

Small businesses are the backbone of our Nation's economy. For many Americans, owning their own business is the embodiment of the American Dream. The NO BOSS Act supports these pursuits by increasing the percentage of individuals who can participate in the SEA Program from 5 percent to 10 percent. It also eliminates the requirement that a participant must be likely to exhaust their unemployment compensation benefits in order to qualify.

Entrepreneurship should not be a last resort for those who are unable to find any other form of employment. Rather, self-employment should be encouraged and, indeed, practiced. These two changes expand the eligibility and the opportunity to participate in the SEA Program for more unemployment insurance claimants.

Finally, the NO BOSS Act strengthens the SEA Program by requiring States to certify participation in the self-employment assistance activities weekly and adding new participation activities.

Currently, self-employment activities include entrepreneurial training, business consulting, and technical assistance. This bill adds submitting a business plan or market feasibility study for approval by the State to that list.

In January, the NO BOSS Act passed out of the Ways and Means Committee unanimously by a vote of 41-0. It is important to get this bill signed into law because the SEA Program is underutilized. The bill is a great example of how government can support, enable, and foster more entrepreneurship in a meaningful way.

Entrepreneurship empowers Americans from all backgrounds at all stages of their professional careers. New businesses create jobs for members of their communities and strengthen our economy. The NO BOSS Act is pro-small business and pro-self-starter.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Leader SCALISE, Chairman JASON SMITH, and Ranking Member NEAL for their support in advancing this legislation. I encourage all of the Members to vote "yes" on this bipartisan, commonsense legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the NO BOSS Act, legislation from my good friend and colleague, Representative MIKE CAREY. I also acknowledge his co-lead on the bill, Representative GREG LANDSMAN. This bill is a demonstration of what neighbors and neighboring congressional Members can do together in a bipartisan fashion.

The NO BOSS Act would give workers the choice to use their unemployment insurance weeks, as necessary, to build their businesses, rather than being locked into job searches that don't fit their skills, their needs, or their potential.

Mr. Speaker, most businesses are small businesses. Nationwide, more than 80 percent, or nearly 30 million small businesses, are a solo venture, meaning they have no employees. The second most common type of business still has fewer than 20 total employees.

According to a Census in 2022, those solo-venture businesses contributed more than \$1.7 trillion, or almost 7 percent, to the U.S. economy. The one thing that all businesses have in common is that they are all started with a good idea and a founder with the time and commitment to develop that business.

Under the Self-Employment Assistance program, Americans using unemployment insurance can use their unemployment insurance weeks to start a business. The cost is negligible to the government since it is offered in lieu of normal benefits. Unfortunately, there are only five States that offer such a program, and participants are unnecessarily restricted.

That is why the NO BOSS Act would expand this program by doubling the number of people who can use it and let workers opt in earlier, instead of requiring them to wait until they have nearly exhausted their benefits.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, this is not a blank check. Participants must follow an approved training or business plan. There must be a feasibility study, and they must certify weekly so that States can verify their progress.

The NO BOSS Act would simply make commonsense updates to a commonsensical program. It is a bipartisan effort, and I urge all of my colleagues to vote "yes."

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman from Ohio ask unanimous consent to reclaim his time?

Mr. CAREY: Yes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized. There was no objection.

Mr. CAREY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, what better way to put more Americans back to work than to foster and encourage entrepreneurial spirit.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the House to pass this commonsense legislation. As stated before, the NO BOSS Act would remove red tape and make simple, bipartisan updates to an existing program that works.

By giving Americans the option to develop their skills and to go to work for themselves, we can improve our unemployment system and opportunities for all American workers.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CAREY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6431, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### CLERGY ACT

Mr. CAREY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 227) to allow a period in which members of the clergy may revoke their exemption from Social Security coverage, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 227

*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 "Clergy Act".*

#### SEC. 2. REVOCATION BY MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY OF EXEMPTION FROM SOCIAL SECURITY COVERAGE.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Notwithstanding section 1402(e)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, any exemption which has been received under section 1402(e)(1) of such Code by a duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister of a church, a member of a religious order, or a Christian Science practitioner, and which is effective for the taxable year in which this Act is enacted, may be revoked by filing an application therefor (in such form and manner, and with such official, as may be prescribed by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue), if such application is filed no later than the due date of the Federal income tax return (including any extension thereof) for the applicant's second taxable year beginning after December 31, 2028. Any such revocation shall be effective (for purposes of chapter 2 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.)), as specified in the application, either with respect to the applicant's first taxable year beginning after December 31, 2028, or with respect to the applicant's second taxable year beginning after such date, and for all succeeding taxable years; and the applicant for any such revocation may not thereafter again file an application for an exemption under such section 1402(e)(1). If the application is filed after the due date of the applicant's Federal income tax return for a taxable year and is effective with respect to that taxable year, it shall include or be accompanied by payment in full of an amount equal to the total of the taxes that would have been imposed by section 1401 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 with respect to all of the applicant's income derived in that taxable year which would have constituted net earnings from self-employment for purposes of chapter 2 of such Code (notwithstanding paragraphs (4) and (5) of section 1402(c)) except for the exemption under section 1402(e)(1) of such Code.

