them, as if any of us are invited. Daily we are invited to places. I was invited to a synagogue. Of course, I went to speak to my constituents about issues important to them at a synagogue. I am a Catholic. Should I have not gone simply because it was not a house of worship in my own faith?

So I denounce this and ask people to be a little more civil and a little bit more respectful of the differences that we have as Americans on fundamental beliefs and principles. We should all agree that the nice thing about the United States of America is that we can worship in the way we so choose. We can go to the places of worship we recognize as those that lead our faith. But we do not cast aspersion nor do we criticize people.

So this commentary that somehow the Speaker is biased and the majority leader is biased is pure bunk. And, again, I say to my colleagues that if they are compassionate, if they are one of faith, if they are one that deeply believes Catholicism is an important religion, those who seem to be defending it today and saying that Republicans are anti-Catholic, I can clearly assure them, clearly assure them from the bottom of my heart, that that is not the premise of the Republican Party and it is certainly not that of our leadership.

## SENIOR CITIZENS' FREEDOM TO WORK ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand here with my fellow Republican, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW), who was instrumental in helping us get the Social Security earnings limit off today.

I introduced this bill 1 year ago, after hearing from many folks around the Dallas area and surrounding cities who are over 65 who want to continue to work. One of them is named Tony Santos. That is his picture right there. Tony is a part-time operator of a television camera now at Channel 4 in Dallas. He started there in 1951, when he was just 18 years old, and he retired in 1992. I first met him when I got back from being a POW in Vietnam; and he helped cover that return back to Dallas, which was really emotional for me.

Not just anyone can operate a television camera. It is a technical job and it requires specialized skills. So when folks take a vacation or get sick, Channel 4 finds itself in a bind and they call on Tony. Tony is over 65 and, after all, has a lot of experience, and he is happy to fill in. But the station needs him more than he is able to work due to the Social Security earnings penalty, which says that if he works more and earns more than $17,000 in this year he starts losing his Social Security benefits. He worked for and paid for those benefits, and it is not Washington's money. It is his money.

Tony's beautiful grandchildren, over here, are also shown: Daniel, Emily, Jacob, Jason, and Stephanie. She is just 8. Tony wants to be able to help them buy school books and get the best education possible, but he is penalized by the government just for working to support his grandchildren. Mr. Speaker, that is un-American. It is not right that Tony should not be able to work all he wants to, he is in great health, and still receive his Social Security benefits which he worked so hard for.

I wonder sometimes why we try to punish other Americans with the laws we pass. I want America to know that Tony Santos, here in this picture, heeds the words of Thomas Edison: ''There is no substitute for hard work.'' And I think the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) and I both have heard workers in America say that to us; that when they get to be 65, they are not necessarily ready to retire. But they have worked and put into the Social Security fund and they would like that little extra benefit that it provides.

This morning, believe it or not, the Democrats, some of them, said this bill only helps the rich. Well, I am sure it will come as news to Tony Santos that he is rich, because he is not. And why we always hear this class warfare created is beyond me. This bill provides relief for all hard-working seniors. And today we took the first step in making sure that Tony Santos and the other close to a million seniors just like him can work and be rewarded and not be penalized.

I was pleasantly surprised President Clinton has decided to endorse the bill, the Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act, to eliminate the Social Security earnings penalty. One day earlier the President's chief spokesman spoke out against it. The gentleman from Florida may remember that. But today at least I am thankful the President has changed his mind and decided to support the repeal of the Social Security earnings limit without any strings attached. And that is exactly what happened today on the floor of this House. We passed a clean bill with no strings attached. Just a bill to eliminate the Social Security earnings limit.

Our Republican leadership has always understood the importance of this issue, and they made it a top-10 item for this Congress. For the past three sessions I have introduced repealing the Social Security earnings penalty, but by no means was I the first sponsor of this legislation. My colleagues will remember Barry Goldwater and his efforts in 1964. Repealing the penalty on seniors was his initiative way back then, and I am elated to finally be standing here so close to the repeal of the penalty that we can finally give every American the freedom to work.

I must confess, though, that I have a feeling that the close to 65,000 seniors affected by this penalty in Texas, and the close to a million seniors affected nationwide will be more thrilled than I am to see it passed.

