EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONOR THE FLAG AND THE CONSTITUTION

HON. DAVID E. SKAGGS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 13, 1997

Mr. SKAGGS. Mr. Speaker, as a veteran and an American, I am proud to introduce on behalf of myself and the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. KOLBE], a resolution expressing the strong support of the Members of Congress and the American people for what the flag represents: freedom, tolerance, and the right to dissent.

Mr. Speaker, the overwhelming majority of our fellow citizens agree that the American flag, as the symbol of our Nation's values and ideals, commands the deepest respect from all Americans. The flag commands that respect because it stands for a people and a Government strong enough to tolerate diversity and to protect the rights even of those expressing unpopular views. Our strong commitment to these values, not the colors and design of our flag, is what makes our country unique and an international model for freedom.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution reaffirms the place of honor the American flag rightly holds in our country and states that respect for the flag should not be mandated, especially at the expense of the first amendment guarantee of free speech.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring our flag and the Constitution by cosponsoring this resolution.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION

HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 13, 1997

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, today I am reintroducing legislation to ensure that Federal grants for the hiring of local police officers actually result in a net increase in the number of ''cops on the beat.'' I invite all of my colleagues to become a cosponsor of this important legislation.

As a former sheriff, I know that in too many instances Federal law enforcement grants result in the hiring of numerous generals but not enough foot soldiers at the local level. In other words, policing grant funds are often spent hiring clerks and dispatchers instead of hiring uniformed officers to patrol the streets. Specifically, my bill amends the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to ensure that Federal funds made available to hire or rehire law enforcement officers are used to produce a net gain in the number of law enforcement officers who perform nonadministrative public safety services—i.e. street cops. This legislation will ensure that Federal police grants will result in a real increase in the number of street officers on the street fighting crime.

My bill is identical to an amendment I successfully attached to legislation in the 104th Congress, H.R. 728, the ''Local Government Law Enforcement Block Grants Act,'' which was passed by the House in February 1995, and the fiscal year 1996 Commerce, Justice, and State appropriations bill. Unfortunately, both bills were vetoed by the President. By reintroducing that amendment in bill form, an important crime-fighting measure can be debated without the politics associated with an all-encompassing bill.

Mr. Speaker, let's help give our communities a fighting chance against crime by putting more police officers on the street than more clerks behind desks. I ask that all members take a look at my bill and give it their full support.

SUPPORT HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 36: PROTECT THE LIVES AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN WORLD-WIDE

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 13, 1997

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Joint Resolution 36, The International Family Planning Funds Release. This Resolution will right a wrong which Congress created in the high-politics of the fiscal year 1997 Omnibus Appropriations Act. It will also unquestionably help to save the lives of countless women and children world-wide. We have no choice but to support it. This resolution does nothing more than move forward the release date of international family planning funds from July 1, 1997 to March 1, 1997. This resolution does nothing less than save lives.

Unfortunately, there are some among us who have chosen to turn this humble proposal into a battle-ground for one of the most controversial of all policy issues—abortion. It is true that abortion has a role in this resolution. That role can be found in the fact that family planning unequivocally reduces the use of abortion world-wide. The use of abortion is closely associated with the unmet need for contraception and with reliance on less effective methods. Therefore, abortion rates are lower in countries where more effective modern methods of contraception are used than in countries where less effective methods predominate. International family planning funds are used to provide women with access to these much needed alternatives. When women are provided with alternatives to abortion, they use abortion less. This fact has been shown again and again world-wide. In addition, as I am sure all of my colleagues are well-aware, the 1973 Helms amendment of the Foreign Assistance Act prohibits the use of any U.S. funds for abortion, or to motivate or coerce any person to practice abortion. Therefore, this resolution is about the reduction of abortion, not its funding.

Most importantly, however, this resolution is about saving the lives of women and children through-out the developing world. According to CARE, family planning is as essential to saving the lives of infants as their programs in immunization, respiratory disease, diarrheal disease, and nutrition. They have also found the scientific evidence to be overwhelming that a woman's ability to space births and avoid births at the extremes of the reproductive years is critical to ensuring child survival. In fact, in many countries, birth spacing alone could prevent one in five infant deaths.

