EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

CELEBRATING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MEMORIAL BREAST CENTER

HON. STEPHEN HORN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 23, 1998

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I commend the Memorial Breast Center which is located in Long Beach, California, upon its 10th Anniversary on March 30th. In its short history, this center has already achieved national acclaim. It was named by Self Magazine in October, 1997, as one of the ten best breast centers in the United States.

The center offers comprehensive and coordinated care to every woman, emphasizing early and accurate diagnosis. Every mammogram is read by two specially trained radiologists. That is a rare service. Informed patients participate in their treatment options. The multidisciplinary approach features the latest technology along with a well trained and caring staff. During 1998, the center will perform its 200,000th imaging examination.

At the 10th Anniversary Celebration several members of the past and present professional staff will be honored for the devotion of their talents and energies in building the Breast Center. Internationally noted radiologist Lazlo Tabar, M.D., will receive a special recognition award that evening. Dr. John S. Link, M.D., the Medical Director of the center, will receive a special contribution award, along with others who have been essential to the success of the center: Cathy Coleman, RN, OCN; Arthur B. Diamond, M.D.; Eldon B. Hickman, M.D.; Julio A. Ibarra, M.D.; Cary S. Kaufman, M.D.; Claudia Z. Lee, MBA; Gainer S. Pillsbury, M.D.; Lowell W. Rogers, M.D.; Susan Roux, M.D.; Wendy Schain, Ed.D.; A.M. Nisar Syed, M.D.; James H. Wells, M.D.; and Robert G. Wells, M.D. These individuals represent radiology, pathology, surgery, medical oncology, nursing, and psychological and social services. They are well deserving of this recognition for the outstanding center which they have helped to build. We are very fortunate to have this facility in California. It serves not only Long Beach, but the entire Southern California region.

Mr. Speaker, breast cancer is a major scourge of this nation. Congress has provided billions of dollars for needed research in the field. Such research is vital. Facilities such as the Memorial Breast Center at Long Beach are where that research is applied. But its patients and talented medical staff are also the basis for new research and a variety of cancer treatment strategies which might result in saving the lives of many women in the years ahead.

TIME TO PAY OUR U.N. DUES

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 23, 1998

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, it is time to pay the dues that we owe to the United Nations.

A number of us have worked hard to try to get needed reforms in the United Nations. Those efforts are being undercut by our continued failure to pay our past bills. We are alienating our allies and eroding our ability to lead in the world by our refusal to pay our debts.

I ask permission to include in the RECORD a letter from a wide variety of organizations calling on Congress to take action to pay the United Nations what we owe that organization.

March 1998.

DEAR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to work actively with your colleagues and the Administration to insure that the United States government meets its legally binding financial obligations to the United Nations in full this spring. It is time for Congress to affirmatively settle the issue of U.S. arrears.

Public opinion polls consistently find that a large majority of Americans supports both the U.N. and a strong, continuing role for the U.S. in the U.N. Recently, 83% indicated that strengthening the U.N. should be a priority for the U.S. (Pew Research, 1997). We, the organizations listed below, with hundreds of thousands of members, constituents, and congregations across the country, represent a significant portion of this broad, bipartisan consensus.

The payment of U.S. arrears to the U.N. is currently being blocked by an unrelated, highly controversial issue which has been linked to passage of the U.N. arrears supplemental appropriations request (proposed restrictions on the activities of private voluntary organizations that administer international family planning programs). An impasse has resulted from the continuing political stalemate over this unrelated issue.

We urge you to call upon the congressional leadership to separate these two unrelated issues before more damage is done to the credibility of the U.S. government in world affairs. Just as Congress would not allow an unrelated, controversial political issue to block government payments on the public debt, so Congress should not allow this issue to block the fulfillment of the U.S. obligation to the U.N. In either case, the credibility and trust in the U.S. Government would be at risk. Such is the case now for the U.S. in world affairs.

We are deeply concerned that the U.S. government's failure to pay its U.N. dues has already soured U.S. relations with its allies and the broader community of nations. Further, we are concerned that this failure to pay has undermined respect for the rule of law in international affairs, exacerbated the U.N.'s financial crisis, and undermined the organization's valuable work.

