EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

INTRODUCTION OF THE SENIOR CITIZENS' FREEDOM TO WORK BILL

HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on March 1, COLLIN PETERSON of Minnesota and I introduced H.R. 5, the ''Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 1999.'' This legislation will eliminate the so-called Social Security ''earnings limit.'' Under current law, our senior citizens aged 65–69 can earn $15,500 before they lose $1 in Social Security benefits for each additional $3 of earnings. This limit is unfair, discriminatory, and adversely effects our country's economy. The Social Security earnings limit must be eliminated.

The Social Security earnings limit is unfair and inappropriate because it imposes a ''means'' test for a retirement benefit. As we all know, our seniors have earned Social Security benefits through a lifetime of contributions to the program and they should not be penalized because they choose to work. We have a fundamental right to work in America and earn money without government intrusion.

Additionally, the Social Security earnings limit discriminates against senior citizens who must work in order to supplement their benefits and is unfair to our nation's senior citizens who have the greatest need for additional income.

It is a Depression-era law whose time has long since come and gone. In the 1930's, the earnings limit was used to force seniors out of the workforce. Today, with unemployment at record lows, seniors are needed in the workforce.

The disincentive effect is magnified when viewed on an after-tax basis. Senior citizens who work lose a large percentage of their Social Security benefits due to the Social Security earnings limit, but they must also continue to pay Social Security taxes, and probably federal and state income taxes as well. The Social Security earnings limit forces seniors to avoid work or seek lower-paying or part-time work.

In addition to being complicated and difficult for the individual senior citizen to understand, the Social Security earnings limit is complex and costly for the federal government to administer. For example, the test is responsible for more than one-half of retirement and survivor program overpayments. Elimination of the earnings limit would help minimize administration expenses, and recipients would be less confused.

Finally, repealing the Social Security earnings limit would aid our country's economy. Our senior citizens would be likely to work more and the American economy would benefit from their experience and skills. The combined increase in the amounts that they would pay in Social Security and other taxes, as well as the additional contribution to our Gross National Product, would largely offset the increase in benefit payments. For decades, our senior citizens worked and dutifully paid their Social Security taxes; it is only fair that they receive all of the Social Security benefits when they are at the retirement age.

I fought for freedom in two wars and I believe that freedom entitles our seniors the ability to work without a penalty. America's seniors want, need and deserve the repeal of the Social Security earnings limit.

HONORING THE VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL VARSITY CHEERLEADERS OF VICTORIA, TEXAS

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay honor to the winners of the National High School Cheerleading Championship sponsored by the Universal Cheerleaders Association—the Victoria High School Varsity Cheerleaders from Victoria, Texas. Under the able leadership of Denise Neel and Terese Reese, the squad of teens took the title for 1999 following an impressive history of second place in 1998, and third place in 1997. Each year, the cheerleaders set their mark higher, worked harder, trained longer, and kept their eyes on their goal. Their training and perseverance paid off when they brought the national trophy home to their school.

The cheerleaders competed against a field of 74 squads in the Medium Varsity Division to reach the national trials. There, they competed against the thirteen regional finalists, coming out on top. The VHS cheerleading team is the first Texas squad to ever win the National Championship.

In addition to their cheerleading duties which include cheering at every sporting event held by their school and a rigorous practice schedule, each of these girls must maintain a grade of at least 80 in each class. They also participate in numerous community activities, such as the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life and the March of Dimes Walk America. Additionally, they worked with the elementary and middle schools during TAAS testing and Red Ribbon Week, and the Gulf Bend Mental Health-Mental Retardation during Friendship Fest.

This group of students deserve the honor they have earned. I commend each one of them:

Liz Lasater and Kendra Serold—Co-Head Cheerleaders
Natalie Cole
Leah Green
Melissa Myers
Laurie Beck
Lindy Burns
Amy Reimann
Amber Clemmons
Sara Dickson
Courtney Horecka
Haley Kolle
Amanda Rodriquez
Karla Sterne
Melissa Keefe
Chelsie Luhn
Sara Carville

I am proud to have these national champions in the 14th Congressional District of Texas, and trust all my colleagues join me in congratulating them on this impressive achievement.

CONGRATULATIONS VA CENTRAL CALIFORNIA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate The VA Central California Health Care System on the outstanding score received with the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations. This organization is dedicated to improving government health care through voluntary accreditation.

The VA Central California Health Care System, known as the VA Medical Center Fresno, received high scores on its accreditation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO). Formed in 1951, JCAHO is dedicated to the improvement of America's public and private health care system through a process of voluntary accreditation. The accreditation serves as proof of an organization's commitment to providing quality health care on an ongoing basis. The mission of the VA Central California Health Care System is to deliver this commitment to its veteran patients.

The JCAHO scores achieved by the VA Central California Health Care System were outstanding. For its Hospital Accreditation Program (HAP) a score of 96 was given. For its Ambulatory Care service a score of 100 was obtained. The VA also scored 100 for its Alcohol and Drug treatment program. The Long Term Care program received a 99 and the Home Care program was given a 98. Special recognition was received for the Infection Control and Performance Improvement Programs and the Computerized Pharmacy Processing System. All of the scores represent great accomplishments for this health care system. The hospital staff worked together to meet the challenge, scoring above the national average.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the VA Central California Health Care System on this outstanding accomplishment. I urge my colleagues to join me in wishing the administration and staff of the VA Central California Health Care System congratulations on this achievement and many years of continued success.

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