniors Protection Act is an investment in the economic stability of our seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and all who depend on Social Security to make ends meet. The bill also offers support to the millions of seniors who are struggling trying to pay their bills, mortgages, and other daily expenses.

The Seniors Protection Act is critical to our seniors, and is fiscally responsible. Unfortunately, Congressional Republicans oppose the bill, something that is truly regrettable and a moral outrage.

While Democrats maintain a strong record protecting, upholding, and strengthening Social Security, Republicans continue to advocate risky schemes to privatize it and cut benefits. America's seniors deserve better.

I commend all of my colleagues who support this bill, and I thank Social Security Subcommittee Chairman EARL POMEROY for his outstanding leadership on this issue. Democrats will always stand with our Nation's seniors, because it is the humane, just, and right thing to do.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5987, the Seniors Protection Act of 2010.

Earlier this year, the Social Security Administration announced that for the second year in a row, Social Security beneficiaries would not be receiving a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increase for the second year in a row. This legislation provides seniors with an additional \$250 payment, equivalent to about a 2% COLA, to Social Security beneficiaries next year.

A COLA increase is imperative for seniors who rely on their benefits to support themselves and their families. According to the Economic Policy Institute, 3.5 million seniors are below the poverty level. The Department of Labor estimates that almost half of the 2 million workers over the age of 55 have been unemployed for six months or longer. Yet as more seniors experience poverty as a result of the economic downturn, the calls for privatizing and cutting Social Security in the name of fiscal responsibility have grown louder. Privatizing Social Security will hurt the most vulnerable Americans such as women, minority communities and children—those Americans that are currently experiencing disproportionately the effects of the recession. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the program is fiscally sound for another 40 plus years.

It is our responsibility to guarantee seniors an adequate income after a lifetime of paying into Social Security. We must shift the focus from cutting vital programs such as Social Security to reviving our domestic manufacturing sector as a means to put Americans back to work.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 5987, "Supporting the Seniors Protection Act of 2010." Let me begin by thanking my colleague Representative EARL POMEROY for introducing this very important legislation into the House of Representatives as it is important that we recognize the struggle that a certain segment of our Nation endures and support them by ensuring that we give attention to this matter.

As you may know, H.R. 5987, directs the Secretary of the Treasury to disburse a \$250 payment to recipients of Social Security, SSI (Supplemental Security Income under title XVI of the Social Security Act), railroad retirement benefits, and veterans disability compensation or pension benefits if no cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is payable in 2011.

I support the Seniors Protection Act of 2010. This Act will provide immediate relief to sen-

iors struggling on fixed income with increasing expenses. The legislation will provide 54 million Social Security beneficiaries and others with a one-time \$250 payment, in lieu of a COLA. Now more than ever this emergency spending of \$14.5 billion would provide targeted economic relief to our most vulnerable citizens living on fixed incomes, and struggling with rising health care, food and utility costs.

For many, social security checks are the primary source of income and for others, social security checks are the only source of income. It is both fair and appropriate to now provide a second payment to help stimulate our Nation's economy and at the same time assist seniors, people with disabilities, children and other Social Security beneficiaries who did not receive a cost of living adjustment in 2010 and will not get one again in 2011. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has determined that the cost of medical care services has risen by nearly seven percent in just the last two years. This \$250 payment would represent a small step toward reversing the erosion in benefits caused by the skyrocketing cost of health care.

Therefore, I am requesting that we, the Congress urge President Obama to include a \$500 payment for seniors in his Budget Request for next year. This \$500 payment represents an inclusion for the lack of COLA in 2010 and 2011 years. While I understand that this will not totally eradicate the financial strain, I believe this allotment will serve to ameliorate some financial hardships. It is important that Congress guarantees resources to our seniors that will assist them in not only surviving, but also thriving.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H.R. 5987 and ask for its immediate adoption.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5987, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. POMEROY. 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.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER PROTECTION ACT OF 2010

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 3789) to limit access to social security account numbers.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 3789

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 "Social Security Number Protection Act of 2010".

SEC. 2. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER PROTECTION.

(a) PROHIBITION OF USE OF SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT NUMBERS ON CHECKS ISSUED FOR PAYMENT BY GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 205(c)(2)(C) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 405(c)(2)(C)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(x) No Federal, State, or local agency may display the Social Security account number of any individual, or any derivative of such number, on any check issued for any payment by the Federal, State, or local agency."

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this subsection shall apply with respect to checks issued after the date that is 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

(b) PROHIBITION OF INMATE ACCESS TO SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT NUMBERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 205(c)(2)(C) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 405(c)(2)(C)) (as amended by subsection (a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(xi) No Federal, State, or local agency may employ, or enter into a contract for the use or employment of, prisoners in any capacity that would allow such prisoners access to the Social Security account numbers of other individuals. For purposes of this clause, the term 'prisoner' means an individual confined in a jail, prison, or other penal institution or correctional facility pursuant to such individual's conviction of a criminal offense."

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this subsection shall apply with respect to employment of prisoners, or entry into contract with prisoners, after the date that is 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Dakota.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, I introduced a bill with my friend, the ranking member on the Social Security Subcommittee, SAM JOHNSON, to protect the accuracy of Social Security records and help shield individuals from identity theft. Our bill prohibited Federal, State, and local governments from employing prisoners in any capacity that would allow inmates access to the full or partial Social Security numbers of other individuals, such as through prison labor contracts. The bipartisan Senate bill before us today does the same thing and also prohibits Federal, State, and local governments from displaying Social Security numbers on paper checks, which will also help protect the Social Security program and protect fraud. Both are obvious changes that would protect millions of Americans from identity theft.

Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I concur with all that's been said so far.

You know, Americans worry about the security of their personal information, including their Social Security number, and I don't blame them. Even though Social Security numbers were