

would be spent on food stamps. It's one of the most valuable economic impact generators, almost \$2 of economic impact for each dollar invested, according to a study from Ecotrust.

Let's accept the challenge to try to help improve this process. There are some additional steps that can be taken locally—don't build or remodel schools that don't have kitchens. It's simple, but it's more cost effective to do it when you're constructing or remodeling than to have to come back later.

Let's hold Members of Congress accountable. Last month, we once again on the floor of the House reaffirmed the fact that pizza dough with a little bit of tomato sauce is a vegetable. Maybe people in the course of this next year, when politicians are going to be out campaigning, may be able to pin them down on whether or not they believe pizza is a vegetable and whether they will act to override that outrage.

It's also important to expand the USDA pilot project that's going to be starting next month in Florida and Michigan. Let's see if we can give other States the opportunity for cash instead of commodities, to be able to purchase these local products. This will give opportunities for our school districts to strengthen the local partnerships; to be able to give kids healthy food; to be able to model behaviors that are important; and, most important, for the Federal Government to realign its interests away from large agribusiness and in favor of the health of our children.

Now, in the midst of the rubble of the so-called supercommittee, there was some good that came out of it. One good element was that there was not a secret sort of farm bill that was embedded that would have denied us the opportunity this year to reform farm legislation, because one of the simplest things we can do is to move payments from large agribusiness, put it in the hands of local schools, and local farmers to be able to improve the health of our children and our local economy.

CHRISTMAS AND THE EMPTY CHAIR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, Thanksgiving is over and Christmas is just around the corner. All throughout America, families will gather to celebrate the traditions and festivities, and be together and celebrate faith. But there are some American families that won't have their entire family with them this year. There will be an empty chair at their table. That's because their loved ones serve in the U.S. military in lands throughout the world.

War at Christmas is not new, and this year will be no exception for many of our warriors that are still on call, still on duty serving America. But there is a way to connect with our troops

throughout the world, and it's a project that we are involved in in southeast Texas through the Red Cross and Operation Interdependence.

□ 1010

And here's how it works. It's a way of having young school-age children connect with troops not only in our war zone, but other places in the world where our troops are serving America.

It started several years ago when I had the opportunity to go see our troops in the Middle East about this time of the year. Before I left, my staff came up with the idea that maybe I should take some Christmas cards and holiday cards to our troops that were serving overseas. And so they did all the work and they were able to get schoolteachers to get their kids to volunteer to make handmade Christmas cards. I took about 6,000 of those handmade cards by third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders overseas.

On my way back from the Middle East, I stopped off at the Landstuhl military base. That's the place in Germany where our wounded warriors are taken before they're brought back to the United States. I distributed those cards not only in the Middle East but to our troops, and even our NATO troops, at Landstuhl.

But here is what happened on the plane when I was going overseas—I checked a couple of bags, but I took one bag on the plane with me. It was a night flight, flying overnight and arriving in the daytime. I started going through one of these suitcases that had all of these cards in it. I was looking at them, and the person next to me wanted to know what I was doing. I told him these were from schoolkids back in southeast Texas. He was passing them around. Before I knew it, these cards were up and down the aisles in that plane and I could hear sobbing and saw tears of emotion from some of the passengers on the plane reading those cards from schoolkids connecting with our troops overseas.

When I came back to the Landstuhl military base, some of our troops who were wounded opened the cards and wanted the nurses to put the cards on the wall. Even NATO troops that were there from foreign countries had these cards that were made from American youth.

Madam Speaker, there's something about a warrior from the United States opening up a handmade Christmas card from some kid in the United States. At that moment, the darkness of war seems to disappear because of the brightness of a child.

I have had the opportunity to have these cards made by the kids in southeast Texas now for 5 years. I say I've had the opportunity. I don't do the work. My staff does the work, along with the chambers of commerce and all the teachers. Everybody volunteers. When my staff does the work, it's not doing it on government hours. It's after work, it's on the weekend, plan-

ning and getting these cards from throughout southeast Texas.