The U.N. is an indispensable organization for advancing U.S. interests in world affairs. It provides a mechanism through which the U.S. can work cooperatively with other countries to address issues that no single country can address alone—such as preserving international security, advancing human rights, containing the spread of infectious diseases, caring for refugees, prosecuting war crimes, protecting the global environment, and promoting international development. The U.N. provides the U.S. with an essential burden-sharing mechanism, whereby U.S. taxpayers do not have to pay the entire cost of addressing global problems.

Our country and the world community need your leadership now. The U.S. government must meet its legal obligation to the U.N. The cost of further delay could be significant—both for the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and for the future of international cooperation. If you lead, the public will support you, and Congress will follow.

Africa Faith and Justice Network, American Baptist Churches USA, National Ministries, Americans for Democratic Action, American Friends Service Committee, Campaign for American Leadership Abroad (COLEAD), Campaign for UN Reform, Church of the Brethren, Washington Office, Church Women United, Columban Fathers' Justice and Peace Office, Demilitarization for Democracy, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Fund for New Priorities in America, International Religious Liberty Association, The League of Women Voters of the United States, The Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Maryknoll Justice and Peace Office, Methodists United for Peace With Justice, Mennonite Central Committee, National Audubon Society Population and Habitat Campaign, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States.

Peace Action, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Psychologists for Social Responsibility, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 20/20 Vision, Union of Concerned Scientists, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, United Church of Christ, Office of Church in Society, United Methodist Church, Women's Division, United Nations Association, National Capital Area, United Nations Association-USA, Veterans for Peace, Washington Office on Latin America, Women Strike for Peace, Women's Action for New Directions (WAND), Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, World Federalist Association, and World Learning.

SUPPORT GROWS FOR CREDIT UNIONS

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

HON. STEVE C. LaTOURETTE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 23, 1998

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, my collegue, Mr. LATOURETTE, and I are pleased to announce that support for H.R. 1151, the Credit

Union Membership Access Act, continues to grow. Below are the twenty-first through thirtieth of the more than 100 editorials and columns from newspapers all across our nation which support giving consumers the right to chose a non-profit, cooperative, credit union for their financial services.

Surveys have consistently shown that consumers strongly support the value and services they receive from their credit unions. That is why the Consumer Federation of America endorses H.R. 1151, the Credit Union Membership Access Act.

A bipartisan group of more the 190 Members from all regions of our country, and all parts of the political spectrum, are now cosponsoring the Credit Union Membership Access Act. We should pass it quickly so that credit unions can stop worrying about their future and return to serving their members.

[From the Wilkes-Barre, PA, Citizens' Voice, Apr. 12, 1997]

CREDIT UNIONS DESERVE HELP FROM A D.C. FRIEND

Credit unions occupy a very small part of the world of finance. But they perform a service which is huge.

Credit unions don't have a lot of political clout. But they have become part of a controversial national issue.

Credit unions need a little help from a friend at this time.

And we're happy to see they're getting some, from a local legislator.

Congressman Paul Kanjorski recently introduced legislation to provide access to credit unions to a greater number of consumers.

The legislation aims to reverse a recent court decision which prevents credit unions from merging—and prevents employees of one company from joining the credit union of another company.

At the heart of the issue is whether consumers will have greater or lesser choice regarding small loans and daily finance. Credit unions, said Kanjorski, often serve the smaller loans that large banks overlook.

That's a genuine service. And that's a service we hope all our area's members of the U.S. Congress will understand and support by signing on to Kanjorski's bill on behalf of credit unions.

[From the San Francisco Chronicle]

SMALL CREDIT UNIONS FACE BANK CHALLENGE

A car loan, an advance for a rent deposit or college tuition bill, or a savings account are the bread-and-butter services long offered by the country's 12,000 credit unions. But these small institutions are now in legal struggle with the country's banks, who believe that credit unions have pushed beyond their authorized limits and are piling up a growing share of the financial marketplace.

The David versus Goliath struggle is now before the U.S. Supreme Court, which agreed earlier this week to hear the dispute and possibly rule within a year.

Founded in the Great Depression, credit unions were designed to help workers from the same occupation or company band together because conventional banks ignored working people. Credit unions endured before running into modern reality: Downsizing company moves, mergers and even military base closures cut into membership. Also, fresh deposits were needed to offer ATMs, debit cards and other modern services. The solution was to find new members, often from different trades or companies, in a clear break with founding traditions.

