INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 5987, THE SENIORS PROTECTION ACT OF 2010

HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 30, 2010

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce the Seniors Protection Act of 2010, H.R.5987. I am honored to be joined by many of my colleagues who have heard from senior citizens back home about the pressing need for Congress to provide this relief in light of the widely held expectation that there will be no increase in Social Security benefits for a second year in a row. The legislation would ensure that seniors, veterans and people with disabilities who receive Social Security and similar federal benefits receive a one-time $250 payment in the event that no cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) is announced this fall.

Seniors did not cause the near meltdown of the economy that occurred in the last days of the prior Administration, yet too many are still feeling the brunt of its fallout. This bill would help seniors across the country who face the likely possibility that on October 15th, the Social Security Administration will announce for the first time ever—as a result of a long-standing statutory formula—that there will not be a COLA in Social Security benefits in back-to-back years.

The failed economic policies of the prior Administration left the nation in such a deep recession that, for the first time since automatic COLAs began in 1975, recipients of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans Administration Pension and Disability Compensation, and Railroad Retirement benefits did not receive a COLA in January of this year.

Social Security benefit levels are quite modest—only $14,000 a year for the average retiree. Yet, the median income for senior households is a mere $24,000, reflecting just how much Social Security means to most elderly Americans. Six in ten seniors rely on Social Security for more than half of their income. About a third of retirees have little other than Social Security to live on.

Although economy-wide measures of inflation have shown no net increase since the last COLA, which reflected price levels in the third quarter of 2008, Medicare premiums and health care costs have continued to rise. Moreover, seniors' other sources of income have weakened as a result of the economic downturn: the financial collapse reduced the value of their IRAs; interest rates are low, reducing income from seniors' savings; and the housing crash reduced seniors' home equity. The one-time $250 payment for retirees and other beneficiaries would represent less than two percent of the average annual Social Security benefit.

Seniors who depend on their very modest Social Security benefits worry about meeting their basic day-to-day expenses. I have heard these concerns from seniors in my district and from Members of Congress who are hearing these same worries from their seniors. I am pleased those Members are joining me in introducing the Seniors Protection Act of 2010. Democrats are honoring America's commitment to protect the purchasing power of seniors' Social Security benefits.

For 75 years, and through 13 recessions, Social Security has been a steady and reliable source of income—never a day late nor a dollar short. And since 1975, when Congress implemented automatic COLAs, recipients of Social Security have been able to maintain purchasing power over time. Social Security is often the only source of retirement income that is fully protected against the corrosive effects of inflation.

This bill is responsive to seniors and responsible to taxpayers. My colleagues and I are committed to fiscal responsibility and will ensure that the Seniors Protection Act of 2010 shall not cause an increase in the federal deficit. When the bill comes to the House floor it will include the necessary offsets to comply with the PAYGO law.

The legislation is supported by seniors. With regard to this legislation, our former colleague Barbara Kennelly, President of the National Committee to Protect Social Security and Medicare said:

> For the millions of seniors who rely upon Social Security as their only source of income, and millions more who rely upon it for at least half of their income, a one-time payment to make up for the lack of a COLA is not a luxury, it's a necessity. I applaud the Members of the Congress who understand that helping seniors maintain their purchasing power for necessities like health care, fuel and food, not only improves their quality of life but also helps the local economy.

AARP Senior Vice President Drew Nannis offered the following statement:

> For over three decades, millions of Americans have counted on annual increases in their Social Security checks to help make ends meet. This year, 41 million older Americans did not receive a Social Security COLA, the first time since automatic Social Security adjustments went into effect in 1975.
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> This relief will put money in the pockets of millions of older Americans struggling to make ends meet—money likely to be injected directly into our fragile economy.

Edward F. Coyle, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans said:

> Seniors are struggling to get by. $250 may not seem like much on Wall Street, but to retirees on Main Street it could be what allows them to pay their electric bill or buy groceries. We must make sure Social Security meets today's basic needs.

I urge my colleagues to stand up for seniors and support the Senior Protection Act of 2010.

MS. BARBARA YARBOUGH'S 50TH YEAR OF SERVICE AT MIDLAND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

HON. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 30, 2010

Mr. CONAWAY. Madam Speaker, I always enjoy being able to share stories about the great people of District 11 with my colleagues. Today, I would like to share the story of Barbara Yarbrough, a treasured citizen of Midland, Texas, who I am privileged to represent in this House.

Barbara grew up in what many of us would consider difficult circumstances. Orphaned at the age of eight, she and her younger brother spent four years homeless until an Aunt took them in. Her Aunt encouraged her to go to college, telling her that If she graduated, she could do anything.

I do not know if Barbara's Aunt knew then how right she would be, but I am proud to say that Barbara has accomplished everything one individual could hope to in a life devoted to serving the communities she has called home.

In Midland, Barbara is a living legend. For almost forty years, she taught two generations of Midlanders, serving as an advisor, a confidant, a cheerleader, a mentor, and a friend to every student who sat in her classroom. After retiring from teaching, Barbara tackled new challenges, and now works as a parent liaison in the Midland school district. Through this office, she works with parents and families, offering counseling, advice, parenting classes, health information, and support for parents when they have needed it the most.

I expect that most every community has someone like Barbara; someone who works nearly as hard or touches almost as many lives. I imagine that every member of Congress I serve with can think of someone that might compare. But, I know that I represent the one and only Barbara Yarbough. She Is a singular individual, a truly unique soul, who my community is blessed to be able to call our own. She is also a near and dear friend to me, who I am honored to be able to brag on here today.

This August, Barbara celebrates 50 years of serving the students, parents, and employees of the Midland Independent School District, I would like to offer my humblest gratitude to her for her five decades of service and her genuine, unwavering, and unflinching concern for the people of Midland. She has been and will continue to be a friend to many and a servant to all.

May God bless her as she has blessed us.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING REGARDING ''GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT''

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 30, 2010

Mr. HASTINGS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express serious concerns regarding the Department of Education's recent Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding ''gainful employment.''

As it is currently proposed, the Department's approach will lead to serious educational capacity cutbacks in critically important fields such as nursing and education and will disproportionately affect low-income and minority students.

Today, 2.8 million students attend career colleges. Seventy-six percent of these students live independently, without parental support. Sixty-three percent are 24 years old or older. Fifty-four percent delayed postsecondary education after high school. Forty-seven percent have dependent children, and almost one-third of these students are single parents.

The Department's suggested approach will disproportionately harm these nontraditional and lower-income students who have no choice but to rely on student loans to pursue a postsecondary education and need the flexibility career colleges provide.

On May 18, I along with thirteen of my colleagues were assured during a meeting with