$734.4 million aggregate in these accounts in 2004. The sales charge on that amount was about $44 million, or about six percent. What is the basis for outlawing a product that over half a million individuals, including half the flag officers on active duty at the time, had freely chosen? Do we really believe that individuals charged with the deployment of billions of dollars of military equipment, are not sophisticated enough to make their own financial decisions?

When the Congress last looked at this product in 1970, we recognized periodic payment mutual funds are a valuable means to help encourage savings by people who do not have large amounts of discretionary income. I have seen no evidence in the record indicating that the judgment then was incorrect. In fact, testimony received by the Financial Services Committee indicates that these periodic payment mutual funds are working for those military members choosing to utilize them.

Before voting on S. 418, Congress should consider whether it is in the best interests of our armed services to substitute our judgment for theirs by banning a financial product that the armed services deem well-suited for their financial security.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Enhanced Options for Rural Health Care Act. This legislation allows critical access hospitals to use beds designated for critical access use, but currently not being used for that purpose, for assisted living services financed by private payments.

This bill will help improve the financial status of small rural hospitals and extend the health care options available to people living in rural areas without increasing federal expenditures. Currently, fear that rural hospitals will lose critical access status if beds designated for critical access are used for another purpose is causing rural hospitals to allow beds not needed for a critical access purpose to remain unused. This deprives rural hospitals of a much-needed revenue stream and deprives residents of rural areas of access to needed health care services.

My colleagues may be interested to know that the idea for this bill comes from Marcella Henke, an administrator of Jackson County Hospital, a critical access hospital in my congressional district. Ms. Henke conceived of this idea as a way to meet the increasing demand for assisted living services in rural areas and provide hospitals with a profitable way to use beds not being used for critical access purposes. I urge my colleagues to embrace this practical way of strengthening rural health care without increasing federal expenditures by cosponsoring the Enhanced Options for Rural Health Care Act.

HONORING SEAN T. CONNAUGHTON

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 21, 2006

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor for Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia and myself to recognize The Honorable Sean T. Connaughton, former Prince William Board of County Supervisors chairman. Sean was recently confirmed as Maritime Administrator in the Department of Transportation and his education and experience will serve him well at the federal level.

We want to take this opportunity to recognize the dedication that Mr. Connaughton showed the people of northern Virginia as Prince William chairman. At a time when northern Virginia was experiencing heavy population growth, Mr. Connaughton took his responsibilities as an elected official very seriously. Prince William's financial resources were well managed and Mr. Connaughton made significant improvements in terms of education, economic development, public safety, and transportation. On behalf of Virginia's 10th and 11th districts we want to thank Chairman Connaughton on his exemplary service.

Mr. Connaughton is a U.S. Naval War College graduate and alumni of the Merchant Marine Academy. While serving as Prince William chairman he also worked as an attorney dealing with maritime laws and is a part of the Maritime Law Association. A U.S. Naval Reserve commander and former active-duty member of the U.S. Coast Guard, his accomplishments speak for themselves. We have every reason to believe that Mr. Connaughton will be an asset to the Department of Transportation and want to congratulate him upon his confirmation.

IN RECOGNITION OF JAMES BARR III

HON. MARK GREEN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 21, 2006

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor and pleasure to recognize before this House TDS Telecommunication Corporation's President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) James Barr III.

For seventeen years, James Barr has been an exemplary leader of a growing Wisconsin business and has served the telecommunications industry with both integrity and distinction. He has played an integral role in the development of TDS Telecom, quintupling annual revenue to more than $900 million and successfully elevating the company to the sixth largest independent telephone company in the country.

Not only did Barr build a customer-focused organization that has won many awards for customer care, he touched the lives of numerous employees which helped him create a vibrant organization with 3200 employees serving 1.2 million customers in 29 states.

But beyond his hard work and dedication on the job Barr is above all else an upstanding person. Barr has been an excellent leader of several telecommunications boards and service organizations including the United Way of Dane County as well as a caring and supportive husband, father and grandfather.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Barr should be commended for his outstanding contributions to the telecommunications industry as well as the great state of Wisconsin. I congratulate him on his years of service and exemplary citizenship and wish him the best in his retirement.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4844, FEDERAL ELECTION INTEGRITY ACT OF 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this bill in its present form.

Having taken an oath to uphold the Constitution, I have a solemn responsibility to vote against even the most politically popular proposals when there are serious doubts about the constitutionality of the legislation. And this bill, transparently brought forward to help the Republican majority whip up public emotions on the eve of a tough election, poses serious constitutional problems—in short, I think it violates the 24th Amendment.

That amendment, added to the Constitution in 1964, says that the rights of Americans to vote in federal elections "shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax" and that Congress "shall have the power to enforce" that part of the Constitution.

But instead of enforcing that constitutional bar on making voting a taxable event, this bill would require states to choose between making some people pay to vote and paying to provide them with the identification that the bill says will be required if they want to exercise that right.

The bill's supporters say the bill is constitutional because it says that states cannot make everyone pay for identification—they have to provide it free to people who cannot afford the "reasonable cost" of providing it.

But the 24th Amendment is not ambiguous on whether it is permissible to make some people pay to vote, so long as they can afford it. Instead, it makes clear that no Americans—regardless of their income—can be forced to pay "any . . . tax" in order to vote.

And while some may argue that paying for a government-issued ID is not a tax, but just some kind of "user fee," I am not persuaded—and I would remind them of the words of Richard Darman, OMB Director under President Reagan, who said that "if it looks like a duck and walks like a duck and quacks like duck, it is a duck, [and] euphemisms like user fees will not fool the public."

That's one of the reasons the National Association of Counties (NACO) opposes the bill—because, as they say in their letter to the Speaker and Minority Leader, "we fear that any fee imposed on other voters [besides those claiming to be too poor to afford an ID] could be characterized as a poll tax and be subject to challenge in court."

Further, aside from the constitutional questions, both NACO and the National Conference of State Legislatures oppose the bill because it would impose a burdensome unfunded mandate on every state and every local government. And, as the Conference points out, the bill "is duplicative" and "adds bureaucratic burdens that are completely unnecessary. The REAL ID Act, flawed though it is, already requires a new state identification system based on legal presence . . . This second identification system would be used only for voting [but the Help America Vote Act] . . . and state and local election procedures