Would the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) care to comment on that? I know the gentleman has been the chairman of the Subcommittee on Social Security in the Committee on Ways and Means, and he has been an interested person in this issue. And not only this issue but, as my colleagues know, he has been a supporter of the Shaw-Archer Social Security reform bill, which I consider this step one toward addressing that problem.

Mr. SHAW. Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) first of all, for being so persistent. The fact that that bill is named H.R. 5 shows that that was one of the first filed here, and those first numbers are usually set aside by the leadership to show that these are bills that we really plan to move. The gentleman's having filed that over a year ago to have gotten that number I think really speaks very well of his foresight and his faith in this Congress, and his persistence, in that he filed several of these bills in the past.

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We had hoped that this H.R. 5 was going to be folded into the Archer-Shaw bill, which was going to be a much larger bill that would have saved Social Security for all time. But when you get into presidential election years, sometimes it is hard to really bring people together and pass good, common sense legislation, as the Archer-Shaw bill is; and it is one that would save Social Security for all time without privatizing Social Security.

This is one of the things that really concerns me more than anything else. And I was very concerned to hear the President's last proposal in which he was going to take the money coming into Social Security and play the stock market with it.

I think Americans do not want that. That is something that we on the Republican side are going to oppose. And my guess is that the majority of the Democrats will also oppose it.

But we do have to change the way that we view Social Security, but we can do it without increasing the FICA tax, no more burden upon the American worker; and we can do it, too, without in any way, any way, changing the benefits so that the cost-of-living increases stay in the Social Security system.

The example that my colleague has pointed out with his constituent reminds me of a call that came into our office. A young lady who works in the office, Elizabeth Richardson, who received the call just in the last day or two. It was someone calling from California. It was not from a constituent. I think it was San Diego or somewhere out on the West Coast. The person wanted an explanation of what it was

that we were doing. And she explained to him that we were removing that onerous tax from seniors that takes a dollar out of every $3 of benefits that they receive should they go over the earnings limit.

And he paused for a moment, and she heard a little silence; and after she explained it all to him, he said, Would you go give the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) a big hug.

Well, we have a policy in my office against young ladies giving the boss a big hug. However, I can say that this shows the gratitude that I think so many of those seniors out there are going to really feel when they really understand what we have done.

This is not something that we are delaying until next year. This earnings penalty will be done away with as of January 1, 2000. That is 2 months ago. So the monies that these people have already lost will be given back to them. And it is the right thing to do.

That is why we had every Member of this House step up and put their card in the electronic device that we vote on and put their vote up on the scoreboard, which is right here above the press gallery, and I think it shows the widespread support that this has.

A lot of people have wondered, how did this possibly get into the Social Security law in the first place. Well, very simply put, the Social Security bill was written during the Great Depression back in the 1930s; and at that time it was the feeling of the Congress, and I believe probably of Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the time, that the older workers should move aside to make room for the younger workers. But remember, we had huge unemployment of 25 percent.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me add if I might what Roosevelt did in that first bill. He created a Social Security program; and if they worked, they could not have any Social Security. And then it kind of reformed throughout the years, and we finally got the penalty up.

I see the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) here, too, who is also on the Committee on Ways and Means, that maybe can help us.

But, in 1935, seniors could not receive any benefits if they worked. And then, believe it or not, it was modified 4 years later, in 1939, so that if they earned up to $14.99 a month, they did not have to pay a penalty. Can you believe that?

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I do believe it. But, you know, back then it might have made a little bit of sense when you had unemployment of about 25 percent, people desperately needed jobs.

Now we have the other problem. We need more workers in this country. The economy is doing good, and we need more workers. And we particularly need the skills of our seniors. We are losing so much talent.

The gentleman from the State of Florida (Mr. FOLEY) and I have I think it is 81,000 seniors that are going to be directly affected by this. Nationwide it is, as my colleague said, just under a million. It is a little over 800,000 of the seniors that are going to be affected.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is close to 1.1 million they are saying now according to the 1999 Census Bureau.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, this is just the right thing to do. Now, people have wondered why in the world Congress did not do it earlier. Well, it simply means that that money was being spent by the Congress to run the Government, so they were taking it away from our seniors, taking their pension away, so they could spend the money on other things. That was wrong. It was wrong then. It is wrong now.

