

While the bill does make some effort to reduce "cherry picking" the NAIC believes the provisions would be inadequate.

Commissioner Praeger goes on to say:

This self-selection is extremely disruptive to the marketplace and will create a very unstable situation in an already fragile small group market, likely reducing the number of insurers willing to offer coverage in the general market. Insurance is of little use unless the costs of caring for the relatively few can be distributed among the many who are healthy.

AHPs would exempt health insurers from State rules that are needed to effectively govern health insurance companies. AHPs would also be exempt from State solvency laws and oversight and subject to inadequate standards. The American Academy of Actuaries has said that the solvency standards for AHPs contained in H.R. 660 are inadequate, and Commissioner Praeger's testimony underscores these concerns. Her testimony states that the solvency standards under the bill are "woefully inadequate" and goes on to predict "If a nationwide AHP were offered to a large association, a capital surplus of only \$2 million would result in disaster." Supporters of H.R. 660 claim that the Department of Labor has sufficient resources to oversee the new plans and prevent insolvencies and fraud. Commissioner Praeger believes that this is not the case. She notes that "The Department of Labor has neither the resources nor the expertise to regulate insurance products."

More than 500 organizations—including many of the major consumer and health care provider organizations—have voiced their opposition to this legislation. The legislation is also strongly opposed by the Nation's Republican and Democratic governors, attorneys general and insurance commissioners. Additionally, many in the small business community oppose H.R. 660, including the National Small Business United (NSBU), which has voiced its opposition to this legislation because it would hurt, not help, many small employers. They cite a recent study by Mercer found that AHPs would result in more than 1 million more uninsured and cause premiums to skyrocket for the sickest workers.

I do understand that small employers are clamoring for relief from the high cost of health care, and I support efforts to improve individuals' and small businesses' ability to obtain quality health insurance. I have introduced H.R. 1937, the Small Business Health Insurance Availability Act. This bill would do several things to help uninsured Americans who work for small businesses get adequate health care. My legislation would establish a tax credit toward the purchase of health insurance for all small employers who choose to offer it. The credit will reimburse 20 percent of health insurance costs, up to \$400 per year for individuals and \$1000 for family coverage. Businesses can get an additional 10 percent tax credit (up to 30 percent total) if they join in a Health Benefit Purchasing Coalition, which provides small employers a way to pool resources, negotiate collectively with insurers, and administer health plans for small employer groups. In order to foster innovation on the State level, the bill creates State grant programs for initiatives that expand health insurance to the uninsured through market innovations.

I believe that we must help uninsured Americans to obtain health insurance while not put-

ting individual insurance markets or consumers at risk. My legislation, in contrast to the very controversial AHP proposals, could be enacted into law immediately without disrupting health insurance markets or regulatory structures. It would also preserve the rights and protections of consumers in States and ensure that the business of health insurance remain regulated on the State level. It would also give small business owners, like their big business competitors, the opportunity to band together and bargain for better insurance rates and terms.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 2620 TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2003

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 26, 2003

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, today I proudly joined my good friend from New Jersey, the Chairman of the Veterans Committee and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee on International Relations, in introducing H.R. 2620, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003.

Mr. Speaker, in the 106th Congress, Mr. Smith and our former colleague, Sam Gejdenson of Connecticut, spent enormous energy to pass the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. I was proud to be an original co-sponsor of that landmark legislation. It is wise to recall where we were just a few short years ago with respect to trafficking of persons. The CIA estimated that 50,000 people were being trafficked into the United States each year and being held in conditions that amounted to modern day slavery. They were being forced to labor in our fields, to work endless hours in sweatshops, and to serve in sexual slavery in cities across our land. U.S. prosecution of traffickers faltered because attorneys in our Department of Justice did not have the right tools to pursue the new forms of trafficking, which often relied on threats, not chains, and on document fraud, not bills of sale. Overseas, millions of people were being used as chattel, and the brothels of Bombay and Bangkok were overflowing with prostitutes, many young girls, who were forced to provide sex. Governments were barely aware of what was happening to their own people, and where they were, they usually blamed the victims and forgot about them. And the international community was just starting to fashion an international agreement to address the horrors of trafficking.