For example, The Embarcadero Federal Credit Union in San Francisco was losing members as federal workers were shifted to new quarters outside the city. So its leaders brought in a local hospital credit union that was struggling. Both groups benefited from the merger, but the court fight has put the marriage on hold.

If credit unions fade away, so will some great deals for consumers. In a 1995 survey the Consumer Federation of America rated six basic services from checking accounts to money orders, and it found that credit unions were cheaper in every category.

Banks estimate the nonprofit status of credit unions is an unfair advantage that totals $1 billion per year. In addition, credit unions have wandered from their origins and must compete fully since they have restyled themselves. Further, 1,000 credit unions have assets of $75 million or more, hardly the one-room money-lending outfit near the plant gate. Finally, the real losers are not big banks, which handle huge sums, but smaller financial institutions which may offer small loans in Main Street towns, say critics of credit unions.

True enough, credit unions have evolved from populist origins. But banks have changed too and should tolerate a sturdy competitor that offers low-cost service to consumers. The Supreme Court should be wary of punishing workplace institutions that have aided millions of Americans.

[From the Asbury Park Press, NJ]

PROTECTING CREDIT UNIONS—CONGRESS COULD KEEP BANKING OPTIONS BROAD

Rather than await the outcome of a Supreme Court case, Congress should revise the law authorizing the establishment of not-for-profit credit unions to ensure that all Americans can have the widest choice of banking services.

The Supreme Court yesterday heard arguments in a case brought by the banking industry against broad membership rules for credit unions. During the Depression, Congress authorized groups with common bonds—workers within one company or residents of one small area—to form credit unions. All credit unions accept deposits and make loans; some permit checking accounts and issue credit cards. Today, 45 million people have accounts at credit unions, although many also still use commercial banks, too.

Because they are not-for-profit, subject to less regulation and are owned and operated by their shareholders, credit unions generally pay higher interest rates and often charge less for loans than commercial banks. Yet credit unions hold just 5.65 percent of all deposits and other banking assets. The other 94.35 percent is held by commercial banks and by savings and loans. The average credit union has $2.7 million in assets; the average commercial bank has $533 million in assets. Two huge banks, Chase Manhattan and Citicorp, alone hold more assets than all credit unions combined.

Still, the banking industry wants the law that created credit unions narrowly interpreted to limit their growth. Plain and simple, banks don't want too many people to be able to turn to credit unions as an alternative.

Since 1982, the National Credit Union Administration, a federal agency, has allowed credit unions to solicit customers beyond their traditional base. The 1934 act that authorized credit unions limited membership to ''groups having a common bond of occupation or association, or to groups within a well-defined neighborhood, community or rural district.'' In the wake of a wave of corporate mergers and layoffs, the federal agency allowed many smaller credit unions to merge and to accept customers who did not work for the specific companies or other common groups.

Judging from their questions during oral arguments yesterday, the Supreme Court justices seemed to be leaning toward the narrower interpretation of the law, advocated by the banking industry. That's why it's crucial that Congress remove any ambiguity in this law and allow credit unions the broadest ability to accept customers. A bill before Congress would do that.

Since federal restrictions on interstate banking were removed, a few large banks have come to dominate the market in New Jersey. Whatever the merits of banking mergers, the consolidations have served to reduce competition. As small as credit unions are, they act as a brake on the fees the commercial banks charge. They also offer residents of underserved inner city and rural areas access to banking services they might otherwise not have.

Congress should act to ensure that as many Americans as possible retain the right to join a credit union.

[From the Las Vegas Sun, Feb. 26, 1998]

EDITORIAL: CONGRESS NEEDS TO HELP CREDIT UNIONS

Credit unions and their members took a hit Wednesday from a long-anticipated Supreme Court ruling.

In a 5–4 decision, the Supreme Court discarded a 16-year-old government rule that let company credit unions accept members from other companies. The court agreed with a legal challenge brought by banks that federal law doesn't allow credit unions to expand their memberships that way. The court's ruling will prevent many Americans from joining federally chartered credit unions, and could cost credit unions millions of customers.