That is why we have had this great support and the support from the White House that I am pleased to see that we are getting at this point. The President said he did not want to reform Social Security on a piecemeal basis. But I think when he took a good look at this, he said, this is one that I have got to support. It is a great initiative, and I am so pleased the result we have had here in the House.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask the gentleman, what is this going to cost?

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, over the long-run, it does not cost us anything.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, and that is great. Absolutely no cost, according to the actuaries, to the Social Security Trust Fund. So we are not invading the Social Security Trust fund at all.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, let me explain that for a moment. Because that sounds impossible, but it is.

What happens when that money is taken away from the seniors in the form of an earnings penalty, it is given back to them very slowly after their 70th birthday, so that their benefits actually increase a little bit in order for them to get some of that money back. And if they live long enough, they get it all back.

But the problem with that is that the Government is using their money which they earned, which they are entitled to at the retirement age, which the Congress said is 65 and that is what they are entitled to. So it is wrong, even though they get it back over a long period of time.

In the long run, it does not cost anything. In the short run, it does cost something and it is going to cost something. The money is there now. We have walled it off to save Social Security. We have walled it off in the lockbox, which I think most of the Members support. And it certainly passed the House of Representatives with good support from the Democrats as well, but a Republican idea in which we walled it off.

We do not spend the Social Security surplus on governmental expense. It is wrong, wrong, wrong.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thought it was amazing that one of the ladies that testified before our committee, and I do not think the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) heard it, or maybe he did, it was the full committee, because she said, they are stealing that from me. That is my Social Security earnings that I am supposed to be receiving, and you are taking it away from me. You are stealing it from me. And guess what, you get it back later, but not with interest.

So the Government is kind of putting it to you when you have a penalty like that.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleague, what does he think?

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) and, of course, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) for their comments.

I was delighted to see on this House floor today a unanimous vote for the measure that he introduced in our committee. It is a beautiful thing that people are finally recognized. At least in America, seniors are recognized for the value that they bring to our communities.

It is interesting to think about back in Social Security's origination, of course, the longevity tables were much different; and I can understand maybe why initially they thought there may be a penalty because people were not expected to live past 68 or 72 years of age. And now they are longer, and they are more productive and healthier.

One of the most important things I want to strongly note is that the seniors are the most important life link not only to the past but to the future. We can learn so much. Many people in my generation and below my generation, particularly all these new Internet people and Internet-challenged children, if you will, they are looking to the 21st century as the new unique and opportunistic place in time; and they are forgetting the wonderful gains made by those who are now over 65 and those who have brought so much insight and wisdom to our communities.

I mentioned today on the House floor that my father retired at the age of 77 from the Palm Beach County school system. He continued to work. And, of course, he had a penalty back when he worked between 65 and 70. And I think that was patently unfair. He worked from his early youth, served in the Marines, served in World War II, came home to raise a family, became a proud member of the community, and chose a profession that he deeply loved. He could have made money in the private sector and done some things, I am certain. He is very talented and smart. But he chose to instill the knowledge he had with our children in the school system.

He was a coach, much like the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), the Speaker of the House, back in his days of high school. He then decided after 65 that he wanted to stay vigorous and involved in helping change children's lives. So he did. And lo and

behold, our Government slapped a penalty on his Social Security income.

As the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) said clearly at one of our conferences, he said, under any other circumstances, this would be discriminatory; there would be an age discrimination suit filed.

And so I applaud the leadership. I applaud certainly both the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT). I know they have worked on it for years and years. But I particularly applaud the two of my colleagues, because they really spearheaded the initiative. They brought it to fruition.

More importantly for the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) and I, who represent Florida, I am the seventh oldest, if you will, Medicare-eligible district in America. And I know that this is fabulous news for our citizens. We have adjoining districts, so we have so many similar, if you will, constituents who want to be a part of the great economy, who want to be part of the dynamics that are now evolving; and they want to be feeling like they are appreciated.