(b) *EFFECTIVE DATE.*—Subsection (a) shall apply with respect to service performed (to the extent specified in such subsection) in taxable years beginning after December 31, 2028, and with respect to monthly insurance benefits payable under title II of the Social Security Act on the basis of the wages and self-employment income of any individual for months in or after the calendar year in which such individual's application for revocation (as described in such subsection) is effective (and lump-sum death payments payable under such title on the basis

of such wages and self-employment income in the case of deaths occurring in or after such calendar year).

### SEC. 3. REPORT TO CONGRESS.

Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social Security, shall develop and submit to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a plan to inform duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers of a church, members of a religious order, and Christian Science practitioners of their eligibility to revoke any prior election of exemption from Social Security participation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CAREY) and the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CAREY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. CAREY. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Clergy Act.

First, I thank my colleague Mr. FONG for his partnership on this issue. This is how the legislative process should work: Democrats and Republicans coming together to solve real problems for our constituents.

For nearly 90 years, Social Security has done exactly what it has promised: protected workers, retirees, and people with disabilities; and kept families out of poverty.

Since it works, our responsibility is pretty simple: to make it easier and not harder for Americans to access and benefit from the Social Security program.

Under current law, members of the clergy can opt out of paying Social Security if they choose not to receive benefits. The Clergy Act provides a 2-year window for clergy members to opt back in, to contribute, and to secure the earned benefits that they may have previously foregone.

Clergy serve as pillars of their communities, offering guidance and support in moments that matter the most. This bill ensures that they will have the opportunity to participate fully in a system that has strengthened generations of American families.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1700

Mr. CAREY. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. FONG).

Mr. FONG. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my bill H.R. 227, the Clergy Act. This bipartisan legislation, cosponsored by my fellow California Congressman MIKE THOMPSON, would create a one-time re-enrollment window for pastors and other clergy members who have previously opted out of Social Security, many in their youth, to voluntarily opt back in.

For decades, members of the clergy have made the permanent decision of opting out of Social Security. While this choice was made with good intentions, many faith leaders experience significant financial hardship as they approach retirement.

Our local pastors and ministers are the backbone of our communities, providing critical spiritual guidance in the Central Valley, throughout California, and across the Nation. This legislation empowers them to take greater control over their own financial futures.

As lawmakers, we have a fundamental responsibility to strengthen Social Security in its current form while providing a pillar of protection for our seniors, including our faith leaders.

The Clergy Act is a commonsense solution to a nonpartisan problem, which is why I am proud it passed the Ways and Means Committee unanimously on a 40-0 vote.

I commend Congressman MIKE THOMPSON for his leadership and partnership, and I thank Chairman SMITH, Congressman MIKE THOMPSON, again, the House Ways and Means Committee members and staff, and all those who supported this critical legislation.

I urge support for this bill and hope to ensure those who have given so much are not left behind in retirement.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I am prepared to close, and I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, if we are serious about strengthening Social Security, we can't stop at incremental fixes. We must also protect the program from efforts that would weaken this great program.

We have heard calls for so-called reforms or tough choices. Let's be clear about what that means: cutting benefits, raising retirement age, or moving toward privatization—steps that undermine the guaranteed security Americans rely on.

Democrats reject that approach. We believe Social Security is a promise, not a bargaining chip.

Today, we have an opportunity to do something constructive. The Clergy Act is a practical, bipartisan step that expands access to Social Security and strengthens retirement security for those who serve our communities every day.

We can choose to build on what works, or we can risk it. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. Let's build on what works.

I want to thank Congressman FONG, who has been a great partner in this effort. This is important legislation. It

will help the people that we represent and the people that our colleagues represent across this country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CAREY. Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CAREY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 227, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. CAREY. 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, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

### INCREASE IN RETIREMENT AGE OF UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE OFFICERS

Mrs. BICE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8364) to amend title 5, United States Code, to authorize the increase of the retirement age in the United States Capitol Police.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8364

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. INCREASE IN RETIREMENT AGE OF UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE OFFICERS.

(a) CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT SYSTEM.—Section 8335(c) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking “becomes 60 years of age” and inserting “attains an age determined by the Board that shall be not less than 57 years of age and not more than 65 years of age”.

(b) FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM.—Section 8425(c) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking “becomes 60 years of age” and inserting “attains an age determined by the Board that shall be not less than 57 years of age and not more than 65 years of age”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Oklahoma (Mrs. BICE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MORELLE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Oklahoma.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. BICE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Oklahoma?

There was no objection.

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