

countries. By singling out oil and gas companies and raising their taxes, H.R. 6 will have the effect of encouraging them to expand production overseas, limit U.S. investment, and cut their American workforce.

Another source of concern is the millions of Americans who invest their pension and retirement savings in the oil and gas sector. Many State and local pension funds, as well as individual stockholders, invest in these companies. Retirees and investors depending on high performing stocks will likely be negatively impacted by Congress's decision to single out this sector.

I am also concerned that H.R. 6 will force companies who signed leases with the Federal Government in 1988 and 1999 for drilling rights in the Gulf of Mexico to renegotiate the terms of the contracts they signed. Under the Clinton administration, the Department of Interior failed to insert a clause in these contracts that would require firms to pay royalty fees when the price of oil exceeded a certain amount. Now, realizing the mistake, the Government has begun to renegotiate the leases on a voluntary basis with the affected companies. Some of them have agreed to begin paying royalty fees while others have not. The Government should continue to voluntarily negotiate with these firms. But, for the Government to force companies to pay new, higher fees as a penalty for not renegotiating legitimate contracts seems akin to what a Russian, Venezuelan, or Bolivian government would do.

As a sponsor of legislation to expand tax incentives for solar energy and hybrid vehicles, I am committed to the improvement of energy conservation and new technologies. Reducing oil and gas consumption is important, but I do not believe H.R. 6 is not the right policy for achieving this objective. I urge my colleagues to resist policies like H.R. 6 that arbitrarily penalize American oil and gas companies and practically incentivize them to move operations overseas.

COLLEGE STUDENT RELIEF ACT
OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 17, 2007

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, the cost of college education continues to rise at an alarming rate. You may ask, "why does it matter?" The simple fact is that education is the single most important factor when it comes to equalizing opportunity and ensuring all students are able to achieve a better future and, of course, greater income. A well educated society is paramount to our global competitiveness and national security. Because education is so critical, I believe we have a duty to ensure it is available to all our citizens. The legislation before us represents an opportunity to assist borrowers with repayment of their student loan debt—a debt that is an investment in their future. While I support that goal, I also urge my colleagues to dig deeper into the problem, and take a hard look at the problem of rising tuition costs. After all, the debt incurred by students is the costs incurred to participate in postsecondary education. I would like to see us engage in a dia-

logue with the higher education community to understand why college costs are rising so rapidly and what can be done to assist students who are struggling to even enroll because the cost barrier is too high.

I would also like to speak for a moment about the cost of this proposal. I fully support a fiscally responsible approach, and our newly reinstated PAYGO rules demand that we offset the cost of this proposal. As such, this bill is being paid for through reductions in government payments to the private and non-profit lenders and guarantee agencies that provide student loans. I have some concerns about how the cost of this bill may affect student benefit programs now available. We need to invest in education and we all need to take a hard look at the programs now available to ensure they are efficient and effective. However, we must not lose sight of the strengths inherent in our current system. Students and families benefit greatly from solid competition within the student loan program, which today results in reduced fees, repayment incentives, and yes, lower interest rates. But there is more: student outreach, need-based scholarship programs and services, statewide career testing for 7th through 12th grades—all of which are helping to make college more affordable and accessible. We shouldn't neglect that. As we proceed with this and other higher education legislation, I want to protect students and families from a one-size-fits-all mentality and ensure these programs that have served so many will go forward in an efficient manner for the students and families they serve, as well as for the American taxpayers making this crucial investment.

I thank Speaker PELOSI and the Chairman of the Education and Labor Committee for including higher education in the First 100 Hours. It shows how important the issue is and that this Congress is committed to moving forward with an investment in our students and an investment in the future of our Nation.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND
UNITED STATES TERRITORIES
CIRCULATING QUARTER DOLLAR
PROGRAM ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 23, 2007

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 392, which requires the Circulating Quarter Dollar Coin Program to honor the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Madam Speaker, you will recall that in 1999, the United States Mint began circulating quarters in commemoration of each of the 50 States. The coin honoring my great State of Texas was issued in 2004. The coin, featuring the Lone Star of Texas, is the 28th in the series and commemorates Texas' admission to the Union as the 28th State on December 29, 1845.

To date, Mr. Speaker, 40 of the 50 State coins have been circulated. I look forward to seeing the last 10 States honored with their own special quarter-dollar coin.

Unfortunately, the beautiful city in which we stand today, our Nation's capital, has been thus far denied the opportunity to commemorate its vital importance as a part of our union, with a quarter-dollar coin of its own. Likewise, the United States territories have not had the opportunity to commemorate their important role in our nation. H.R. 392 would change this regrettable state of affairs.

I thank the delegate from the District of Columbia, Ms. NORTON, for introducing this legislation and urge my colleagues to vote in favor of it. I am, however, saddened that she herself cannot cast a vote in favor of this bill since she is not yet permitted a vote on the floor of the House or in the Committee of the Whole. I am optimistic that the new Democratic majority in this House will grant elected delegates the right to vote in the Committee of the Whole at the earliest possible opportunity. I remain a strong supporter of H.R. 328, the District of Columbia Fair and Equal Voting Rights Act of 2007, which will give the representative for the District of Columbia a full, fair, and equal vote on the floor of the House of Representatives.

As a supporter of freedom, democracy, and equality, I believe that it is long overdue for the citizens of the District of Columbia to have a representative in Congress who can vote on the vital legislation considered in this august body. It is wrong, Madam Speaker, that the citizens of the District of Columbia, who after all pay taxes to the United States, serve in the Armed Forces, and are subject to the laws and jurisdiction of the United States, are denied a vote in the body that imposes those taxes, raises and maintains the Armed Forces, and makes the laws that each of us must obey. Similarly, we cannot deny the territories of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands the right to have a vote in Congress. Doing so denies the important relationships of these territories to our Nation and diminishes the contributions of their people to our country.

In light of this unfortunate situation, I commend the delegate from our Nation's Capital for introducing H.R. 392, to show the people of the United States capital and territories that we do indeed honor them. I urge my colleagues to pay tribute to them by voting in favor of this legislation to establish a quarter dollar coin program in their commemoration.

RETIREMENT OF SUPERVISOR
ILLA COLLIN

HON. DORIS O. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 24, 2007

Ms. MATSUI. Madam Speaker, I rise in tribute to Sacramento County Supervisor Illa Collin and her esteemed career. Supervisor Collin built a lasting legacy in Sacramento County and her presence on the board of supervisors will be deeply missed. As her friends, family and coworkers all gather to celebrate her career, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the dedicated service of one of Sacramento's finest leaders.

Illia Collin was first elected to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors in 1978. She immediately made her presence known by tirelessly working to strengthen neighborhoods and revitalize urban corridors. Through