

Federal Government is telling our elderly citizens to stay at home, and not to pursue gainful employment. That is not the message that I want to send to the seniors in the 3d Congressional District of Connecticut.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation's seniors have too much to offer for us to simply turn them away. We need their wisdom, their expertise and their zeal.

Older Americans have tremendous potential to contribute to our communities, both in terms of professional expertise and productivity. It is a shame to lose those invaluable resources. Furthermore, Seniors who are active live longer and lead happier lives.

I strongly support the Senior Citizen's Right to Work Act, and I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this important legislation.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice some concerns with H.R. 2684, the Senior Citizens' Right to Work Act. Although I will support the bill on final passage, I am concerned about the effect that some of the more obscure provisions in the legislation may have on the rights of senior citizens.

Included in this bill are provisions which remove the Social Security Administration from the process of payment of attorneys' fees. Currently, the Social Security Administration [SSA] approves the fees that an attorney may charge to represent a person in administrative proceedings, usually related to a denial of disability benefits. When the applicant is successful, SSA withholds the lesser of \$4,000 or 25 percent of the benefits to pay the attorney. H.R. 2684 would change the law such that SSA would no longer be involved in the process and attorneys could negotiate fees up to a \$4,000 limit.

This portion of H.R. 2684, while seeming sublime on the surface, may result in attorneys choosing to stop representing disabled individuals in their administrative proceedings. Since the fee would no longer be withheld, attorneys are fearful that they may not be paid for the service they provide, and thus may choose to avoid this type of representation.

While I will support the legislation, I regret that the leadership has chosen to bring this legislation to the floor in such a fashion so as to preclude amendments, and I hope to work with the Senate and the White House concerning the availability of competent representation for Social Security claimants.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2684, the Senior Citizens' Right to Work Act of 1995, and commend its sponsor, the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. BUNNING] for all of his hard work on this measure.

Under current law, this country's senior citizens from age 65 to age 69 are limited to earn only \$11,280 in additional income before they suffer penalties of \$1 in Social Security benefits for every \$3 of income earned above that limit. Mr. BUNNING's measure will allow seniors by the year 2000, to earn up to \$30,000 in outside income without being forced to give up Social Security benefits.

While this bill is certainly a step in the right direction, I believe that we should go further and eliminate this anachronistic limitation and thereby allow our seniors to continue to work to the best of their capabilities in order to sustain themselves in a time of an increasing cost of living. We must allow older Americans who choose to work to earn appropriate pay with-

out losing any of their hard-earned Social Security benefits.

Mr. BEILSON. Mr. Speaker, the bill before us obviously enjoys very broad support among our colleagues. However, we ought to pause for a moment and give serious thought to what we are doing by passing this measure.

The Congressional Budget Office projects that we will spend more than \$350 billion on Social Security benefits in 1996—more than one-fifth of the budget, and more than we are spending on any other single Federal program. Working Americans—no matter how little they make—6.2 percent of their paycheck—with their employers paying the same amount—to finance these benefits. Yet not only have we taken this huge program off the budget negotiating table, we are now actually moving to increase it—at a time when we are trying to cut back just about everything else the Government spends money on.

We need to give serious thought to whether it makes sense to increase these benefits—when the majority of that increase will go to those who are already relatively well off—at a time when we are moving to cut benefits for people who really need them.

We also need to give serious thought to whether it is wise to make what will be a huge move toward turning Social Security into a benefit which one is automatically entitled to receive upon reaching age 65, rather than a program to compensate for lost earnings due to retirement, as was originally intended. We need to ask: Does it make sense to do that when people are living so much longer than they used to, and when our population of older Americans is going to begin growing enormously in just a few years?

And, we ought to consider whether we are inviting early retirees—ages 62–64—to ask for the same thing we are about to grant retirees aged 65–69. Once we increase the earnings limitation for recipients who are aged 65–69, will early retirees ask for a liberalization of the definition of "retired" using the very same arguments that are being made by those aged 65–69?

The title of this bill, the Senior Citizens' Right to Work Act, is a misnomer. Senior citizens have every right to work; what this does is give older working Americans the right to collect more Social Security benefits than they are currently entitled to. At a time when we ought to be curbing entitlement spending, not expanding it, passing this legislation seems most unwise.

Mr. BUNNING of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. BUNNING] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2684, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. BUNNING of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BUNNING of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that

all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2684, the bill just considered.

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

There was no objection.

#### PRIVILEGES OF THE HOUSE—REQUEST FOR REPORT FROM COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT REGARDING COMPLAINTS AGAINST SPEAKER

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 2(a)(1) of rule IX, I hereby give notice of my intention to offer a resolution—on behalf of myself and the gentleman from Florida [Mr. JOHNSTON]—which raises a question of the privileges of the House.

The form of the resolution is as follows:

Whereas the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct is currently considering several ethics complaints against Speaker Newt Gingrich;

Whereas the Committee has traditionally handled such cases by appointing an independent, non-partisan, outside counsel—a procedure which has been adopted in every major ethics case since the Committee was established;

Whereas—although complaints against Speaker Gingrich have been under consideration for more than 14 months—the Committee has failed to appoint an outside counsel;

Whereas the Committee has also deviated from other long-standing precedents and rules of procedure; including its failure to adopt a Resolution of Preliminary Inquiry before calling third-party witnesses and receiving sworn testimony;

Whereas these procedural irregularities—and the unusual delay in the appointment of an independent, outside counsel—have led to widespread concern that the Committee is making special exceptions for the Speaker of the House;

Whereas a resolution calling for a status report on the Gingrich investigation was tabled by the House without debate on November 17, 1995;

Whereas a second resolution calling for a status report on the Gingrich investigation was tabled by the House without debate on November 30, 1995;

Whereas the integrity of the House depends on the confidence of the American people in the fairness and impartiality of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

Therefore be it resolved that:

The Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct should report to the House, no later than December 19, 1995, concerning:

(1) the status of the Committee's investigation of the complaints against Speaker Gingrich;

(2) the Committee's disposition with regard to the appointment of a non-partisan outside counsel and the scope of the counsel's investigation;

(3) a timetable for Committee action on the complaints.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under rule IX, a resolution offered from the floor by a Member other than the majority leader or the minority leader as a question of the privileges of the House has immediate precedence only at a time or place designated by the