

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Thursday, March 4, 1999

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HEFLEY).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 4, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOEL HEFLEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Reverend James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

We are grateful, O God, for the many blessings that have come from Your hand, and we begin this day with appreciation for the gift of friendship. With our families and with our colleagues, there can be that kind of relationship that transcends all the divisions of position or responsibility, that surmounts the differences that separate people from each other. For friends who support us when the day is done, we offer our praise. For friends who encourage us when we are discouraged, we offer thanks. For friends who forgive when we miss the mark and for friends who stand near us when we are alone, we offer these words of gratitude and thanksgiving. This is our earnest prayer. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WU led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair wishes to announce that the one-minute limit will be limited to 15 on each side.

REMOVING SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS TEST

(Mr. KUYKENDALL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge Members' support of a piece of legislation that will be introduced shortly in the House. That legislation is called the Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 1999 and it removes the earnings limitations that now exist in our Social Security laws. For 1999, this limit penalizes retirees with above \$9,600 in earnings. For example, if the Social Security recipient is under the age of 65 and they earn \$20,000, they would lose \$5,200 from their Social Security benefit. It is a little better if you are age 65 to 69. Then you would only lose about \$3,500 in your Social Security benefits.

This restriction on outside earnings dates back to the original Social Security law. In 1935, unemployment in the United States exceeded 25 percent, net new business investment was a negative \$55 billion, and national wages had declined from \$50 billion in 1929 to \$30 billion.

In this environment, it made sense to provide a disincentive to an older generation of workers to remain in the work force. The government would take care of this older generation by ensuring a level of financial support we now call a social insurance system. In turn, new positions for younger workers were created, giving them the wherewithal to become financially independent from government assistance. Taxes from these workers would become the mechanism to fund the benefits payments to the retirees.

Sixty-five years later, it is time to revisit the premise underlying this penalty. With record low unemployment rates, the annual earnings limit is an outdated disincentive that we cannot afford to keep. We need the expertise and wisdom that these workers can provide, but we make it punitive to compensate them for this value. It is time we change this provision of the Social Security Act. The Senior Citizens Freedom to Work Act of 1999 does exactly that and addresses one of the most unfair provisions of all, the penalty for working. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this important, and long overdue, piece of legislation.

SCHOOL MODERNIZATION

(Mr. WU asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WU. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favor of school modernization. In communities like Astoria in Oregon, there are elementary schools with only one electrical plug in each classroom. No new elementary schools have been built there since 1927. This is simply not an adequate 21st century learning environment.

In my congressional district, communities like Astoria and McMinnville need the resources to modernize school buildings and provide schools with up-to-date technological tools. In other rapidly growing communities such as Beaverton and Hillsboro, schools are suffering from that growth. There, classroom overcrowding creates difficult learning environments and exacerbates student discipline problems. Schools there need the resources to expand and maintain education quality.

Congress can make it more affordable for local school districts to refurbish old school facilities and construct new school buildings by paying the interest on local school bonds designated for construction and repair of school facilities. The agenda is clear but it requires a real commitment by Congress. We must work hard to meet that challenge.

BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER TREATMENT ACT OF 1999

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that this year alone approximately 44,000 women will lose their lives to breast cancer and an additional 15,000 will die from cervical cancer. As these treacherous diseases continue to spread in women, researchers work diligently in hopes of finding a cure for cancerous cells and in hopes of providing solutions to improve and extend the lives of cancer patients. Yet with all this new technology and new medications, scores of low-income women, mothers, daughters and wives, will never know the benefits of this new research because they simply cannot afford treatment for their potentially fatal cancer.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) will soon introduce a bill that will provide States with an optional Medicaid benefit to provide coverage

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.