Despite the decision, help may be on the way for credit unions, which for many individuals are the only institutions where they can secure low-cost financing. Legislation is being offered in Congress, which has strong bipartisan support, that would reinstate credit unions' ability to sign members from other companies.

Banks aren't hurting for business, and it's estimated that only 6 percent of financial business is handled by credit unions. In light of the increasing number of bank mergers, there is definitely a need and a place for credit unions, which offer their customers an alternative to higher-cost financial services.

[From the New Bern Journal, NC]

LET'S GIVE CREDIT UNIONS THE CREDIT THEY DESERVE

Credit unions, which have been helping people with their financial needs for more than six decades, are themselves in need now. They need to win a legal fight and, failing that, they need some political help from Congress. If they don't get it, the credit unions themselves may no longer be available for millions when they come knocking, and American consumers, especially those of modest means, will have reason to grieve.

Congress established credit unions as nonprofit cooperatives in 1934 chiefly for poorer people left out of the loop by banks.

It required that members have a ''common bond,'' such as being employees of the same company. The formula worked fine until the late 1970s, when the disappearance of large manufacturing plants and other economic changes began robbing the credit unions of members. A federal agency then said a credit union could include a multitude of groups in its membership in order to maintain a sufficiently large operational base.

The commercial banks yelped. What's more, they sued. The maintained that the federal agency, The National Credit Union Administration, had misconstrued the law,

and a federal judge said the commercial banks were right. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear the case either late this year or early next. If the high court concurs with lower court rulings, some 10 million people will no longer be members of credit unions, and millions more may never get the chance.

If the credit unions lose in court, Congress could quickly come to the rescue with just a slight change in the 1934 law's wording about ''common bonds.''

After all, 70 million Americans belong to credit unions, and that's a lot of voters. It's possible, of course, that another number speaks more loudly in the legislative ear: 4.4 trillion, which is the accumulation of dollars the banks have in assets, and more than 12 times the assets of credit unions.

[From the District News, Dec. 1, 1997]

DON'T PUT CREDIT UNIONS AT RISK

In the looming battle of banks vs. credit unions, credit unions should not be put at risk.

Strong arguments exist on both sides. The status of credit unions, which are nonprofit and, as such, receive tax exemptions not afforded banks, is a topic of considerable debate locally and nationally, and the whole question currently is before the U.S. Supreme Court.

But credit unions should not be put in jeopardy. Many people in Utah and the United States (nationally the number is in the millions) would be prohibited from belonging to a credit union if the top court, and subsequent legislation, favored the banks. This is not fair nor is it right.

Credit unions originally were established to make loans available to people who might be considered risks by banks and to give people with small means access to loans. The Federal Credit Union Act of 1934 brought credit unions under federal regulation with the stipulation that membership should be limited to ''groups having a common bond of occupation'' or association.

The thrust changed in 1982 when the National Credit Union Administration expanded the interpretation of the law to let credit unions accept nontraditional members. This was a response to a downturn in the economy and was an attempt to keep credit unions viable during a time when many of the companies that had formed them were in financial trouble. For example, small businesses that lacked enough workers to form their own credit unions were allowed to join existing credit unions.

Banks claim the new interpretation precipitated a situation that has gotten out of hand. Some credit unions no longer fall under the traditional definition.

Several North Carolina community banks and the National Bankers Association sued the AT&T Family Federal Credit Union based in Winston-Salem, N.C., for overstepping its bounds. It has 165,000 members from 323 companies. A judge ruled in favor of the credit unions but a federal appeals court reversed that decision. That's the case before the high court.

Locally, the Utah Bankers Association brought suit against credit unions—a suit that initially was dismissed in 3rd District Court and then reinstated on appeal.

Bank officials argue that large credit unions, such as AT&T Family Federal Credit Union nationally and America First locally, no longer fall under the 1934 guidelines and therefore should not be afforded tax-exempt status. They also point out that large credit unions advertise for customers and offer many of the same types of services as banks. Because of their tax exemptions they have an unfair advantage and are able to offer their customers lower interest rates. All banks ask for is a level playing field.

Credit union officials counter that banks could be more competitive if they were as concerned about their customers as they are about their stockholders and that their sheer size gives banks advantages that equate to a level playing field and then some.

The fact is conditions have changed a lot for a lot of organizations since 1934, including banks.

