

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

Mr. KANJORSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to raise my concerns about H.R. 2, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act.

I voted in favor of H.R. 2, with some reservations. I fully support providing health coverage to children and support this legislation as it continues funding for 7 million children currently enrolled in SCHIP and will allow an additional 4 million children to be covered. Moreover, I support the efforts of this legislation to reach families that are eligible for this program but are not currently enrolled.

At the same time, however, I am concerned about the increases in tobacco taxes that will be used to pay for the extension and expansion of this worthwhile program. In particular, I am concerned about these taxes for small manufacturers.

For example, in my Congressional district, there is a small manufacturer, Avanti Cigar Company, that produces large cigars. The company currently employs 43 people and is concerned that the increased taxes as a result of this legislation will force the company out of business. In 2008, the company generated \$6 million in revenues and paid \$1 million federal excise taxes. With the increase in taxes included in H.R. 2, the company is facing a 40 percent increase and expects to pay \$3.1 million annually in excise taxes. These increases may very well cause Avanti Cigar Company to close.

From my perspective, at a time when our economy is in trouble and our small businesses are hurting, now is not the time to pass tax increases that may put some of these businesses out of business. In the coming months, it is my hope that we can revisit this issue and look for other ways to pay for providing health care to children that will not cause parents to lose their jobs.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to voice my concerns about this legislation.

DTV DELAY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 328, the DTV Delay Act.

As a supporter of this bill, I believe we must do everything we can to make sure no one gets left behind during the transition to digital television.

Unfortunately, the Bush Administration grossly mismanaged the digital television transition and put years of meticulous planning for this transition at risk.

The coupon program, which was designed to help households defray the cost of converter boxes, has a waiting list of over two million. This number is expected to increase in the weeks ahead. What's more, we also face the possibility of converter box shortages.

And that's why we need to approve this important legislation to extend the cutoff date.

First, the DTV Delay Act extends the DTV transition date to June 12th, 2009. I am confident this one-time extension will give us the time we need to develop an approach that allows us to move the country smoothly to digital television without needing to extend the transition date in the future.

Second, this legislation fixes the converter box coupon program.

The fact that the coupon program has failed comes as no surprise.

As someone that supports the digital transition, I joined many of my colleagues in fighting for additional funding for the coupon program.

Over the last two years we have tried, repeatedly, to prevent this failure. And, I was very disappointed the Bush Administration did not work with us to prevent this situation.

We called on NTIA multiple times to make sure the coupon program had enough funding and people would not be put on a waitlist.

Repeatedly, we were told not to worry. And then, on Christmas Eve, we were informed that there were millions of people on the coupon wait-list and the NTIA would run out of money before the transition date, leaving millions of Americans without access to television.

Without coupons, households will not be prepared.

Unfortunately, in this economy, where every penny counts, the price of a converter box is more than many people can afford. To date, 98% of converter boxes are purchased with the help of a government coupon.

Last week we took a very important first step to fix this program by providing additional funds in the economic stimulus package for coupons.

But now, we must make further improvements to the program to address consumer needs.

For example, this bill permits Americans to receive coupons electronically and to apply for new coupons if their current coupons have expired. Americans should no longer have to wait 4 to 6 weeks to receive their coupons.

Unfortunately, we also know that certain segments of our population will likely be disproportionately impacted by the digital transition: Latinos, African Americans and seniors. As someone who represents a congressional district that is 42 percent Latino and many senior citizens, I find the failure of the coupon program particularly troubling.

Third, this legislation keeps in place the SAFER Act, legislation that I introduced and the Congress passed last year.

The SAFER Act enables the FCC to let a single broadcaster in each market continue broadcasting simple information about the transition to digital broadcasting over the old analog channel for a short period of time.

Households still not prepared for the DTV transition will see, for 30 days after the transition, information that the transition has taken place and information phone numbers. More importantly, households will also receive emergency weather and public safety information that is broadcast over digital airwaves.

We know that regardless of how much work we do, there will always be some households left behind and the SAFER Act is a common sense step to reduce that confusion even further.

Finally, the DTV Delay Act will let first responders use available spectrum before the transition date if the FCC determines there is no harmful interference in the area. It also explicitly authorizes the FCC to use expedited procedures to promote inter-operability amongst public safety radio services.

It is important for us to remember that one of the original purposes of switching to digital television was to free up spectrum so our first responders would have radio inter-operability.

This will make our country safer. But if we transition to digital television with millions of households still unprepared, we risk cutting off millions of Americans from vital emergency information, thus causing confusion and decreasing our safety.

We must act now to extend the cutoff date and fix the converter box coupon program. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

FAST REDRESS ACT OF 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. CANDICE S. MILLER

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 559, the FAST Redress Act of 2009. This bill requires the Homeland Security Secretary to create a timely and fair process for individuals who believe they were delayed or prohibited from boarding a commercial aircraft, or entering the country because they were wrongly identified as a threat when screened against any terrorist watch list or database used by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Customs and Border Protection, or any other component of the Department of Homeland Security.

We have heard many news reports of people whose names are similar to those on the watch list, detained for hours at border crossings and airports, all because their name is the same or similar to a person with suspected terrorist ties.

The Fast Redress Act would set up a dedicated office within Department of Homeland

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