Every year the number of cards that are either taken or shipped gets to be more. The first year, it was 6,000. The next year, 10,000 Christmas cards were shipped overseas. The third year, 16,000 cards. And, Madam Speaker, this year kids from southeast Texas are shipping to our troops overseas 35,000 handmade cards, wishing them well, giving them Christmas greetings, saying some of the most awesome things that only third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders could say.

So I want to thank those kids. I want to thank Rikki Wheeler and the chamber of commerce in Baytown. I want to thank Ross Sterling High School, Horace Mann Junior High, Highlands Elementary, and I want to thank those teachers. God bless our teachers who work to have these kids volunteer to make cards for our volunteers overseas who won't be home for Christmas, because there's an empty chair at the Christmas table where that soldier, that warrior, that sailor, that airman is not there because they're representing the United States in lands far, far away.

And that's just the way it is.

COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POLIS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Computer Science Education Week, which started this past Sunday, December 4, 2011, and runs through Saturday, December 10. This week-long celebration of the teaching and learning of computer science is a call to share information and host activities that will elevate computer science education for students at all levels.

In my district in Colorado, the computing achievements of 20 young women will be celebrated at an awards event for the Colorado affiliate of the Aspirations in Computing Award on the campus of the University of Colorado at Boulder.

On Friday, representatives of Computer Science Education Week and the Computer Science Teachers Association will be honored at the White House as Champions of Change, which is part of President Obama's Winning the Future initiative.

Today in Harlem, New York, a company is launching a new national initiative, Tech Girls Rock, in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. On Thursday, 200 third-graders will learn hands-on programming and Web site development at Techie Club. I'm marking this occasion by talking to you about computer science education and urging all my colleagues in the House to support legislation I introduced earlier this year, the Computer Science Education Act, H.R. 3014.

Computing and information technology is transforming our world—

driving innovation, driving job creation, leading to entirely new multimillion-dollar industries, and transforming how we live and work for the better.

Computer science education prepares students for the jobs of the future by engaging and preparing them for careers in high-paying occupations. But our education system is not currently producing enough graduates in computing sciences and IT fields to meet the growing needs of the industry. In fact, the current pipeline of computing graduates will only fill 52 percent of the projected jobs. The other 48 percent will either have to be filled elsewhere in the world or go unfilled.

If the U.S. is to continue to discover and develop the innovations that have created new industries and transformed others, we need to ensure a healthy computer science workforce that's skilled and large enough to meet our growing needs. Women and many minority groups are currently underrepresented among computing and IT professionals as well as students, depriving the Nation of a potential skilled workforce and of the innovation that results from diverse teams.

If we don't address the issues causing too few students to take computer science education classes in kindergarten through 12th grade, as well as college, our pipeline and our Nation's future will be compromised. That's why I've introduced the Computer Science Education Act, which will help ensure that American students not only use technology, but also learn the computing skills to invent technology needed to grow and drive our economy. I look forward to working with my colleagues to include this piece of legislation in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization.

Computer Science Education Week was established in 2009 by the Computing in the Core Coalition to honor Grace Murray Hopper, a pioneer in computer science who engineered a new programming language and developed standards for computer systems to lay the foundation for many advances in computer science from the late 1940s through the 1970s. The U.S. House of Representatives has recognized Computer Science Education Week in the second week of December over the past 2 years.

Computer Science Education Week is a collaborative activity of Computing in the Core, a nonpartisan advocacy coalition. Its core partners are: the Association for Computing Machinery, Microsoft, Google, Computer Science Teachers Association, the National Center for Women and Information Technology—which is based in my district in Colorado—IEEE Computer Society, the Computing Research Association, the College Board, and many, many others.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in acknowledging the importance of computer science for our future by recognizing Computer Science Education Week this week.

