

100th anniversary of the Fraternal Order of Eagles in Scranton as well as their dedication to serving the community, and I wish them all the best.

POSTAL CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT SYSTEM FUNDING REFORM ACT OF 2003

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, as the Ranking member of the House Committee on Government Reform, I join Chairman TOM DAVIS, Representative JOHN MCHUGH and Subcommittee Ranking member, Representative DANNY K. DAVIS, in introducing the "Postal Civil Service Retirement System Funding Reform Act of 2003."

The legislation we introduced today corrects the calculation of the Postal Service's contributions to its pension fund and provides immediate and needed financial relief to the Postal Service. It allows the Postal Service to reduce its debt and hold off on rate increases until at least 2006. It does this by crediting the Postal Service for the real value of contributions it made in the past and changing how contributions will be computed in the future.

This legislation is being introduced quickly because, without it, the Postal Service faces an increasing financial crisis. The Postal Service has suggested that, in the absence of such a change, a rate increase will be necessary within a year. While there is a need for action to be taken quickly, the issue requires more measured consideration than we are able to give it in this short time. That is why the bill includes a mechanism for Congress to revisit this issue. The bill requires the Postal Service to report on the ways in which the savings can best be used so that Congress can make an informed decision on such use. Given the many serious concerns about the Postal Service's future obligations, our legislation is only the first step in addressing much larger problems.

The legislation that we introduced today, however, is not perfect and we are still working on areas of disagreement. For instance, the bill requires the Postal Service to pay the pension costs associated with military service both before and after the change from the old Post Office Department to the new Postal Service. I do not believe this is a good idea; I am not convinced that the Postal Service, which is supposed to run like a private business, should be paying the costs of military service for employees in the Civil Service Retirement System. I am confident we will continue to be able to work together to resolve this important issue.

In closing, I want to commend Chairman DAVIS, Rep. MCHUGH, and Rep. DANNY DAVIS for their efforts in addressing this problem and for working in a bipartisan manner. The Postal Service faces many challenges and I look forward to working together on strengthening our nation's Postal Service.

FUEL CELL RESEARCH

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about promising technology that could help protect our environment and safeguard our national security. Given time and support, research into hydrogen-powered fuel cells could yield a reliable, clean source of power and curtail our dependence on foreign oil.

By chemically combining oxygen and hydrogen, fuel cells generate electricity up to three times more efficiently than any internal combustion engine. Hydrogen has the highest energy content of any known fuel, and hydrogen-powered fuel cells run almost silently while emitting no pollutants. An automobile powered by fuel cells would produce only water as waste. Furthermore, hydrogen could be used for far more than transportation. Hydrogen fuel cells could be used to power homes and offices, and even to replace batteries for computers, cell phones, and other appliances.

Fuel cells could not only serve as a clean and efficient energy source, but also as a way to limit our reliance on foreign oil. If we don't concentrate on viable alternatives to now, the United States is expected to import 68 percent of the oil it consumes by 2025. Should hydrogen-powered fuel cells fulfill their promise, we could drastically reduce that figure and ensure our independence in a way that keeps our environment protected.

Despite the great potential of this technology, there are significant obstacles to overcome. Usable hydrogen remains expensive to produce and difficult to store effectively. At present fuel cells can cost up to ten times more than conventional engines. There is important work to do in this field, and I am proud to say that there are over a dozen organizations in my home state of Texas hard at work on solutions. Often Texas is thought of as oil country, but our state has the opportunity to play a vital role in the development of viable alternatives.

As a ranking member of the Science Committee, I am very interested in any technology that could help keep our environment cleaner and our people more secure. I appreciate the opportunity to participate and look forward to ongoing involvement in this promising avenue of research.

INTRODUCTION OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROTECTION ACT OF 2003

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Social Security Protection Act of 2003 to provide the Social Security Administration with the additional tools they need to fight activities that drain resources from Social Security and undermine the financial security of beneficiaries.

Many Social Security and Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries have individuals or

organizations called "representative payees" appointed by the Social Security Administration to help manage their financial affairs when they are not capable. At present nearly 8 million beneficiaries entrust their financial arrangements to 'rep payees'. Representative payees safeguard income and make sure expenditures are made for the beneficiary's good. While most are conscientious and honest, some are not.

Despite current precautions, abuse continues. For example, the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General investigated one case in which an organization serving as representative payee to several hundred beneficiaries inappropriately charged those beneficiaries over \$100,000 in fees, which were paid for almost entirely using their benefits. In addition, this representative payee continued to receive and accept beneficiaries' checks without notifying the SSA when beneficiaries left the organization's care or were missing.

The Inspector General reported that between January 1997 and December 1999, Social Security identified over 2,400 representative payees who misused approximately \$12 million in benefits entrusted to their management. This bill raises the standards for persons and organizations serving as representative payees and imposes stricter regulation and monetary penalties on those who mismanage benefits entrusted to their care.

This bill also picks up where previous legislation ended in stopping benefit payments to those who have committed crimes. In 1996, Congress passed provisions denying Supplemental Security Income benefits to persons fleeing to avoid prosecution or confinement. However, these fugitive felons can still receive Social Security benefits, and the Congressional Budget Office estimates we will pay over \$500 million to them over the next 10 years directly out of the Social Security trust funds. This is not right, and this legislation denies the money to those fleeing justice.

My legislation also provides tools to further safeguard Social Security programs, help shield Social Security employees from harm while conducting their duties, expand the Inspector General's ability to stop perpetrators of fraud through new civil monetary penalties, and prevent persons from misrepresenting themselves as they provide Social Security-related services.

My legislation not only prevents fraud and protects the Social Security programs, it also helps those who are legitimately seeking to receive benefits by improving the attorney fee withholding process. This bill caps the current attorney fee assessment and extends fee withholding to Supplemental Security Income claims, enabling more individuals with disabilities to receive needed help navigating a complex application process for benefits.

And finally, this legislation continues the great work of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act, helping individuals with disabilities to return to work and independence when they are able.

Protecting Social Security programs is a key responsibility of the agency and of Congress. Taxpayers must be confident that their hard-earned payroll dollars are being spent accurately and wisely, and in the best interest of beneficiaries. That is why the 107th Congress's version of this bill, the Social Security Program Protection Act of 2002 (H.R.