for U.S. service personnel are “the worst in the Department of Defense.”

My bill provides members of the U.S. armed forces, the benefit of a tax exclusion to help offset the high cost of living and the poor quality of life while serving in South Korea and applies to personnel who execute permanent change of station orders or orders for temporary duty exceeding 30 days. Service members will be provided with an immediate boost in their quality of life as they keep more of the money they earn.

Why should we provide this benefit to our soldiers in Korea?

An unusual hardship of family separation for more than a year is borne by 94 percent of the 37,000 plus personnel who serve in Korea. Conditions are so poor for personnel that one third of those authorized to bring family members choose voluntary family separation before subjecting their families to the conditions on the peninsula.

Seoul is the third most expensive city in the world to live according to a recent United Nations survey. Despite this, our service men and women receive no cost of living allowance, COLA, for being stationed there. That means they receive no additional compensation to offset higher costs in Korea. Working and living facilities in Korea, as well as living conditions for our service personnel are sub-standard by any measure.

Even the living quarters on post are smaller than typical military installations, and all our soldiers must live in an environmentally degraded region. Beyond cost and comfort, let’s not forget that these soldiers live under the threat of an unpredictable North Korea.

It’s no wonder then that those who are allowed to bring their families to Korea rarely do so and that those who are given the opportunity to command forces in Korea decline at a rate five times the normal Army wide rate.

There are many uncertainties about the future of our forces abroad as we re-examine our overseas basing and force structure. Unfortunately, discussion of overseas re-alignment may lead to further neglect of the critical quality of life and infrastructure requirements of our forces in Korea.

As we work to rectify the inequities in pay/benefits for those stationed in Korea, I believe it is so important to give our soldiers there an extra boost now. The United States Forces Korea Quality of Life Act won’t fix all the hardships that our service members face in Korea, but it will give them a chance to make their life there a little better and their time there more agreeable.

I encourage all my colleagues to join me in giving our soldiers in Korea the additional assistance they need and deserve.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JO ANN DAVIS
OF VIRGINIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mrs. Jo Ann Davis of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I was inadvertently detained in the Senate while attending to duties associated with my role as Chairwoman of the Civil Service Subcommittee. If I had been present, I would have voted “yes” to H.R. 743, the Social Security Protection Act of 2003.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 743 makes necessary changes to existing Social Security law to ensure the protection of recipients and the Social Security system. The provisions included in this bill aim to promote the accountability of the Social Security program by closing the present government pension offset (GPO) loophole. I feel that the clarifying corrections addressed in this bill will result in the improvement of the Social Security program.
The bill would also require financial institutions to take steps to identify and block gambling-related transactions that are transmitted through their payment systems. The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC), the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), the Office of Thrift Supervision (OTS), and the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) would enforce the provisions of H.R. 21 as they apply to financial institutions.

CBO estimates that implementing this legislation would result in no significant cost to the federal government. The bill could affect direct spending and revenues, but CBO estimates that any impact on direct spending and revenues would not be significant.

H.R. 21 would create a new intergovernmental mandate as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments. The bill would impose a private-sector mandate, but CBO estimates that the direct costs of the mandate would fall below the annual threshold established in UMRA ($117 million in 2003, adjusted annually for inflation) in any of the next five years.

Estimated cost to the Federal Government: CBO estimates that the government would incur no significant costs under H.R. 21. CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 21 would increase administrative costs of the Department of Justice, but any such costs would be negligible. The bill also would have a small effect on the operating costs of the FDIC and the Federal Reserve System.

Finally, the bill would have a negligible effect on the collection and spending of criminal penalties.

Basis of estimate:
The bill would have only minor budgetary effects, as described below:

Spending subject to appropriation:

Because H.R. 21 would establish new federal crimes relating to Internet gambling, the federal government would be able to pursue cases that it otherwise would not be able to prosecute. CBO expects, however, that most cases would be pursued under existing state laws. Therefore, we estimate that any increase in federal costs for law enforcement, investigations, or prison operations would not be significant. Any such additional costs would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

H.R. 21 would require the Department of the Treasury to submit an annual report on deliberations with other countries on issues related to Internet gambling. CBO estimates that preparing and completing the report would cost less than $100,000 a year, subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Direct spending and revenues:
The NCUA, the OTS, and the OCC charge fees for administrative costs; therefore, any additional spending by those agencies to implement the bill would have no net budgetary effect. That is not the case with the FDIC, however, which uses deposit insurance premiums paid by banks to cover the expenses it incurs to supervise state-chartered institutions. (Under current law, CBO estimates that the fees charged by the OCC, the OTS, and the FDIC by less than $500,000 a year over the 2002-2006 period.)