Nearly 600,000 women die each year from pregnancy-related causes—leaving thousand of motherless children behind. Another 18 million women suffer long-term reproductive health complications that are excruciatingly painful and often result in life-long disabilities. According to UNICEF, just meeting the existing demand for family planning in the developing world would reduce unintended pregnancies by one-fifth, which would be expected to prevent at least 100,000 of the 600,000 annual maternal deaths. Put simply, family planning saves lives. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to be on the side of life and vote in favor of House Joint Resolution 36. I can not imagine a better use of this institution's time. Thank you.

IS THE INS MAKING CRIMINALS OUT OF BOATERS ON THE GREAT LAKES?

HON. STEVE C. LaTOURETTE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 13, 1997

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation to correct what are well intentioned, but misguided efforts by the United States Immigration Service to protect our northern border against United States citizens who seek to reenter their own country after a recreational boating trip to Canada.

In what appears to be a federally sanctioned game of waterway robbery, the Immigration Service is willing to forego its legal obligation to inspect all vessels returning to a United States port from Canada, if boaters are willing to pay a $16 per-person per-year fee to purchase what is known as the I–68 Canadian border boat landing permit. The I–68 permit program was established in 1963 but was not implemented nationally until a few years ago when Congress directed Federal agencies to begin charging a fee for some Federal programs. I have no problem with the fee-for-service approach, but where is the service? The I–68 program would have the boating public paying the INS for the convenience of not inspecting their boats. Its difficult to see how this approach would stem the tide of illegal immigration from Canada on recreational boats, a problem that is not well documented by the INS—if it exists at all. We do know, however, that the number of United States

boaters visiting Canada from the Great Lakes Region fell 15 percent in the 1996 boating season to just under 40,000. This translates to a loss of over $2 million in destination spending on the Canadian side and it can be assumed that similar losses were felt on the United States side.

It is unfortunate that the recreational boating community has been on the receiving end of some bad Government programs in recent years. We all remember the ill-conceived boat luxury tax, the FCC radio license fee and, most recently, the marine diesel fuel tax. Fortunately, all of these programs have been repealed by Congress as detrimental to boater safety and the recreational boating economy. However, once again, we are making it harder and more expensive for law-abiding boaters to enjoy their chosen form of recreation.

I must confess that with all the complex issues to address during my first term in Congress, somehow the news of illegal immigrants cruising across the Great Lakes in power and sailboats got by me. Ever mindful of the problems experienced on our southern borders and with images of illegal aliens coming into Florida, California, and Texas burned into my memory. I rushed down to one of the many marinas in my congressional district, the Ashtabula Yacht Club. That Sunday afternoon was a sight to behold. Sure enough I witnessed 40 some sailboats boldly entering the harbor.

At this point the threat became clear to me. Men, women, and children of United States and Canadian descent docked their sailboats and came ashore illegally. They were barely clothed, sunburned, and the worst among them were telling lies.

While I expected the illegal aliens to soon depart to taste freedom in the interior of our great country—they did not. In fact, the next morning I watched as all of the Canadian boats returned to Port Stanley, ON. Soon after, I spoke to the Commodore of the Yacht Club to see how long this problem has been going on. He informed me that it was the 25th year of the Lake Erie International Sailboat Race between Ashtabula, OH and Port Stanley, ON, and that he hoped to expect the same type of trouble next season. I use this example to illustrate that things are not always as they appear. The cash registers of our local harbor district depend on this annual visit from our Canadian friends to help one of our most promising growth industries—recreational boating.

Mr. Speaker, my bill would not eliminate the I–68 program, but would simply allow recreational boaters the option of using their U.S. passport in lieu of the I–68 permit in order to reenter the United States after returning from Canadian shores. It seems to me that if a U.S. passport is good enough for all other international travel purposes, that boaters traveling between two friendly countries should also be afforded this option.

I would like to thank Representative STUPAK and my colleague from Ohio, Representative TRAFICANT for being original cosponsors of this simple yet important piece of legislation. I look forward to enthusiastic support from all Members of Congress bordering the Great Lakes.

JAMES GILMORE NAMED 1997 PERSON OF THE YEAR BY THE COUNCIL OF SOUTH SIDE ADVANCEMENT ASSOCIATIONS

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 13, 1997

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my friend, Mr. James Gilmore, on being named one of the 1997 Persons of the Year by the Council of South Side Advancement Associations.