But somehow that light goes out in the Federal Government at the age of 65. No, no. Why do they not go sit down, go rest, go lounge around somewhere, because they are no longer valuable, they are no longer needed.

What the Archer-Shaw bill does today is say to senior citizens 65 to 70, not only are you needed, you are wanted. We want you as part of our country. We want you as part of our economy. And we want you to not only have your Social Security money that you paid for and that you earned, but we want to give you the chance to make more money in your pockets to safeguard your financial security.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, and guess what? They pay taxes on that money, too.

This is a letter from AARP, which has given their support to this project, which says, ''Older workers have the skills, expertise, and enthusiasm that employers value.'' They support reducing or eliminating this penalty totally, and that is what we have done.

As the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) said, it is a good first step toward getting Social Security reform totally. At least we are looking at it. As chairman of the committee, my colleague is going to have hearings to talk to this issue and others that have come up during the debate.

I see we are joined by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA).

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, can I ask one question if the gentleman would continue to yield.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) has been in Congress since 1980. And I am not certain of the start of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON).

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, 1991.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask the gentleman, why was this not considered before? Why was this issue not brought to the forefront?

It seems like, with 422 votes, this is a child looking for adoption and it found it today. But what was wrong in all those years?

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is the Democrats controlled the Congress for such a long time over 40 years, and they did not brother to introduce this bill or make it go. And now they realize that this is an important issue, and they are with us on it for a change. That is good. I think it is time for a little bit of partisanship.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I say to the gentleman, I think it is also important to note that we have walled off Social Security with the lockbox. That money is out there and held sacred. It goes to pay down the debt if it is not being used to reform Social Security or Medicare. It is money that has been paid in by workers for their retirement years. We quit spending it.

The direct answer to the question of why was it not done before: in the old days, the Congress spent that money. They spent it as if it were unencumbered tax dollars. They spent it on all kind of problems. In fact, they spent even more than that, and that is what ran up the national debt. That is why we owe so much money.

But things are changed around here. We are living within our means. We are paying done the national debt. We are reforming Social Security. We are not taking Americans' pensions away. We are allowing the older American workers to keep what they have earned.

Social security is an earned right of the American people. It is that simple. That is black letter law. And it is not for any Congress to take away any of that or compromise any of those benefits. It is a contract, a sacred contract, between the Government and the people of this country, the American workers. And this is what has to be preserved.

You know what I was thinking when I was sitting here managing a portion of this bill today, I sort of felt the spirit of Claude Pepper coming into this area. A portion of my district down in Miami-Dade County was in Claude Pepper's. He would have been very proud of this Congress today and what we have been able to accomplish. Because he was Mr. Social Security when he was there, and I think we are taking his place as Mr. Social Security.

Our job is to protect the sacred, contractual right of our American workers.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, did my colleagues know that by 2030, one-fifth of the entire population will be age 65 or older?

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According to a Manpower Inc. study released this week, nearly one in three U.S. companies will hire more workers in the upcoming second quarter, of this year. Tight labor conditions are going to continue to persist and demand for workers is at the highest level in 20 years. Those seniors that we have taken the earnings limit off of now have an incentive to go back to work, and I think that these companies will hire them.

Mr. SHAW. We need them. It is not only what they are entitled to. We need them in the workforce. There is so much talent that we have lost. Go into the hospitals today, go down the corridors, see the age of the nurses that are about to retire. When the baby boomers come through and when they start using the hospitals more, who is going to be there to take care of them? We have a shortage of nurses in this country.

The school teachers, some of the greatest teachers that we have are age 65 and older. We need to keep them in the workplace to train our kids. On a construction job, the supervisors are older people and they are there to train the apprentice, the young people coming in. We need to pass these skills down. It is wrong when people are living longer, enjoying life more, want to work or even have to work that we come back and penalize them. That is just so wrong. It is so wrong.

