

\$43 billion in Federal assistance. That's an average amount of over \$1900 per taxpayer. At \$4 a gallon, an average EITC check can now pay for 32 trips to the gas station to fill your tank.

In my district, over 38,000 taxpayers received \$64 million through the EITC. But because one-quarter of those eligible to receive EITC don't claim it, there are also nearly 13,000 of my constituents who should receive EITC but don't and they're losing out on \$25 million in benefits.

Nationally, there are 7 million Americans who are eligible to receive this benefit but don't. This amounts to a loss of \$14 billion to eligible working Americans.

American families are struggling to get by. The cost of gas, food, education, and health care are skyrocketing. How can we stand by and let the American people leave \$14 billion on the table?

A Republican Governor working with a Democratic legislature has given us a model for addressing this problem. Last year, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law Assembly Bill 650, the Earned Income Tax Credit Information Act. The bill was simple and straightforward. The law requires that California employers notify employees of their potential eligibility for the EITC when they send employees their W-2 forms.

Employers are uniquely positioned to help because they are already providing their employees with their W-2 forms that tell them their earnings for this year. This law simply piggy-backs on that requirement to help employees understand that they may be eligible to receive the EITC.

Our legislation takes the California law and expands it to the rest of the country. Under our bill, employees throughout the country who earn enough to be eligible for the EITC will receive a notice from their employer with their W-2 form telling them about the program and how to learn more about it. Small businesses will not be affected by the bill and the proposal won't cost American taxpayers one single dime. It's a common sense way to ensure families who need it most get the benefits they deserve.

I am hopeful that this legislation will be unnecessary. Today, Sen. SCHUMER and I will send a letter asking the Administration to accomplish this goal by executive order. Secretary Paulson is a supporter of EITC and I'm hopeful that he will build on his role during the economic stimulus debate and embrace this common-sense, fiscally responsible approach to providing hardworking Americans with additional fiscal relief.

Finally, Wal-Mart, the Nation's largest employer, and the SEIU, one of the Nation's leading labor unions, are supporting the bill. They understand the importance of the EITC to their workers and members. In addition, the bill is supported by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Citizens for Tax Justice, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the College and University Professional Association of Human Resources, TJ Maxx, Kindred Healthcare, and Cintas.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VETERANS REVENUE ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2008, H.R. 6366

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, I am introducing the Veterans Revenue Enhancement Act of 2008, which would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish today not more than seven consolidated patient accounting centers.

The concept of the Consolidated Patient Accounting Center, also known as CPAC, was included as a demonstration project in the Conference Report, House Report 109-95 and Conference Report 109-305, in 2005 accompanying H.R. 2528, requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, to initiate a revenue improvement demonstration project within 60 days after enactment of the bill, Public Law 109-114. The VA followed the recommendations in the report, and created the Mid-Atlantic Consolidated Patient Accounting Center demonstration project located in Asheville, North Carolina.

A recent GAO report reiterates previous findings that third party billing and collection processes at the Department continue to be ineffective and limit the revenue received by VA from third party insurance companies. Hundreds of millions of dollars continue to go uncollected, dollars that could be used to further improve the quality and quantity of veterans' health care.

With the establishment by VA of the Mid-Atlantic Consolidated Patient Accounting Center in Asheville, North Carolina, the collection of third party revenues has improved significantly at the medical centers in VISN 6. By implementing best practices, a standardized revenue cycle for business processes and training of personnel, the majority of the GAO report recommendations on maximizing third party revenue collections have been met.

The demonstration project has proven to be very successful in enhancing the revenue of the department by more than \$12.5 million in increased collections in FY 2007 and \$6.5 million so far in FY 2008 to an overall \$19 million total. Building on this success, my legislation would permit the VA to continue this successful venture at the Mid-Atlantic project in Asheville, North Carolina, and direct the Secretary to establish an additional six centers throughout the country in the next five years.

I urge my colleagues to support the Veterans Revenue Enhancement Act of 2008.

INTRODUCING THE HEALTHY TRANSITION ACT OF 2008

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce legislation aimed at addressing the unique needs of young people with serious mental illness as they transition from adolescence into adulthood. Senator GORDON SMITH and Senator CHRIS DODD are introducing identical legislation in the Senate. We have an ob-

ligation to provide appropriate and effective mental health treatment and supports to young adults so that they can transition to healthy and successful adults.

Young adults suffering from mental illness fall through the cracks far too often. Senator SMITH and I requested that the Government Accountability Office, GAO, examine this issue. The GAO recently issued their report and the findings should disturb us all. At least 2.4 million young adults age 18-26 suffer from serious mental illness. Another 9.3 million have mild or moderate mental illness. Currently, there is no specific federal program aimed at these youth. Instead, we are left with a fragmented and ad hoc system that does not meet their unique needs. Not surprisingly, many of these youth are adrift without services, support, or guidance. They have lower education and employment rates than their peers and they are more likely to end up in jail or homeless. For youth who are aging out of foster care with no family supports the situation is particularly dire. One recent study found that these youth suffer from post traumatic stress disorder at rates similar to Iraq War veterans.

The GAO has clearly laid out the problem. But it is not enough to simply describe the current situation and become angry. Our outrage must lead to action. This legislation aims to change the tragic and unnecessary status quo and bring real support to millions of young people.

Some States are making strides to connect young adults with mental illness to systems that can assist them. The GAO documented 4 states—Maryland, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Mississippi—that are doing good work in this area. My home State of California is using dedicated mental health funding to specifically target adolescents and young adults with mental illness. I am pleased that states are undertaking this important work, but the Federal Government should and must play a role. There needs to be improved coordination among the many Federal agencies that provide services to these youth. Most critically, there needs to be Federal support and assistance to states committed to doing the right thing and creating innovative approaches to serve these youth. The Healthy Transition Act will do just that.

This bill builds on the successful Partnership for Youth in Transition Demonstration Program. It will provide grant funding to states to develop statewide coordination plans to assist adolescents and young adults with serious mental health disorders to acquire the skills and resources they need to make a healthy transition into adulthood. The state must specifically plan for youth who are in the juvenile justice system, the child welfare system, and those who have an education plan under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The bill will also provide grant funding for states to successfully implement their plans and create sustainability and comprehensive systems of care. Finally, the legislation will create a Committee of Federal Partners. The Committee will include representatives from all agencies that serve young adults as well as representatives from consumer and family advocacy organizations. The Federal Partners will evaluate the programs, provide technical assistance, and report to Congress on the progress being made.