In selecting Jim, the Council of South Side Advancement is honoring a man who has done much to maintain and improve the quality of life of Milwaukee's south side. Through his 25 years of service to the south side of Milwaukee, Jim has made a direct impact on the lives of many people in our community.

Over the years Jim Gilmore has shown his dedication to his neighborhood through his involvement in several community organizations. In addition, to serving on the board of directors for the Council of South Side Advancement, Jim is also involved in the Bay View Business Association, the South Side Scholarship Foundation, and St. Veronica's Parish. His involvement in these organizations demonstrates his desire to help his fellow neighbor in any way he can.

Jim Gilmore has clearly set an example for our entire community. I join the Council of South Side Advancement Associations in commending him on his outstanding dedication to the south side of Milwaukee, and I congratulate him on being named one of the 1997 Persons of the Year.

THE ACCREDITATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1997

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 13, 1997

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a bill that requires all Medicare-accrediting organizations to hold public meetings and to ensure that at least a third of the governing board consists of members of the public.

Healthcare facilities must comply with certain conditions in order to participate in the Medicare Program. Through a process termed ''deemed status,'' the Health Care Financing Administration relies on accrediting organizations to assure that Healthcare facilities are providing quality services to Medicare beneficiaries. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations is one such organization. If a facility is accredited by the joint commission, for example, it is deemed to meet Medicare's conditions of participation.

When facilities are wrongly accredited, Medicare beneficiaries suffer. A 1988 Wall Street Journal investigation found that ''accreditation masks serious failings in possibly hundreds of the 5,100 hospitals in America that are inspected and approved by the joint commission.'' The Journal also reported that many patients died as a result of receiving substandard care in hospitals that were considered ''marginal'' and that ''many accredited hospitals had actually failed inspections but remained accredited for months, even years, as they sought to correct their problems.''

At a 1990 hearing, witnesses agreed on the need to improve the hospital accreditation process. Participants reported that accrediting organizations' survey standards lacked compatibility with Medicare's conditions of participation and that follow-up with noncompliant facilities was lacking.

Today, I am focusing on the importance of an accrediting organization's accountability to the public. Accrediting bodies should be managed and directed by a balanced combination of healthcare professionals and community representatives and consumers. Currently, many accrediting bodies are directed solely by leaders of the same organizations which they accredit. This is nothing more than the fox watching the chicken house.

The joint commission has attempted to increase its commitment to the public. Currently, 6 of its 28 accrediting board members are members of the public. Although a good start, it is not enough.

We should reconsider the dependence of accrediting organizations on funding and direction from the same healthcare organizations which they survey and accredit. A July 1996 report from the public citizen health research group charged that the joint commission is ''a captive of the industry whose quality of service it purports to measure.''

Further, the group concluded that the joint commission ''fails to recognize the often conflicting interests of hospitals and the public'' and puts the interest of healthcare institutions first when conflicts arise. I question the credibility of accrediting bodies, because their income currently depends on the facilities they are supposed to be monitoring. Until a balance of representation is brought to the boards which lead accrediting organizations, we cannot assure the interests of the public are truly being considered.

As the number of accrediting organizations increases, so does the need for public accountability. For this reason, I am introducing a bill that requires all Medicare-accrediting organizations to hold public meetings and to ensure that at least a third of the governing board consists of members of the public.

This bill is a first step in assuring quality of care for our Nation's Medicare beneficiaries through the accreditation process. I am currently working on a more comprehensive bill that will make accrediting organizations more accountable—accountable to the public as well as to the health care financing administration. The upcoming bill will require the following:

Accrediting organizations must release the status of all accredited facilities to the general public within a reasonable time frame.

HCFA must scrutinize all advertising claims which use data from accrediting organizations, and must deny accreditation to all healthcare organizations which falsify accreditation-related information.

Accrediting organizations must allow employees of healthcare organizations to meet with survey teams off-premises, must accept confidential testimony from healthcare workers during surveys, and must provide whistleblower protection for workers who report violations of accreditation rules.

Accrediting organizations must publicly disclose all payments received from organizations that are being accredited.