Today the picture is visibly brighter. Because of the enactment of the Smith-Gejdenson Act, the Attorney General is prosecuting cases from American Samoa to New Jersey and has recently achieved the first conviction under the new tools provided by that Act right here in the DC metropolitan area. Victims are coming forward because of the federal benefits we are offering to them, treating them like the refugees that they are. The naming of countries that are not making significant efforts to combat trafficking and the threat of sanctions against them are forcing measurable changes in the way that governments around the world are facing this modern day form of slavery. A new international criminal protocol

is gaining wide acceptance, and is being studied by the Administration. Modern day slavery is under assault from all directions.

But Mr. Speaker, we need to do more. In the two-and-a-half years since the enactment of the Smith-Gejdenson Act, we have learned much more about the phenomena of trafficking and how to combat it. It is time to do a thorough review of our trafficking statutes and ensure that we are doing everything we can to prevent trafficking, protect victims and prosecute traffickers.

And that is exactly what the Trafficking Victims Reauthorization Act of 2003 accomplishes. Drawing from the conference earlier this year held by the Department of State, this bill authorizes new strategies for prevention, including using trafficking victims to identify traffickers at the borders and deterring sex tourism, which is part of the fuel of sex slavery around the world. It increases protection by making measured expansions of the visa category for trafficking victims and related provisions to better enable cooperation, particularly with respect to state and local trafficking prosecutions, which are increasingly the front line of law enforcement in this area. And it enhances prosecution of traffickers by, for example, ensuring that trafficking is treated like the organized crime that it is. Perhaps most critically, it demonstrates Congressional commitment to fighting this scourge by authorizing additional funds for U.S. agencies to combat this human rights crisis around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I salute Congressman SMITH, Congressman PITTS and Congresswoman SLAUGHTER for the vision they are showing today by joining me in this fight against trafficking in human beings. Just as we made a real difference two-and-a-half years ago, we can accelerate our fight against modern-day slavery. I urge all my colleagues to join in this fight.

BILL TO MAKE PERMANENT THE EXPANDED EXPENSING BENEFITS PROVIDED TO SMALL BUSINESSES UNDER THE JOBS AND GROWTH TAX RELIEF RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2003

HON. WALLY HERGER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 26, 2003

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, last year Congress, working together with President Bush, enacted into law the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003. Among other provisions, this new law strengthens and expands the expensing provisions afforded to small businesses under section 179 of the Internal Revenue Code. As such, the law encourages small businesses to make new capital investments, thus spurring our economy and creating jobs. I believe Congress should make this provision permanent and today I am introducing the "Small Business Expensing Permanency Act of 2003" to do just that.

Specifically, the Jobs and Growth Act increases from \$25,000 to \$100,000 the amount of new investment a business can expense—or deduct from income—in a given year. The new law also increases—from \$200,000 to \$400,000—the amount of total investment a business can make in a year and still qualify

for expensing under section 179. Unfortunately, under the new law, these provisions are set to expire after 2005.

My legislation will repeal the 2005 sunset. If the higher expensing limits are good for our nation's small businesses over the next two years, they should be good for small businesses indefinitely.

Small businesses truly are the backbone of our economy, representing more than half of all jobs and economic output. We should not take small business vitality for granted, however. Rather, our tax laws should support small businesses in their role as the engines of innovation, growth, and job creation.

Mr. Speaker, in difficult economic times, we must do all we can to encourage new investment and job creation by creating certainty and predictability for America's small business owners. The "Small Business Expensing Permanency Act of 2003" will help accomplish this worthy goal. I applaud the administration for its consistent leadership on this issue, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to enact this much-needed legislation.

H.R. 2620: TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION REAUTHORIZATION ACT

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 26, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003, which is intended to improve the United States efforts in combating the scourge of human trafficking. I am very pleased to have Congressman LANTOS, ranking member of the International Relations Committee, Congressman PITTS and Congresswoman SLAUGHTER, join me as original cosponsors.

According to a recently released U.S. Government estimate, 800,000 to 900,000 women, children, and men fall victim to international trafficking each year and end up prisoners of slavery like practices in the commercial sex industry, domestic servitude, sweatshops, and agricultural farms, among other destinations.

In October 2000, we adopted the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), P.L. 106-386. As a result of that law, the U.S. Government allocated \$68.2 million last year to combat trafficking in human beings. In the past two years, federal prosecutors initiated prosecutions of 79 traffickers—three times as many as in the two previous years. Nearly 400 survivors of trafficking in the United States have received assistance, facilitated by the Department of Health and Human Services, to begin recovering from their trauma and to rebuild their shattered lives. Thanks to the efforts of the State Department, USAID, and the spotlight put on the issue through the annual Trafficking in Persons Report, governments worldwide have also begun taking significant actions against human trafficking.

