

WE CAN SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY AND ELIMINATE THE MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

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

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, in the next 2 weeks, we have a lot to do, and of course we want to do the people's business.

This past weekend this House of Representatives did the right thing. We set aside \$1.4 trillion in surplus tax revenue for the effort to save Social Security, and we passed legislation which will eliminate the marriage tax personally.

I have often asked in the well of this House over the last year, is it right, is it fair that under our current Tax Code, 28 million married working couples pay higher taxes, just because they are married.

Well, we have addressed that. On Saturday we passed and sent to the Senate legislation whose centerpiece eliminates the marriage tax penalty for the majority of those who suffer. In fact, for 28 million couples they will see an extra \$240, enough money for a car payment in extra take-home pay because of lower taxes.

Now, those who opposed it, particularly those on the Democratic side of the aisle, claim somehow that our effort to eliminate the marriage tax penalty hurts the Social Security trust fund.

Now, on the Committee on Ways and Means, which I am proud to be a member of, we asked a representative of the Social Security Administration, Judy Chesser, the Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs, if this tax cut to eliminate the marriage tax penalty impacts Social Security. She gave us a simple answer: No.

Let us save Social Security. Let us eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

□ 1215

HOSTILE TAKEOVERS WITH A POSITIVE IMPACT

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

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, a previous speaker talked about a hostile takeover with negative impact. I would like to talk about a hostile takeover with a very positive impact.

Yesterday the New York Yankees won their 114th game, to set an all-time record for an American League club. In addition to that, Bernie Williams won the American League batting championship with a .339 average. In addition to that, David Cone, after 10 years without winning 20 games, won his 20th game.

In addition to that, the wonder boy, Shane Spencer, who came up from the minor leagues and captivated the

hearts of all America, he has more home runs per game at bat ratio than Mark McGuire. He got number 10 yesterday, his third grand slam in 9 days. Joe Torre, that magnificent manager, brought them all together under the leadership of George Steinbrenner.

All America is smiling today. Mark McGuire has his 70 home runs, the New York Yankees are the American League all-time champion, and I invite all the Members to come witness what baseball has to offer America in Cooperstown, New York, that mecca of baseball. Come see it.

TAX CUT PACKAGE UNDER VICIOUS ATTACK BY LIBERALS

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, the House of Representatives passed a tax cut package this past Saturday that, not surprisingly, is under vicious attack by liberals.

Think about that for a second. The very idea that government could get by with a little less so that families could have a little more is so offensive to liberals who worship at the altar of big government, no matter how much it wastes and no matter how dismal its results.

We have heard over and over again that tax cuts are an election year gimmick. This is quite revealing about the different attitudes of conservatives and liberals when it comes to the relationship between the governed and their Washington masters.

Conservatives have a respect for work. They believe that it is a fundamental principal of freedom to have the right to the fruits of your labor. Liberals act like people who work extra hard, who go the extra mile to get extra education and are thereby rewarded for those efforts with a higher income, have something to apologize for.

In their view tax cuts are not even legitimate. They are nothing more than an election year gimmick. Liberalism speaks for itself.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU). Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule I, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 4 of rule XV.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken after debate is concluded on all motions to suspend the rules, but not before 5 p.m. today.

NUTRIA ERADICATION AND CONTROL PILOT PROGRAM

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill

(H.R. 4337) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide financial assistance to the State of Maryland for a pilot program to develop measures to eradicate or control nutria and restore marshland damaged by nutria.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4337

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

SECTION 1. NUTRIA ERADICATION AND CONTROL PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) GRANT AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of the Interior (in this section referred to as the "Secretary"), subject to the availability of appropriations, may provide financial assistance to the State of Maryland for a pilot program to develop measures to eradicate or control nutria and restore marshland damaged by nutria.

(b) GOALS.—The pilot program shall develop methods to—

(1) eradicate nutria in Maryland;

(2) eradicate or control nutria in other States; and

(3) develop methods to restore marshland damaged by nutria.

(c) ACTIVITIES.—The Secretary shall require that the pilot program consist of management, research, and public education activities carried out in accordance with the document entitled "Marsh Restoration: Nutria Control in Maryland Pilot Program Proposal", dated July 10, 1998.

(d) COST SHARING.—

(1) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the costs of the pilot program may not exceed 75 percent of the total costs of the pilot program.

(2) IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS.—The non-Federal share of the costs of the pilot program may be provided in the form of in-kind contributions of materials or services.

(e) LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—Not more than 10 percent of financial assistance provided by the Secretary under this section may be used for administrative expenses.

(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—For financial assistance under this section, there are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary \$2,900,000 for fiscal years 2000, 2001, and 2002.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) and the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

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

(Mr. SAXTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4337, a bill that implements the nutria eradication and control pilot program for the State of Maryland. This legislation was introduced by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST), from Kennedyville, a small town on the eastern shore. This bill was the subject of a subcommittee hearing on July 16.

At that time, the subcommittee received testimony from a diverse group of witnesses who strongly supported immediate action. In fact, H.R. 4337 incorporates the recommendations of a

comprehensive report entitled "Marsh Restoration: Nutria Control in Maryland." This report was a consensus document approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the University of Maryland, the Salisbury Zoological Park, and Ducks, Unlimited.

