

Therefore, Davis-Bacon prevents small firms from bidding on federal construction projects, which, unfortunately, constitute 20 percent of all construction projects in the United States.

Because most minority-owned construction firms are small companies, Davis-Bacon keeps minority-owned firms from competing for federal construction contracts. The resulting disparities in employment create a demand for affirmative action, another ill-suited and ill-advised big government program.

The racist effects of Davis-Bacon are no mere coincidence. In fact, many original supporters of Davis-Bacon, such as Representative Clayton Allgood, bragged about supporting Davis-Bacon as a means of keeping "cheap colored labor" out of the construction industry.

In addition to opening up new opportunities in the construction industry for smaller construction firms and their employees, repeal of Davis-Bacon would also return common sense and sound budgeting to federal contracting which is now rife with political favoritism and cronyism. An audit conducted earlier this year by the Labor Department's Office of the Inspector General found that inaccurate data were frequently used in Davis-Bacon wage determination. Although the Inspector General's report found no evidence of deliberate fraud, it did uncover material errors in five states' wage determinations, causing wages or fringe benefits for certain crafts to be overstated by as much as \$1.08 per hour!

The most compelling reason to repeal Davis-Bacon is to benefit to the American taxpayer. The Davis-Bacon Act drives up the cost of federal construction costs by as much as 50 percent. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office has reported that repealing Davis-Bacon would save the American taxpayer almost three billion dollars in four years!

Mr. Speaker, it is time to finally end this patently unfair, wildly inefficient and grossly discriminatory system of bidding on federal construction contracts. Repealing the Davis-Bacon Act will save taxpayers billions of dollars on federal construction costs, return common sense and sound budgeting to federal contracting, and open up opportunities in the construction industry to those independent contractors, and their employees, who currently cannot bid on federal projects because they cannot afford the paperwork requirements imposed by this act. I, therefore, urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting the Davis-Bacon Repeal Act of 1999.

STATEMENT ON K-12 EDUCATION  
EXCELLENCE NOW (KEEN) ACT

**HON. MATT SALMON**

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 11, 1999*

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, I am reintroducing the K through 12 Education Excellence Now (KEEN) Act, which would offer tax credits to families and businesses of up to \$250 annually for qualified K through 12 education expenses or activities. Senator KYL has reintroduced the companion in the Senate, where it has been included in the Coverdell-Lott education reform bill (S. 277).

Over the last 30 years, the Federal Government has steadily increased its monetary commitment to education. Unfortunately, we have not seen a corresponding improvement in the quality of the education our children receive. The results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), released last year, revealed that U.S. 12th graders scored next to last in advanced math and dead last in physics. The Department of Education, which promised that the United States would lead the world in math and science by the year 2000, can't even claim bragging rights over war-torn Slovenia. As to reading, which was not measured by TIMSS, 40 percent of fourth graders can't read at the basic level.

The legislation I am introducing addresses the problem of falling education scores by giving families and businesses a tax incentive to provide children with a higher quality education. Specifically, it offers every family or business a tax credit of up to \$250 annually for any K through 12 education expense or activity. This tax credit could be applied to home schooling, public schools (including charter schools), or parochial schools. Allowable expenses would include tuition, books, supplies, tutors, and computer equipment.

Further, the tax credit could be given to a "school-tuition organization" for distribution. To qualify as a school-tuition organization, the organization would have to devote at least 90 percent of its income per year to offering grants and scholarships for parents to use to send their children to the school of their choice. How would this work? A group of businesses in any community could join forces to send sums for which they received tax credits to charitable "school-tuition organizations" which would make scholarships and grants available to low-income parents of children in non-functional schools.

Unlike the big government proposals being peddled by President Clinton and Vice-President GORE, KEEN credits would offer families control over the expenditure of these education dollars, not centralized bureaucrats. Moreover, the bill would provide an "emergency blood transfusion" to improve America's schools immediately. In Arizona, where a limited version of this operates, inner-city schools are already profiting from an infusion of contributions from area businesses. I encourage my colleagues to enact the K-12 tax credit proposal as expeditiously as possible.

TRIBUTE TO MATT LANGLEY BELL  
III

**HON. JOE SCARBOROUGH**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 11, 1999*

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, on October 15, 1998, the citizens of Pensacola and the State of Florida lost a man who dedicated his career to the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of life. This gentleman distinguished himself as a community leader, a dedicated philanthropist, and the model of an honest and effective leader. The man that I speak about today is Matt Langley Bell III.

It is natural to remember Matt Langley Bell III for his nearly 22 years of tax collecting, during which he served on the Board of Directors of the Florida Tax Collectors Inc. and the National Association of County Treasurers. I could mention the countless awards he has received for effective leadership, especially the Meritorious Service Award that was presented to him by the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped. Or I could applaud his involvement with the March of Dimes and the United Way where he helped raise funds and increase awareness concerning the plight of handicapped citizens. But I am sure that if Matt was with us today he would say that those accomplishments were simply part of his job.

However, in my opinion Mr. Speaker, Matt went above and beyond the call of duty by dedicating his life to helping others. At a time when our nation calls out for principled leadership from public officials, it is fitting that today we honor a professional who always went the extra mile to represent the under-represented and to promote awareness within the community, the State of Florida, and the nation. During his distinguished career, Matt Bell III came to know and respect our rights of justice and he never forgot how important that right is to the American way of life.

Matt's overall attitude and dedication to public service has been a model in the lives of the public servants that he has trained, supervised, and encouraged. His legacy will be a constant reminder that one person can make an extraordinary difference in the lives of many.

As we remember the life of Matt Langley Bell III, we can take pride in knowing that he has influenced so many people in a positive way. As a fellow elected official and as a friend, I appreciate the importance of dedication and devotion to public office. I can't think of a better way to be reminded of that fact than in honoring of life of the late Matt Langley Bell III.

INCOME EQUITY ACT OF 1999

**HON. MARTIN OLAV SABO**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 11, 1999*

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, the American economy continues to grow at a remarkable rate and to defy the troubles striking many other parts of the world. Yet despite the strength and prosperity of our economy, the income gap between rich and poor in this country is still on the rise. The benefits of the past 20 years of growth are being shared very unevenly—the richest 20% of households now earn as much as everyone else in America put together. It was not always this way. In the years from the end of World War II through the 1970s, economic growth brought with it greater equality. But in the past two decades this progress has been reversed, and our country now has a more unequal economy than we did in the 1940s.

As the income gap grows, working Americans are finding it harder to make ends meet. The dark secret of the 1990s expansion is that