Despite these substantive inroads, people continue to be bought and sold in modern day slavery. Victims continue to face obstacles in the process of securing needed assistance. We are not yet addressing trafficking in persons as an organized crime activity. We have not yet aggressively targeted sex tourism as a

factor contributing to the demand for trafficked persons in prostitution, and more specialized research is needed.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) would address these and other areas of concern, would authorize funding to continue our government's efforts against trafficking, and would build upon the experience of implementing the TVPA to refine U.S. laws and practices to better fulfill the intent of that law. Specifically, the TVPRA would enhance the prevention of human trafficking by:

Requiring that U.S. Government contracts relating to international affairs contain clauses authorizing termination by the United States if the contractor engages in human trafficking or procures commercial sexual services while the contract is in force;

Promoting innovative trafficking prevention initiatives, such as border interdiction programs; and

Requiring airlines to inform passengers about U.S. laws against sex tourism.

The TVPRA would enhance protections for trafficking victims by:

Allowing Federal, State, or local law enforcement authorities to certify, for the purpose of receiving benefits, that a victim of trafficking has cooperated in the investigation or prosecution of trafficking crimes;

Allowing trafficking victims to sue their traffickers in U.S. courts;

Eliminating the requirement that a victim of trafficking between the ages of 15 and 18 must cooperate with the investigation and prosecution of his or her trafficker in order to be eligible for a T-visa;

Allowing benefits and services available to victims of trafficking to be available for their family members legally entitled to join them in United States; and

Providing for the confidentiality of T-visa applications.

The TVPRA would enhance prosecution of trafficking-related crimes by:

Permitting federal anti-trafficking statutes to be used to prosecute acts of trafficking involving foreign commerce or occurring in the special maritime or territorial jurisdiction of the United States;

Making human trafficking crimes predicate offenses for RICO charges; and

Encouraging the use of International Law Enforcement Academies to train foreign law enforcement authorities, prosecutors and members of the judiciary regarding human trafficking.

The TVPRA would improve the U.S. Government's response to trafficking by:

Encouraging critical research initiatives;

Mandating a report on Federal agencies' implementation of the TVPA;

Designating that the Director of the State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking shall have the rank of Ambassador-at-Large; and

Prohibiting the use of funds to promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution.

The TVPRA would reauthorize appropriations for each of FY 2004 and 2005:

\$4 million to the Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking;

\$15 million to the Department of Health and Human Services;

To the Secretary of State, \$15 million for assistance for victims in other countries; \$15 mil-

lion for programs to improve law enforcement and prosecution; and \$15 million for trafficking prevention initiatives;

\$300,000 to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for trafficking prevention and legal reform programs;

\$15 million to the Department of Justice for assistance to victims in the United States and \$250,000 for anti-trafficking training activities at the International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEAs);

\$15 million to the President for foreign victim assistance (prevention activities); \$15 million for assistance to foreign countries to meet the minimum standards to combat trafficking; \$300,000 for research; and \$250,000 for anti-trafficking training activities at the ILEAs; and \$10 million to the Department of Labor.

Mr. Speaker, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 enjoyed broad, bipartisan support in both Houses of Congress. We are making progress in our battle against modern day slavery, but clearly there is still much work to be done by government authorities, by civil society, by our faith communities, and by all men and women of good will. As lawmakers, we have the opportunity to make our contribution to this endeavor. I strongly urge my colleagues to support this commonsense reauthorization bill to support and enhance the good work which has been undertaken.

RECOGNIZING MARY ELLEN DESANTOS

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 26, 2003

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an individual who has dedicated over twenty-five years of her life to public education, Mary Ellen DeSantos, on the occasion of her retirement.

DeSantos' remarkable contributions as an educator with the Los Angeles County Office of Education are well known. Her leadership has proven invaluable in implementing innovative approaches to improve the quality of education for language minority students in the Los Angeles County area utilizing the Title I and Title VII program.

DeSantos has taken on many roles in the private and public education sector in Arizona and California. Over the course of twenty-five years she has been a primary and secondary education teacher, director of state categorical programs, bilingual coordinator, and a vocational teacher trainer.

Mary Ellen DeSantos' hard work has enriched the lives of over eight thousand students. Her numerous contributions will not be forgotten.

TRIBUTE TO FABIUS-POMPEY BOYS BASEBALL TEAM

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 26, 2003

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the stellar Varsity Boys Baseball Team of Fabius-Pompey High School, winners of the Class C New York State Championship.