By way of background, nutria are large, semi-aquatic rodents that are native to South America. Nutria may weigh up to 20 pounds and live along the banks of lakes, marshes, ponds, and rivers. These large water rats are surface-feeding mammals that are extremely destructive to marsh vegetation.

Nutria were introduced in Maryland in the 1950s to assist with the clothing industry. Today, there is no market for that fur and no natural predators to control them. As a result, the nutria population has skyrocketed. It has been estimated that there are now between 35,000 and 50,000 nutria living at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland.

This refuge has 17,000 acres of marsh that are essential habitat to thousands of nesting and migratory birds. Regrettably, this habitat is being systematically destroyed because of the appetites of these South American rodents. This is causing serious problems for native wildlife, fish, plants, and marsh ecosystems.

H.R. 4337 authorizes \$2.9 million over 3 years to help alleviate the nutria problem. While this may not solve the problem entirely, it is a positive step in the right direction. In fact, the refuge manager of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge testified that "These wetlands, which provide significant ecological, cultural, and economic benefits, will continue to disappear at an increasing rate unless prompt action is taken."

Mr. Speaker, I urge an aye vote on H.R. 4337, and I want to pay special compliments to the gentleman from Kennedyville, Maryland (Mr. GILCREST) for his leadership in this matter.

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

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

(Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I certainly would like to commend the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans, for bringing this legislation to the floor. I also want to commend my good friend, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCREST) for his sponsorship of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this bill authorizes Federal financial assistance to the State of Maryland to develop methods to eradicate or at least control nutria. These submarine rodents were accidentally released into the wild, and have

wreaked havoc with wetlands in Louisiana, Maryland, and elsewhere.

The foraging habits of nutria are especially destructive to marsh grasses. Nutria have thrived in their newfound homes in our North American swamps and marshes. Given all the other threats to wetlands these days, nutria must be brought under control.

The State of Maryland has developed a comprehensive plan for nutria eradication, and Federal support will greatly expedite its implementation. If we can come up with a method to control these destructive rodents, the plan can be modified and used in other places where nutria are a problem.

Mr. Speaker, this is sound public policy to deal with a strange yet important threat to our vanishing wetlands. I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

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

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Kennedyville, Maryland (Mr. GILCREST), the author of the bill.

Mr. GILCREST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding time to me, and for his generous help on this legislation.

This bill will go far to preserve and restore Blackwater Refuge on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and to provide a base of information and experience to help other States devise ways to deal with this little critter we call nutria.

The Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1933 to protect habitat for migrating and wintering birds. The refuge is currently home to more than 250 species of birds, including bald and golden eagles, cormorants, great blue herons, northern loons, ospreys, and 20 different varieties of ducks.

It is also home to the Delmarva fox squirrel, a critically endangered species that is found almost exclusively in only 4 counties in my district.

Of the 20,000 acres protected by the refuge, almost 17,000 acres are or were marshland. Seven thousand of those marshland acres have been lost to erosion. One of the reasons for the loss is the reason for the bill we are discussing today, the rabid appetite of this little critter from South America known as the nutria.

Nutria are large, semi-aquatic rodents native to South America, and were introduced to Maryland in the 1950s to support the fur industry. As demand for nutria fur dropped off, and with no natural predators, nutria populations took off. From far less than 150 animals in 1968, today we have between 35,000 and 50,000 of them.

Nutria are surface-feeding herbivores that can be extremely destructive to marsh vegetation. They forage directly on the vegetative root mat, leaving the marsh pitted with digging sites, riddled swim canals, and extremely susceptible to erosion associated with tidal currents, wave action, and sea level rise.

While it is impossible to quantify exactly what percentage of marsh loss is due to nutria, recent studies have shown that excluding or controlling nutria substantially slows the rate of erosion. In Louisiana, for example, where there is still some market for nutria, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has documented substantial habitat damage in coastal wetlands for every year that the annual harvest falls below 500,000, as it has every year since 1988.

The bill will authorize the Fish and Wildlife Service to work with the State of Maryland and other partners to extensively trap nutria, to develop methods to eradicate or control nutria that may be applied in other affected States, and to begin to restore marshland damaged by the nutria.

The proposal, which is the centerpiece of this bill, was developed jointly by Federal, State, and local and private partners. This bill authorizes \$2.9 million over the next 3 years to implement a pilot program, and requires that nonfederal partners bear 25 percent of the cost of the program. It also includes a limitation that administrative expenses may not be used for more than 10 percent of the Federal share.

This is an important piece of legislation, not only that it is going to reduce the problems nutria have caused in the State of Maryland, and extend some of that information to the State of Louisiana, but we certainly do not want nutria to extend their way up to the State of New Jersey. I am sure the chairman of the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans would go along with that, along with a brother that I have in the pine barrens up there.

Unless action is taken, seriously, Mr. Speaker, this will only get worse, and the marsh habitat that is so critical to migratory waterfowl will disappear. We know while people need a certain area, a certain habitat, and sometimes suburbs to live in, the migrating waterfowl need a habitat that is not being destroyed.

Again, I would like to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) and the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) for all of their good work on this legislation, and I urge the support of my colleagues to pass the nutria eradication and control program bill.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4337.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.