It's also a fact both banks and credit unions are doing well. Banks have about $4.4 trillion in assets compared to $330 billion for credit unions.

This is not a time of crisis for either. And it shouldn't have to be a time of crisis for credit unions or their customers. Rulings and legislation should reflect that.

[From the Oakland Tribune, Feb. 7, 1997]

BANKS SHOULD BACK OFF FROM CREDIT UNIONS

As banks have merged, closed branches and added additional fees for services that were previously free, an increasing number of customers have looked for alternatives. Sometimes they are motivated by the simple urge to deal with a person with a familiar face in a familiar place.

Credit unions have been the beneficiaries of banking customers' dissatisfaction. But those who run banks are trying to keep their customers from joining credit unions.

Banks should keep their hands off the credit unions.

Credit unions were originally established during the Great Depression to accommodate low-paid workers the banks rejected as customers. Membership was restricted to people who worked together or lived in the same vicinity. In recent years, because so many employees have lost their jobs through corporate downsizing, membership requirements for credit unions were relaxed, allowing people from outside groups to join.

Even as banks were cutting back services, they began a legal assault on the growing credit union industry. In the past six years, bankers have filed 13 suits in 10 states to stop expanding membership of credit unions.

In one of those cases, five North Carolina Banks and the American Bankers Association sued AT&T Family Federal Credit Union and the National Credit Union Administration, claiming they had violated the federal law by allowing employees of other companies to join the credit union.

A lower court rejected the banks' argument and the banks appealed. Last July, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit sided with the bankers. In October, a District Court judge issued an injunction against the expanded memberships.

As a result, credit union nationwide reported that each business day they were forced to turn away 4,400 people who wanted to join. On Christmas Eve, however, the U.S. Court of Appeals temporarily blocked the injunction against accepting new members. Now, both sides are waiting to see if the U.S. Supreme Court will hear the case.

The banks should back off. The moves they have made have led many customers to believe that banks don't have their best interests in mind. Consumers should have the choice of opting for credit unions. If banks don't want credit unions to take away their customers, perhaps they can do a better job of meeting customers' needs. That is the basic principle of our free market system.

[From the Blade, Toledo, OH, Feb. 28, 1998]

CREDIT UNIONS FOR WHOM?

The narrow Supreme Court ruling that credit unions cannot draw members from a variety of occupations, contrary to the way regulators had interpreted a 1934 law, is just the beginning of a good fight.

It's one that will pit average people against big banking interests. And it's one in which a nonprofit, tax-exempt, do-it-yourself approach to financial services wages war with money managers committed to bottom lines, shareholder demands for profit, and, with plenty of grumbling, tax payments.

The 5-4 decision, because it is so narrow, is not one to be relied on over the long haul, but now it defines the law of the land.

And both banks and credit unions are back in Congress lobbying for pending legislation that would allow individual credit unions to serve a broader clientele.

The credit unions offer lower fees and better rates on loans.

Bankers argue that credit unions are exempt from taxes so they can do this. Well, if banks want to be exempt from taxes, it's pretty easy. Let them go nonprofit.

The current credit union law says these institutions must be limited to groups with a ''common bond'' of occupation, association, or geographical area. Nearly 20 years ago, as companies downsized, merged, or disappeared, the National Credit Union Administration said smaller groups sharing a common employment bond could meet the condition.

The American Bankers Association argued successfully that the same bond had to unite every member.

If bankers fear credit union competition, they have only themselves to blame. Their fees have escalated outrageously, along with their profits. Financial services share values have skyrocketed over the decade.

While credit unions were begun as a way to provide poor people, in whom banks weren't interested, with banking services, many now serve working people who, as a result of union participation, have middle-class incomes. That ought not matter at all, because working people everywhere are still at the mercy of big business, including big banking.

It's worth noting that the push to let credit unions expand isn't coming from the political left. Ohio Congressman Steven LaTourette (R., Madison Village) is lead sponsor of a bill to expand them so workers of small companies could join together to form one. And House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R., Georgia) has endorsed the legislation.

Credit unions are about local folks helping local folks. It seems odd that the banking industry, which gave up this approach for mergermania, wants every American now to go along with their way of doing things, letting the diversity that has been America's strength go by the boards.

