Mr. COYNE. Mr. Speaker I rise today to observe the retirement of Mr. Robert M. Tobias. Mr. Tobias was the NTEU's president for the last 16 years. Prior to his service as president of the NTEU, he served the union as its executive vice president and general counsel. Mr. Tobias worked successfully to expand the NTEU's membership from 20,000 to 155,000. His tenure has also been marked by major steps forward in the treatment of federal employees. As a result of his efforts, the NTEU has negotiated alternative work schedules, flexipace work arrangements, monetary performance awards, and on-site child care arrangements for federal employees. He was also involved in the successful court battle to overturn the ban on speaking and writing for federal employees. Mr. Tobias also helped to create innovative labor-management partnerships which resulted in greater productivity and customer satisfaction at the Internal Revenue Service.

Mr. Tobias was also appointed to serve on the Federal Employees Salary Council, the National Partnership Council, the Commission to Restructure the IRS, the Federal Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, the Executive Improvement Team at the U.S. Customs Service, and most recently, the IRS Oversight Board. I had the honor to serve with him on the IRS restructuring commission in 1997, and I can vouch first-hand for the hard work and dedication that he put into the commission's efforts to provide Congress with recommendations for improving IRS organization and management. Mr. Tobias has also testified many times before the House Ways and Means Committee, on which I served, and I can honestly say that his testimony was always informative and helpful to the Committee in its efforts to improve the operations of the IRS.

My constituents in Pittsburgh who are part of NTEU's Chapter 34 are pleased to have worked with Mr. Tobias as well. Mr. Tobias serves on the board of directors of American Association for Retired Persons, and, most recently, he served on the House Ways and Means Committee, and I want to thank Mr. Tobias for his many years of service and wish him all the best as he pursues new challenges and opportunities in the coming years.

TRIGGER FOR DEBT/TAX REDUCTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, in 1995, the National Treasury Employees Union, along with other Federal employee and retiree organizations, defeated the first attempt by the 104th Congress to raise Federal employees' retirement contributions and reduce their pension.

At a press conference celebrating the victory, the NTEU national president, Robert Tobias, is quoted as saying, told over 500 Federal employees in attendance, "You promised to serve the public with honesty. You promised to work hard. You promised to serve the public. And in return, you were promised fair treatment and fair pay. It sounded like a fair deal. You kept your word. Now we're asking Congress to keep its word."

Robert Tobias has spent the last 31 years making sure that the executive branch and Congress keep their promises to Federal employees. He has used lawsuits as a way to further Federal employees' causes and to escape the narrow confines of Federal collective bargaining. He has testified before the Subcommittee on Civil Service on behalf of the 155,000 Federal employees NTEU represents on numerous cases.

Mr. Tobias is a leading authority on Federal employees' issues and by extension has expanded his union's lobbying power on Capitol Hill. In the last 20 years, Mr. Tobias has been involved in the development of a Federal employees retirement system, FERS, protecting Federal employees' health benefits program, restructuring the Internal Revenue Service, advocating for the pay raise for Federal employees, and he worked with Vice President Gore to create labor-management partnership councils across the Government.

Mr. Tobias is leaving the NTEU to embark on a second career, writing, teaching, and educating a new generation on public policy. Given Mr. Tobias' history, this is probably an attempt to train future politicians on how to vote on Federal employees issues before they get to Capitol Hill.

As ranking member of the Subcommittee on Civil Service and on behalf of all Federal employees in my congressional district and throughout this wonderful country, I wish you the best, Mr. Tobias, in your future endeavors."