

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

INTRODUCTION OF THE HOME-OWNERS MILITARY EQUITY ACT

HON. LINDA SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 13, 1998

Mrs. LINDA SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce legislation correcting an inadvertent inequity in the Taxpayer Relief Act (TRA) we passed last year.

The TRA gives taxpayers who sell their principal residence a much-needed tax break. Prior to this, taxpayers were allowed a one-time exclusion on the profit from selling their home, but to take the exclusion you had to be at least 55 years old and live in the residence for 2 of the 5 years preceding the sale.

In 1997, we changed that. Under the TRA all taxpayers who sell their personal residence on or after May 7, 1997, are not taxed on the first \$250,000 of profit from the sale (\$500,000 for joint filers.) To qualify, there is a two-part test. The taxpayer must own the home for at least 2 of the 5 years preceding the sale, and he or she must also have lived in the home as their MAIN home for at least 2 years of the last 5 years. For most people, Mr. Speaker, all of this is fine. But there is a very important group of people we left out—military personnel on active duty away from home.

For these people—the men and women serving in our military who are assigned somewhat away from their home—qualifying for the new exemption can be difficult. I'm sure everyone would agree that our military personnel should be able to qualify for the same tax relief available to every other homeowner. Serving one's country away from home shouldn't be an impediment to qualifying for the exemption, but that's exactly what it is in many cases.

The measure I am introducing today amends the home ownership test in the Taxpayer Relief Act so that military personnel who are away on active duty can include that time spent serving our country when they calculate the number of years they lived in their primary residence. Under the bill's provisions, members of our Armed Forces will be considered to be using their house as their main residence for any period that they are away on extended active duty as long as they lived in the house as a principle residence before being ordered away.

Senator McCAIN has introduced a similar measure in the other body. I hope my colleagues here in the House will support this legislation and act swiftly to extend the same tax relief available to everyone else to the dedicated men and women in our Armed Forces.

IN HONOR OF THE LAND O' LAKES FISH AND GAME CLUB'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JAY W. JOHNSON

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 13, 1998

Mr. JOHNSON of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Land O' Lakes Fish and Game Club as they celebrate their 50th Anniversary. It is a remarkable milestone for a remarkable organization.

The Land O' Lakes Fish and Game Club is the oldest club of its kind in the state of Wisconsin. The club has been dedicated to the preservation of natural resources and wildlife from its inception. It is also dedicated to sponsoring educational projects in the public schools, as well as granting scholarships to teachers and students about to enter college.

For their commitment to the environment and Wisconsin's Northwoods, for their work to foster education and learning, for their public service, I want to officially recognize the Land O' Lakes Fish and Game Club on a half century of excellence.

I hope my colleagues will join me in congratulating the club on this extraordinary occasion, and wishing them another fifty years of success.

SPECIAL TRIBUTE HONORING KELLY GEORGE, LEGRAND SMITH SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 13, 1998

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect for the outstanding record of excellence she has compiled in academics, leadership and community service, that I am proud to salute Kelly George, winner of the 1998 LeGrand Smith Scholarship. This award is made to young adults who have demonstrated that they are truly committed to playing important roles in our Nation's future.

As a winner of the LeGrand Smith Scholarship, Kelly is being honored for demonstrating that same generosity of spirit, intelligence, responsible citizenship, and capacity for human service that distinguished the late LeGrand Smith of Somerset, Michigan.

Kelly George is an exceptional student at Grand Ledge High School and possesses an impressive high school record. She has been involved with the National Honor Society. Kelly is involved with Drama and varsity tennis and track. Outside of school Kelly, has been involved with her church as a student leader and various other community activities.

In special tribute, therefore, I am proud to join with her many admirers in extending my highest praise and congratulations to Kelly George for her selection as a winner of a

LeGrand Smith Scholarship. This honor is also a testament to the parents, teachers, and others whose personal interest, strong support and active participation contributed to her success. To this remarkable young woman, I extend my most heartfelt good wishes for all her future endeavors.

SPECIAL INTERESTS

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 13, 1998

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, May 6, 1998 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

THE POWER OF LOBBYISTS AND SPECIAL INTERESTS

One of the public's biggest criticisms of Congress is the power that lobbyists and special interests have over the legislative process. People see them as extremely powerful wheeler-dealers, able to manipulate the system for their own advantage, "buying" the votes of Members of Congress through extensive campaign contributions and other favors, and basically corrupting the political system.

CONCERNS

Certainly there are legitimate reasons for concern. Lobbying is constitutionally protected under the right to petition government, yet the powers of pressure groups are formidable. Their numbers are large and their resources vast. There are special interest groups for almost every cause, and lobbying is the third largest business in the nation's capital, behind only government and tourism.

Special interests gain access to Members through campaign contributions and determined lobbying, and often put pressure on Members to vote with them on their key votes. They also have a broader impact on the legislative process. Lobbyists regularly meet with leaders of Congress to help lay out the congressional agenda, and play a role in drafting legislation, often behind closed doors. Congress will sometimes debate bills that have little or no chance of passage, but which will appease key supporters.

Interest groups have also been criticized for sending out misleading information on the issues and running expensive "issue advocacy" attack ads against those who don't support their positions. They typically try to push through measures that benefit narrow rather than broader interests, and can make more difficult the compromise that is so essential to our system of government. There is no doubt that Members hear disproportionately from the well-off and the politically active groups—such as seniors, veterans, small business owners, and gun owners.

The power of special interests has long been recognized. More than 200 year ago, James Madison and the other founding fathers were particularly concerned about the power of "factions" in a democracy. And over the years, many congressional scandals have been related to powerful special interests and influence buying—from the Union

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