

law, the HI premium is reduced for former beneficiaries who have at least 30 quarters of Social Security coverage. Under current law, the reduction in the premium will be fully phased in by 1998. In 1998 and thereafter, the reduction will be 45% of the premium for HI.

Under current law, State Medicaid programs may purchase Medicare HI coverage for low-income former beneficiaries known as "Qualified Disabled and Working Individuals."

Disabled worker tax credit

The plan would offer a refundable Disabled Worker Tax Credit (DWTC) to encourage DI beneficiaries to leave the rolls and return to work. To encourage work and cushion the loss of benefits, the credit would be available to DI beneficiaries whose benefits had ceased due to work. The DWTC would provide a modest supplement to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Like the EITC, the credit would increase as earnings increased up to a maximum credit; would plateau at a level designed to make work more financially rewarding than collecting disability benefits; and would phase out thereafter.

The DWTC for a person with no children would increase until earnings reached \$8,000 and would be phased out completely at \$18,000. This would provide a maximum credit of \$1,200 annually in addition to the current EITC OF \$306. The credit for a worker with one child would peak at \$7,000 of earnings and phase out at \$25,800. The maximum credit would be \$500 annually in addition to the EITC of about \$2,100. Finally, the credit for a worker with two-children would peak at about \$10,000 and would be phased out at about \$29,000. The maximum credit would be \$750 annually in addition to the current EITC of \$3,560.

Tickets for work opportunity

The Commissioner of Social Security would be required to establish a Transition to Work demonstration program in as many localities as she deems appropriate. Under the Transition to Work program, Social Security Disability (DI) beneficiaries would be encouraged to return to work through Tickets for Work Opportunity (TWO). The TWO could be used by beneficiaries to seek out those providers of rehabilitation services who would most effectively help them to return to work. The individual could choose to receive services from a private provider or from the State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency.

Under current law and policy, Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) beneficiaries are referred to State VR agencies for rehabilitation when the Disability Determination Service determines that the beneficiary would be eligible for VR services in that State. A DI beneficiary who refuses such services may lose his or her benefits. State VR agencies are reimbursed for the cost of rehabilitation after the individual has been gainfully employed for nine months. Under the current system, less than 1% of DI beneficiaries return to work.

The Ticket for Work Opportunity would offer beneficiaries additional options for rehabilitation services. Furthermore, both public and private providers would have an incentive to seek out beneficiaries to help them leave the disability rolls. Under the plan, the TWO would be provided automatically to those persons most likely to return to work—to new beneficiaries and to those who are notified of the commencement of a continuing disability review (CDR). All other DI beneficiaries would have the option to participate in the TWO plan.

Beneficiaries would present the TWO to a public or private provider of vocational reha-

bilitation services. Payment would be made by the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration to the provider for successfully returning the beneficiary to work. A milestone payment would be paid to the provider when the beneficiary was placed in employment and began to work. When the individual had engaged in Substantial Gainful Activity (i.e., earnings exceeded \$500 a month) throughout the 9-month trial work period and his or her benefits ceased, the provider would receive 50% of the savings which accrued to the Disability Insurance Trust Fund. Providers would receive payments on a quarterly basis. The Commissioner of Social Security would be permitted to alter the percentage or the period of the payments if she determined that the incentive was not adequate to return beneficiaries to work.

The Social Security Administration would certify providers. Providers would be defined to include a broad range of rehabilitation services include job training, liaison and placement. The Commissioner would be required to provide beneficiaries with a list of providers of vocational rehabilitation services available in each locality.

The vocational rehabilitation provider and the beneficiary would jointly develop an individual transition to work plan. The plan would take effect upon approval by the beneficiary.

THE AMERICAN ASSISTANCE ACT

HON. GEORGE P. RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 4, 1997

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the Armenian Assistance Act. This bill is designed to assist Armenia and her people with an ambitious and progressive plan, similar to the successful program Operation Flood of India, to reconstruct sagging agricultural markets.

Ultimately, if Armenia is able to feed itself, its people will directly benefit from improved public health and nutrition standards. Improvement to Armenian's agricultural sector, specifically in the area of wheat seed development, is in the direct strategic interest of the United States and our desire to secure the advantages of a stable Caucasus region. Further, this bill will help empower Armenians in their bid for reform, likely establish new markets for United States products, and it specifically will enhance the exporting of United States agricultural products.

However, in introducing this bill, I am not proposing additional burdens for America's hardworking taxpayers nor proposing that we neglect America's precious farmland. Our people and farmers deserve more responsible representation. I recognize the need to harness the waste and dated programs contained within past foreign aid budgets. Therefore, I have pursued creative measures for striking a balance between the issue of controlling foreign aid and the need to help Armenia.

Allow me to clearly outline what this bill will do:

First, empower the private sector transition in Armenia toward a market economy, and likely establish new markets for the United States by strengthening our consumer buying power in Armenia.

Second, enhance the exporting of U.S. agricultural products.

Third, assist to coordinate activities with the U.S. Department of State, and help to establish a monitoring system in the Caucasus region for zoonotic diseases, which are transmissible from animals to humans. These diseases have no boundaries and are apt to cause major public health problems throughout the region, and furthermore are easily spread to Europe.

If this bill is passed, it is my intention to request that the agricultural renewal program in Armenia be implemented by the Armenian Technology Group [ATG], a nonprofit organization based in Fresno, CA. Over the past several years, ATG has been involved in similar programs in the area. It should be noted that, 80 percent of the organization's operational funding has been generated from the private and public sectors, and only 20 percent from U.S. Government sources. ATG has been effective in implementing its programs by working directly with the people of Armenia, in assisting them in their transition toward market economy, and in helping build democracy from the bottom up. I have enclosed for the RECORD specific figures on ATG's contributions and investments in the agricultural sector of the Republic of Armenia.

You may recall in the 104th Congress that the Government of Turkey was appropriated \$22 million in economic support aid. Initially, the aid was dependent on Turkey's long-awaited recognition of the Armenian Genocide. A belligerent Ankara reacted to the House genocide clause, a reasonable amendment which I was privileged to introduce and lead in eventual passage in the House, by telling the United States State Department and the United States Congress that Turkey would not accept United States aid with preconditions such as recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Amazingly, Turkey was given the support and was not asked to recognize the genocide. All this despite their declaration to decline United States economic aid, while countries such as Armenia were in desperate need of financial support.

The Armenian Assistance Act proposes to redirect the \$22 million or any remaining amount not yet obligated from the fiscal year 1997 Foreign Appropriations Act in economic support aid for Turkey, and transfer those funds to Armenia for agricultural development. I'm certain Armenia has been, and will continue to be, grateful for the support of the United States Government and the American taxpayer.

ARMENIAN TECHNOLOGY GROUP, INC.

[ATG Sponsored Contributions and Investments in the Agricultural Sector of the Republic of Armenia 1989-1996]

Contributions/Donations Per Sector	Amount USD	Percentage
ATG Contributions:		
Private Sector Donations	\$11,695,672	58.13
In-Kind Professional Services	3,751,456	18.65
Cash Contributions	586,468	2.92
U.S. Government Support:		
USAID Grants/Sub-Grants	2,948,226	14.66
Transportation Costs	1,025,000	5.10
UNHCR Grants	115,010	0.58
Total	20,121,832