We talked earlier about class warfare. What about this one? For so long, if you were wealthy, if you had stocks and bonds, if you had real estate, if you had income that was not what we call earned income, that is stuff that you actually earn by working, you were not penalized. But if you were a working person, whether you had to work or just wanted to work, you were penalized. What kind of class warfare is that? We are getting rid of that. We are getting rid of that. It is an earned penalty whether you are living off of dividends, interest or living off of the sweat of your brow, you are not going to be penalized anymore once you pass retirement age and go on to Social Security.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. That was a good statement. I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA).

Mr. HOEKSTRA. First I would like to express my appreciation to my colleagues for moving that bill through the committee, moving it to the House floor and being able to come out on the floor of the House and getting unanimous support.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. I have never seen a faster subcommittee than this guy ran. It was bang, bang and it was out, with a unanimous vote.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. A unanimous vote, bipartisan, all the right characteristics. I think you are going after one of the most unfair things in the tax code. You have identified that. I did nine town meetings last week. In my first town meeting, it is the exact issue that came up.

There was a gentleman who had retired from teaching, had been substitute teaching and said, I reached the threshold. The school wanted to keep

me in the classroom. I wanted to stay in the classroom. It is one of my rural communities, Fremont, Michigan. He said I wanted to stay in the classroom but I looked at it and it made no sense for me to stay in the classroom, in effect, it would almost cost me money for the privilege of being in the classroom to teach those kids.

That gentleman now is going to be able to come back and he will be able to do it this year. He will be able to call up that school district and say, I can teach as much as you now want me to teach this year and as much as I am available to teach because the other nice thing about this bill is that, as you said in your closing statement today on the floor, the bill goes into effect on January 1, not of 2001 but of 2000, correct?

Mr. SHAW. That is correct.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. When this bill gets signed by the President, it will in effect be retroactive, a retroactive tax cut for workers for this year. It fits in perfectly. It was 2 weeks ago that we had a hearing in my subcommittee about the shortage of workers that we are facing. So whether it is the school teacher and qualified teachers in Fremont, Michigan or whether it is other industries around the country today, we know that there is a shortage of workers and that seniors have so much to add in terms of their skills and their expertise to filling that need that it is not only the fair thing to do, it is the right thing to do.

We need these workers if they want to. We need them to stay in the workforce. The least we could do is make the tax code neutral to that decision rather than penalizing them for staying in the workforce, at least now as they consider whether they are going to work or whether they are going to enjoy their retirement, they do not have to take a look at the tax code and see, now, what does the tax code want me to do and how many hours does it want me?

What a ridiculous process to go through. It is the fair thing to do; it is the right thing to do. Again I think as the chairman pointed out, when you take a look at what we are doing with Social Security, the lockbox this past year, not spending one dollar of the Social Security surplus and dedicating that all to paying down the debt, we are doing a number of things that are starting to shore up and save Social Security so that we can address the next issue which the chairman is also working on with a great passion which is doing the fundamental reforms to ensure that this program will not only be there for the seniors of today but for the baby boomers of tomorrow and for our kids.

So we really are taking a step by step approach. I again appreciate the work that the chairman is doing there and also appreciate the chairman's support for one little thing, we call it the worker right to know. Again it is an issue of the American people deserve to know how much money we are putting into Social Security and one of the things that is kind of a little bit of misinformation out there is all the workers get their W–2 at the end of the year and they see the portion that they have paid in and it is a pretty good size number, it is 6.5 percent of what they have made, they say, wow, that is my Social Security contribution. That is the money that was sent to Washington for me.

What they do not recognize and what they do not know is that for every dollar that they paid in, their employer was forced to match that, and so really it is 13 percent of their income is coming here for Social Security, supposedly with their name on it.

Mr. SHAW. I think that is something that people sort of miss, that kind of goes over their head, because Social Security, both the employer and the employee's portion of it is part of the compensation of the American worker, so they are paying in, I think it is 12.4 percent of their wages is going into the Social Security Administration. That is plenty high. When you start thinking about it, particularly for low-wage people, we can save Social Security without in any way raising that tax, and it would be wrong to raise that tax. We do not need to tax American workers one dime more and we can save Social Security just by getting busy and doing it.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Most people do not realize that that tax was 2 percent to start with. It is up to 13 percent now. It has been raised eight times since 1939. That is atrocious. You are absolutely right that we should never ever increase that. In fact, we ought to start decreasing it. Most of the options show the way to do that.