[From the Pocono Record, Stroudsburg, PA, Feb. 27, 1998]

REVERSE CREDIT UNION RULING

The banking industry's victory over federal credit unions may be short-lived. Even before the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling curtailed credit union membership, a bill was awaiting action in the House to reverse the ruling's effects.

At issue is a 1992 government rule allowing credit unions to accept members from other companies than the one that formed them. The Court invalidated that rule, basing its decision on the 1934 law that authorized credit unions. That law said credit union memberships ''shall be limited to groups having a common bond of occupation or association'' or to groups in a geographic area.

What is a common bond? The government had interpreted it broadly, allowing employees of other, smaller companies to join a credit union because they enjoyed a common bond among themselves. Not precise enough, said the Court. That is the issue addressed by the House measure, filed by Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-Luzerne-Monroe.

Kanjorski's bill has 138 co-sponsors. It received a bi-partisan boost when House Speaker Newt Gingrich endorsed it, ensuring at least that it will come up for a vote in the House Banking Committee. What happens next will be the subject of a fierce lobbying battle between credit unions and the banking industry.

What is likely, however, is less legislation to overturn the Court's decision, than a compromise, possibly restoring more latitude to that definition of ''common bond,'' while imposing a membership threshold on some of the larger credit unions.

That would be a workable and fair resolution of the issue. Allowing the court's ruling to stand as it is fails that test. Particularly since deregulation of the banking industry allowed so many and massive consolidations, more competition is needed in the financial industry, not less.

Kanjorski's bill is pitched at small businesses, which he points out is the fastest growing sector of the economy. Small companies generally do not have enough employees to sustain a credit union by themselves. Even some large companies face problems during economic slowdowns, as layoffs reduce their credit unions' active memberships. That is what happened in the recession of 1982, and prompted the government to broaden membership rules.

If the Court decision were allowed to stand, in effect it would discriminate against employees of small companies. Unless their workforce—their ''common bond''—were large enough to form a credit union, they would be denied the opportunity to take advantage of its lower loan and mortgage costs and higher savings account interest rates, among other benefits.

The reason credit unions can offer such benefits, though, is why a compromise is likely. Credit unions bear fewer regulatory and financial burdens than banks do, not having to pay federal taxes, for example. The banking industry considers that unfair competition. But in truth, it is hardly an insupportable competitive burden for banks: In Pennsylvania, with more credit unions than any other state, they still hold only 4 percent of all bank deposits.

As their recent moves to raise or impose ATM and check-cashing rates show, banks are aggressively pursing profits wherever they can find them. Reining in credit union membership is in step with that drive. But as with the service rates, the credit union restrictions will hurt those with less money, who need low-cost alternatives to what banks offer.

The money will gush in the intensive lobbying against and for Kanjorski's bill. There is merit in a compromise that levels the field for the larger credit unions. But Congress should allow access to credit unions for small-business employees as one way of restoring competition to the banking industry.

[From the Evansville Press, Mar. 4, 1998]

CONGRESS SHOULD ALLOW CREDIT UNION EXPANSION

The long-running battle between commercial banks and credit unions didn't end last week when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a Depression-era law places strict limits on the membership of credit unions.

The 1934 Federal Credit Union Act established credit unions because banks were perceived as ignoring the needs of low- and moderate-income Americans.

The act limited credit union membership to ''groups having a common bond of occupation or association, or groups within a well-defined neighborhood, community or rural district.''

But in 1982, responding to a wave of corporate reorganizations and downsizing that threatened existing credit unions, the National Credit Union Administration expanded membership beyond the single-company, single-community confines.

It is this expansion that the Supreme Court, in a 5–4 decision in a case from North Carolina, said was in violation of the 1934 federal law.

Anticipating the Supreme Court decision, the Credit Union National Association asked Congress last year to consider legislation to allow federally chartered credit unions to maintain their expanded membership base.

Credit unions operate on a not-for-profit basis. They pay no taxes and tend to offer lower-cost loans and higher earnings for savings. They also tend to charge fewer and lower fees than commercial banks. But the commercial banks say credit unions' not-for-profit status creates an unfair competitive advantage.

Bankers have reason for concern.

Since the 1982 regulation took effect, credit unions have rapidly expanded their membership. Last year, 72 million Americans belonged to credit unions, double the number in 1991.

