

Let me address directly some arguments sometimes offered up by the domestic shippers in defense of the Jones Act: that it contains important labor and environmental protections that would be lost upon repeal. Of course, the exact terms of repeal are up to this Congress and administration, and all three of these bills propose to retain these important protections. Specifically, these bills provide that all foreign shippers operating under Jones Act exemptions must comply with the same labor, environmental, tax, documentation, U.S. locus and other laws as are applicable to non-U.S. flag ships and shippers transiting U.S. waters today.

Mr. Speaker, these long-overdue bills are of the utmost importance to the localities which have long borne the brunt of the Jones Act. Sometimes it is difficult to pierce the veil of longstanding custom and understanding to see what should instead be, but clearly the time for these measures is overdue. I urge their passage.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO SUPERVISORY SPECIAL AGENT THOMAS M. BOURGEOIS

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Supervisory Special Agent Thomas M. Bourgeois for his nearly twenty-two years of service to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. For the past two decades, SSA Bourgeois has selflessly put his own well-being in jeopardy to serve and protect the American people.

Thomas M. Bourgeois reported for duty on October 5, 1981 and was first assigned to the Milwaukee Division of the FBI. He worked in both the Milwaukee and Myrtle Beach offices investigating fugitives, bank robbery, and kidnaping cases before being transferred to the Chicago Division to investigate narcotics and organized crime. During his tenure in Chicago, Tom was responsible for the apprehension of some of America's most dangerous criminals, including the Calabrese Street crew, Anthony Centracchio, and John Serpico. From 1986 until 1997, Tom served as a member of Chicago Division's enhanced SWAT Team. While serving on the SWAT Team, Tom was deployed on several assignments, including the Unibomber case, Hurricane Marilyn in the Virgin Islands, and the Republican National Convention in 1996.

SSA Thomas M. Bourgeois is the recipient of numerous honors for his work at the FBI. He received letters of commendation from FBI director William Webster in May of 1982 and again in March of 1986. Mr. Bourgeois also received the Chicago Crime Commission's Star of Distinction Award in both 2001 and 2003 for his role in the Anthony Centracchio investigation and for his role in thwarting a scheme by Cicero, Illinois public officials to defraud the town of nearly \$13 million.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my best personal regards to SSA Thomas M. Bourgeois on his recent retirement from the FBI and I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking him on behalf of the American people for his service and dedication to our collective security.

INTRODUCTION OF THE COBRA COVERAGE ACT OF 2003

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the COBRA Coverage Act of 2003. As you may know, our Nation's faltering economy has resulted in staggering unemployment, unemployment that has risen from 5.7 percent in January of this year to 6.4 percent in June, leaving millions of Americans out of work. The loss of one's job is often accompanied by the loss of employer-based health coverage and the ability to afford individual health insurance. In this time of economic hardship, we must act to make health care more accessible to the working and middle-class families of America.

In an attempt to reduce the growing population of those without health coverage, Title X of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA) provided access to group health insurance for workers who had lost their employer-sponsored coverage. COBRA requires employers who offer health insurance to continue coverage for their employees under circumstances such as a change in their employment status. However, this law allows the employer to charge up to 102 percent of the premium for the covered beneficiary and up to 150 percent for disabled individuals who qualify for an additional 11 months of coverage.

The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that in 2002 health care premiums increased by 12.7 percent, making the average cost for self-only coverage \$3,060 while the average cost for the family coverage reached \$7,954. These high costs make retaining health coverage extremely difficult for individuals without work, without an income. As a result many people and their families choose to go without health insurance until they find another job. This is unacceptable.

Not only do these prohibitive costs prevent people from maintaining their health coverage, they can also drive up the group costs of employers who offer COBRA coverage. Because health care premiums are so high, those who have costly, preexisting health problems are more likely to enroll in extended coverage than those who are healthy. These costs are often passed onto the employer and onto the others covered by the group insurance.

We can alleviate this problem by making COBRA health coverage more accessible and more affordable. With the COBRA Coverage Act of 2003, laid-off workers would be provided with a 50 percent tax credit toward the cost of COBRA coverage, up to a maximum of \$110 for an individual and \$290 for a family per month. This credit is entirely refundable, which means one can receive it regardless of one's tax liability, and it is advanceable, meaning that it's available to the recipient immediately. This is possible because the tax credit would be administered through the employer.

While we work diligently to improve our economy, we must not sit idle and turn our backs on the millions of uninsured Americans. We must assist those who are suffering by ensuring they retain access to affordable health insurance for themselves and for their families.

TRIBUTE TO DR. GEORGE ROLOFSON

HON. HOWARD COBLE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, Dr. George Rolofson—"Dr. George" as I call him—has been a good friend of mine for many years and has worked with me on a number of issues relating to the U.S. agrichemical industry. Soon he will be retiring as Senior Vice President of legislative and regulatory affairs from CropLife America, where he has been a tireless champion of the agriculture and chemical industries. As Dr. George prepares to retire, I want to take the opportunity to thank him for these efforts and for his many contributions to the industry and to let him know that he will be greatly missed by all those with whom he has come in contact over the years.

George spent his entire adult life devoted to the study and improvement of the field of agricultural science, specifically as it regarded the use of important agrichemicals. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in entomology from the University of Nebraska and later went on to receive a Doctorate from Virginia Tech in entomology and toxicology. He then applied those degrees to practical use with the former Ciba Geigy Company in their agricultural division, now known as Syngenta Crop Protection. George worked in product development, toxicology, environmental sciences, and most recently in government relations for CropLife America here in Washington, D.C.

Our nation was largely built upon the back of the agriculture industry. Even here in our Capitol building, we see numerous artistic references to this critical industry and its importance in our nation. I would like to ask my colleagues to join with me in thanking my friend, Dr. George, for the devotion he has demonstrated to such an important part of our nation. George, you have left a legacy of pride and commitment to the American farming industry and we are most appreciative for your dedication and contributions. Best wishes in the next phase of your life.

RECOGNIZING COLONEL DAVID L. HANSEN, COMMANDER OF THE NORFOLK ENGINEER DISTRICT, NORFOLK CORPS OF ENGINEERS, VIRGINIA FOR HIS SERVICE AND DEDICATION

HON. J. RANDY FORBES

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Colonel David L. Hansen, Commander and Norfolk District Engineer, for his loyal service to the United States Corps of Engineers and to the development and progress of numerous projects in Virginia's Fourth District.

Colonel Hansen's dedication and loyalty to the advancement of our district and the Commonwealth of Virginia as a whole is to be commended. He has played an instrumental role in overseeing the growth and preservation