Budgetary effects on the Federal Reserve are recorded as changes in revenues (governmental receipts). Based on information from the Federal Reserve, CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 21 would decrease such revenues by less than $500,000 a year.

Because those prosecuted and convicted under the bill would be subject to criminal fines, the federal government might collect additional fines if the bill is enacted. Collections of such fines are recorded in the budget as governmental receipts (i.e., revenues), which are deposited in the Crime Victims Fund and spent in subsequent years. Any additional collections are likely to be negligible because of the number of cases involved. Because any increase in direct spending would equal the amount of fines collected (with a lag of one year or more), the additional direct spending also would be negligible.

Estimated impact on state and local governments:

Although H.R. 21 would prohibit gambling businesses from accepting credit card payments and other bank instruments from gamblers who bet illegally over the Internet, the bill would not create a new mandate relative to current law. Under current federal and state law, gambling businesses are generally prohibited from accepting bets or wagers over the Internet. Thus, H.R. 21 would not contain a new mandate relative to current law and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

Estimated impact on the private sector:

H.R. 21 would impose a new federal mandate on the private sector. The bill would require designated payment systems to establish policies and procedures designed to identify and prevent transactions in connection with unlawful Internet gambling. Designated payment systems include the bill to include any system utilized by businesses such as creditors, credit card issuers, or financial institutions to effect a credit transaction, an electronic fund transfer, or other transfer of funds. Information provided by representatives of the financial services industry indicates that such transactions can currently be identified through the use of codes. Most financial institutions are currently able to identify and block restricted transactions by using the coding system. Thus, CBO estimates that the costs to comply with the mandate would be small. There also could be direct savings to those entities subject to the mandate as the bill limits their liability arising from their compliance with the requirement. CBO estimates that the total direct costs for private-sector mandates in this bill would fall well below the annual threshold ($117 million in 2003, adjusted annually for inflation) established in UMRA.

Although section 3 would prohibit gambling businesses from accepting credit card payments and other bank instruments from gamblers who bet illegally over the Internet, provisions would not create a new private-sector mandate under UMRA. Under current federal and state law, gambling businesses are generally prohibited from accepting bets or wagers over the Internet. Thus, those provisions do not contain a new mandate relative to current law.

Previous estimate: The cost estimate for H.R. 21 transmitted to the House Committee on Financial Services on March 27, 2003, did not identify or describe the private-sector mandate that would be imposed by the bill. This cost estimate was based on previous estimates. The estimate of the bill’s impact on the federal budget and on state and local governments is unchanged.

Estimated impact on federal spending:

Ken J. Johnson and Mark Hadley, federal revenues: Mark Booth; impact on state, local, and tribal governments: Victoria Heald Hall; impact on the private sector: Cecil McPherson.

Estimate approved by: Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

BOUNDARY COUNTY DISTRICT LIBRARY IN BONNERS FERRY, ID

HON. C.L. ♥︎BUTCH♥︎ OTTER OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mr. OTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of the House the distinguished accomplishments of the Boundary County District Library in Bonners Ferry, ID. Under the leadership of Director Sandy Ashworth, the Boundary County District Library received the 2002 National Award for Library Services. The Institute of Museum and Library Services and First Lady Laura Bush bestowed this well-deserved honor upon the library at a White House ceremony.

Established in 1956, the Boundary County District Library was the first countywide library district in the State of Idaho. The library is dedicated to using innovative collaborations in raising both the quality and quantity of library resources while helping to overcome the rural isolation of Boundary County’s residents.

The Boundary County District Library is a model for the community and the State of Idaho, as well as for other libraries trying to meet increasing demand for services with less money. The library and the community work together toward the common goals of providing excellent service and improving the quality of life in northern Idaho.

Mr. Speaker, I was honored to nominate the Boundary County District Library for this special award. Furthermore, I am very proud of the independent nature of Boundary County, ID, and citizens, whose hard work and sense of community should serve as an inspiration to us all. I wish to convey a special thanks to the Boundary County District Library for leading that effort.

INTRODUCTION OF THE SCHIP WEB-BASED ENROLLMENT ACT OF 2003

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce the introduction of a piece of legislation that will provide an e-government solution to the complicated process of signing kids up for health insurance, the SCHIP Web-Based Enrollment Act of 2003. This bill provides a simple, targeted approach to expanding access to children’s health care by giving States the flexibility they need to implement web-based enrollment programs for SCHIP.

The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 established the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), a program that allows States to cover uninsured children in families with incomes that are above Medicaid eligibility levels. Like Medicaid, SCHIP is a Federal-State matching program, but spending...