Mr. SHAW. Actually under the Archer-Shaw bill which you pointed to earlier, it would be many years from now, but the future Congress could many years from now actually reduce that tax substantially and still keep Social Security fully funded and paying out the benefits for all times.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Our seniors are paying a penalty, a severe penalty today, where they are paying a 33 percent tax really on their earnings. Some of them because of the situation are as high as 80 percent tax bracket, marginal tax bracket. So they are really getting penalized. I think it is a credit to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER) that we sent the President a clean bill, and I have to tell you that we got a clean bill out of the House.

You will admit that. There is nothing else on it. It is an elimination of the Social Security earnings penalty. He has promised to sign that bill if it reaches his desk without other provisions. However, I am a little worried about the Senate. Some of the Senate Democrats are claiming that they would like to offer amendments to end the penalty on seniors. Although we have bipartisan support, some Democratic obstructionists want to alter the core objectives.

I think we should all plead with our friends across America to write their Senators and tell them we do not need an amendment to this Freedom to Work Act because we want the President to sign it, and he said he would if it comes out clean. I am hopeful, I think it is Senator ASHCROFT that has submitted the bill over there and Senator LOTT says that they are going to push for expeditious passage. I look forward to a big signing with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) of the total bill when it is done. Your mention that it will take effect retroactively is exactly correct, January 1, this year.

Mr. SHAW. I am sure that we will all be in the Rose Garden smiling together with the President and be there when he signs it. I am certainly looking forward to that day.

I again want to congratulate you and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON), your original cosponsor in carrying this through. I want to congratulate the entire House on the decorum we had today. There was a little fringe politics, a little boxing going in. I felt a couple of jabs coming from the other side but on the whole the debate was of the highest caliber I have ever seen, just like a fresh air blowing through this institution. I made note during the debate that people tuning in and looking at it would think they were looking at another parliamentary body somewhere else and not here in Washington at the United States Congress. This was certainly one of the finest days that I have seen. My congratulations to you.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. It is a rare day in Washington.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Again I would like to express my appreciation to my two colleagues for sponsoring it and moving this bill forward. I think the reason we had such a great debate on the floor today is that Members on both sides of the aisle recognized that it was the right thing to do.

The end result is we have provided seniors the opportunity to continue doing what many of them want to do, which is to continue working because they love their jobs and in many cases they are in professions where they can mentor, train, and teach young people. This provides a wonderful avenue to keep those skills and those resources in the workplace. Congratulations to my colleague from Texas for spearheading this effort and getting it done. Now we will watch as we see what we can do to move it over to the other body.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. I appreciate the support of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA). I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. There are a lot of parents of this bill. The gentleman from Texas is one of those parents. This is something that has been

in the works with bills introduced for the last 15 or 16 years trying to correct an injustice.

It is interesting it has taken us this long. Then there is a unanimous vote to move ahead. When it is an injustice and it is moving ahead with fairness, then I think there is a general attitude in this Chamber when it is reasonable, when it is fair, when it is getting rid of something that is unjust, then it is very good.

I would just say there is another provision that I hope we can move ahead with in terms of fairness, in terms of encouraging individuals to work, and, that is, to increase benefits for individuals that, at age 65, decide to delay taking those Social Security benefits. And so if they wait a year, they should end up with more benefits. It is called delayed retirement credit. A provision of this bill that would make an 8 percent increase in benefits for every year was an amendment that I hoped to incorporate in this bill someplace along the line.