Although banking industry officials say consumers who currently belong to credit unions will not be asked to give up their memberships, the choice of joining a credit union may prove more difficult in the future unless Congress changes the 1934 law.

A bill before Congress to allow credit unions to serve multiple groups deserves approval.

With Congress set to begin hearings this week on a bill aimed at resolving the dispute between banks and credit unions, both sides already have begun their lobbying efforts.

The commercial banks, particularly the smaller community-based banks, have legitimate concerns about rapidly expanding credit unions.

But in drafting new legislation, Congress must recognize the realities of America's small-business economy. Americans have shown an increasing preference for credit unions, and consumer choice must be preserved.

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER EDITORIAL CRITICIZES H.R. 1757—FOREIGN AFFAIRS AUTHORIZATION LEGISLATION IS BAD LAW AND BAD POLICY

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 23, 1998

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, for the past two weeks, H.R. 1757, the foreign affairs authorization legislation has been on the schedule for House consideration and both weeks, the bill was pulled because the Republican leadership was not able to get the necessary votes to pass the bill. Mr. Speaker, that is fortunate for the American people and for the foreign policy of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation has been foisted on the House through a flawed and blatantly partisan procedure. It is a preposterous process that was perpetrated in public. It is calculated to appeal to a narrow but noisy special interest group, and it is clearly not in the best interests of the American people and our nation's foreign policy.

American foreign policy is best, strongest, and most effective when it is a bipartisan foreign policy. As many of our colleagues have observed throughout the years, ''Politics should stop at the water's edge.'' Unfortunately, what we have here is domestic politics being injected into foreign policy. All Americans are the losers in this process, Mr. Speaker.

I call the attention of my colleagues in the House to an excellent editorial that appeared on March 13 in the San Francisco Examiner which discusses H.R. 1757. I ask that the full text of that editorial be placed in the RECORD, and I urge my colleagues to read it carefully and thoughtfully. Who knows? We may actually find ourselves having to cast a vote on this outrageous bill some day in the near future.

GOP SHORTSIGHTEDNESS: REPUBLICANS IN CONGRESS SHOULD RETHINK TYING IMF AND U.N. FUNDS TO AN ANTI-ABORTION PROVISION THAT DOES MORE HARM THAN GOOD

The annual blackmail of the administration by some Republican members of Congress has begun. They insist that $18 billion in U.S. funding for the International Monetary Fund, as well as payment of past dues to the United Nations, be held hostage to an anti-abortion provision.

''Killing babies is a very serious matter,'' Rep. Christopher Smith, R–N.J., told a New York Times reporter. ''The administration is promoting abortion overseas.''

Smith wants to deny U.S. funds to any overseas organization that provides or promotes abortions. Under existing law, no U.S. money can be used for those activities. Smith argues that other activities, such as family planning services, allows organizations to shift money abortion-related programs.

But it's much more reasonable to assume that supporting birth control in other countries actually reduces the number of unplanned pregnancies and, hence, diminishes the need for abortions.

The GOP position is offensive to some traditional political allies.

Thomas Donohue, president of the United States Chamber of Commerce, says failing to fund the IMF during its financial bailout of Asian nations would ''come under the heading of stupid.''

Many conservatives and environmentalists concerned about the escalation of world population believe global education about family planning is essential to humankind's future welfare and even its survival.

The U.S. debt to the United Nations, now almost $1 billion, has been a source of embarrassment to Americans who believe in the worldwide organization. The image of the United States as a deadbeat is especially alarming when this country needs to persuade other nations to go along with its policy initiatives, as in the recent confrontation over arms inspections in Iraq.

In any case, U.S. funding for international financial and political organizations ought to be separate from the question of whether this country should back family planning groups that also provide abortion services. Combining the two issues hurts causes that even the most anti-abortion members of the GOP cares about—or ought to care about.

Last year's hostage was the $12 billion foreign operations bill. After a threatened veto, the GOP finally relented.

The annual exercise is, unfortunately, even more harmful this year when resurrecting the economies of a half dozen Asian allies depends on our financial goodwill. Their pain, of course, soon can become our own as American exports fall and U.S. investments in those countries teeter.

Let's instill some good sense in the IMF/U.N. funding debate—and turn down the volume of political rhetoric.