SQUARING SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE PAYROLL TAX CUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. McCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Madam Speaker, topping the list of unfinished business this year is the impending collision of two closely related crises: the expiration of the payroll tax and the acceleration of Social Security's bankruptcy.

Last year, Congress voted for a payroll tax cut that averages roughly \$1,000 for every working family in America. As warned, it failed to stimulate economic growth and it accelerated the collapse of the Social Security system; but, as promised, it threw every working family a vital lifeline in very tough economic times.

We need to meet three conflicting objectives: We need to continue the payroll tax cut; we need to stimulate real economic growth; and we need to avoid doing further damage to the Social Security system.

First, we need to understand that not all tax cuts stimulate lasting economic growth. Cutting marginal tax rates does so because it changes the incentives that individuals respond to; cutting inframarginal tax rates, such as the payroll tax, does not. But that payroll tax cut did make a huge difference in the ability of working families to make ends meet in a time of declining family incomes and steadily rising prices. To restore that payroll tax rate today, given the economic pressures on working families, is simply unthinkable.

□ 1020

Yet at the same time, the payroll tax is what supports the Social Security system. Last year, that system entered a state of permanent deficit, and this condition will worsen until the Social Security system bankrupts in 2036. At that moment, every retiree will suffer a sudden and permanent drop in benefits of roughly 25 percent.

Further reducing the revenues into that system will hasten this day of reckoning. Just as bad, in the intervening time the expanding Social Security deficit will heap growing burdens on the Nation's already staggering public debt. Now, some have proposed paying for the inframarginal payroll tax cut that doesn't help the economy with a marginal tax hike that actually harms the economy. Surely we can do better than that. Actually, Congressman LANDRY of Louisiana has done better, and I commend his proposal to the attention of the House. It avoids damaging the Social Security fund while at the same time offering families continued relief from crushing payroll taxes.

His measure, H.R. 3551, the Social Security Preservation Through Individual Choice Enhancement (or SSPICE) Act, constitutes the most realistic and innovative approach to these twin and related crises that has

yet been placed before Congress by linking the cost of Social Security to the benefits that it provides. H.R. 3551 would give every American the choice of paying a lower payroll tax each year in exchange for working a month longer. That's all it would take to pay for itself—a month's delay in retirement for a year's worth of tax relief.

For the first time, individuals can make this choice to pay a lower payroll tax based on their own circumstances without further undermining the fiscal integrity of the Social Security system or the financial security of those relying on that system. For the first time, costs and benefits would be linked in a manner that all consumers can understand and judge for themselves based on their own circumstances.

In a difficult year like this, I think most families would rather save the extra tax and work the extra month. In better times ahead, they may choose to pay the extra tax to maintain their retirement schedule. But it will be their choice based on their needs, their plans, and their best judgment, and not the government's. And by linking costs with benefits, it will protect the long-term actuarial soundness of the Social Security system, a fact that the Social Security system's chief actuary has confirmed.

I'm excited to cosponsor Mr. LANDRY's bill and strongly and enthusiastically recommend it to the membership of the House and to the leadership. Mr. LANDRY has done an enormous service to every retiree who depends upon the Social Security system, as well as to every working family struggling in America, by preserving the fiscal integrity of the system while at the same time giving every American a choice that links the tax they pay to the benefits they receive. And it's an option they can exercise every year without fear that a future congressional act or failure to act might sock them with a tax increase they can't afford or hasten the collapse of a retirement system that many depend upon for their economic survival.

CUBS GREAT RON SANTO ELECTED TO HALL OF FAME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, in case you were wondering, that noise you heard from above yesterday morning was an old third baseman clicking his heels. Finally, on Monday morning, Ron Santo was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Now, most people knew Ronnie as the nine-time All-Star and the five-time Golden Glove winner, one of the top hitters of his era, and the third baseman on the Top 10 list in every statistical category. And many people knew Ronnie as the lovable voice of the Chicago Cubs, with whom we cheered every home run, moaned every dropped fly ball, and laughed at life's most