I talked to the White House, the President has agreed to it, the Democrats and Republicans have agreed to it. The actuaries at the Social Security Administration have suggested that it does not cost money because actually it might save money encouraging individuals that want to delay taking Social Security to have an increased benefit later on, to make it actuarially sound. Another point that I think is important in this issue is that widows eventually would have the higher benefit when they become widows. This kind of action, the kind of piecemeal approach of sending one bill at a time to the President I think is the right policy decision, so you can measure the merits, the pros and cons of each policy. Again my congratulations and thanks to the gentleman from Texas for having this hour.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. I appreciate those comments. Do you want to tell people what the percentage is right now, because you are not raising it very much.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Right now under the legislation as we amended it in 1983, it started at 2 percent per year increase after age 65, then it went to 4. This year it is going to 6 percent. The amendment that I have proposed would move it up to 8 percent, which is the actuarially sound amount. If you are going to live an average life span, then it is reasonable if you put off taking benefits and continue working, continuing paying the FICA tax to support Social Security, it ends up ultimately being somewhat of an advantage and so moving that 8 percent per year up until you are age 70 is a reasonable step to take.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. But what you are saying, they will get their money back where they are not now.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Especially if you exercise and you live longer than the average, then you of course are going to get more than your money back. So everybody should exercise, all seniors should contribute to the workforce and contribute their talents, now they can do it under this legislation.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. We can all live to be 100 and earn our Social Security benefits, right?

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. It is so interesting. I chaired the Social Security task force. The futurists for health care are suggesting that within 25 years, anybody that wants to live to be 100 years old would have that option.

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Within 35 to 40 years, anybody that wants to live to be 120 years old will have that option. This is just another signal that everybody, especially younger people, better save now, so save and invest now, because who knows what medical technology is going to do.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Well, I thank the gentleman for joining us today. I would just like to say that I want to repeat that this legislation will take effect retroactively, from January 1 of this year, which is important to a lot of seniors. That means you can go to work right now.

Republicans agree, we have got to set in motion steps to reform Social Security overall. I think the gentleman is involved in some issues like that. I can think of no better way than by repealing the Social Security earnings limit as a start.

I always tell people, you know, I fought in two wars, Korea and Vietnam, for freedom; and I think that that entitles our seniors the freedom to earn the savings they have been putting away and paying for during their years of employment, year after year.

I think Nick probably agrees with me, America's seniors need, want, and deserve a penalty elimination. No more penalties. This is a day of freedom. I salute the gentleman and all America. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Sam, everybody salutes you. You are a great American and a great veteran.

## ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUYKENDALL). The Chair reminds all Members that it is not in order in debate to refer to other Members by their first names.

## A CRISIS IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, today was a historic day; and I join my colleagues on the other side in celebrating the passage of the Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act. It is a great achievement. We all should be quite proud of it. I congratulate my colleagues. It was a bipartisan achievement, and we should all celebrate it and also take the next step. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle said we should take steps to reduce the Social Security tax as soon as possible, so I hope that that is going to be somewhere in the proposed budget proposals and appropriations proposals, that we will begin to take back, roll back, the increase in the payroll taxes.

The payroll taxes represent the largest increases in taxes over the last 2 decades. So we heard our colleagues on the Republican side say they think it ought to be rolled back. We want to endorse that wholeheartedly. Let us roll back the payroll tax and lower the taxes that people pay for Social Security.

The immortal words of Thomas Jefferson kept ringing in my ears as I listened to the debate today, ''life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,'' the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

In affirming the fact that we want to take care of our senior citizens, we say we want to have more life, longer life, and we are all in favor of that. Life is sacred; and all over the world I think there is no ideology, no political philosophy at this point and no religion that condones irreverence for life.

Reverence for life exists everywhere. No political party anywhere in the world openly says that some people should be destroyed and others should be kept in existence anymore. Reverence for life is there. We hope that the reverence for life, although there might be a debate about when life begins, how early it begins, whether there is life as we know it in the womb, or afterwards, all of those debates are debates where we respect each other's opinions and ought to work that out. But certainly once a human being is here, reverence for that life ought to exist.

As we practice law enforcement, as we practice law enforcement we must all bear that in mind, that no one can be careless about another human being's life.

I am going to be on the floor discussing the Congressional Black Caucus alternative budget. I have said before that everything that we do in this Congress relates to the budget, and certainly the Social Security and the rollback of taxes is one item that we shall propose in our Congressional Black Caucus alternative budget. We will be dealing with many other subjects, education, housing, health, health care, economic development, livable communities, foreign aid, welfare, low-income assistance, juvenile justice and law enforcement.

This last item, juvenile justice and law enforcement, was placed in the top priorities of the Congressional Black Caucus alternative budget preparation process by the gentlewoman from