HONORING MEGAN ROONEY, LEGRAND SMITH SCHOLARSHIP WINNER OF CONCORD, MI

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 10, 1999

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, let it be known, that it is with great respect for the outstanding record of excellence she has compiled in academics, leadership and community service, that I am proud to salute Megan Rooney, winner of the 1999 LeGrand Smith Scholarship. This award is made to young adults who have demonstrated that they are truly committed to playing important roles in our Nation's future.

As a winner of the LeGrand Smith Scholarship, Megan is being honored for demonstrating that same generosity of spirit, intelligence, responsible citizenship, and capacity for human service that distinguished the late LeGrand Smith of Somerset, Michigan.

Megan Rooney is an exceptional student at Concord High School and possesses an impressive high school record. Megan's involvement in student government and school activities began her freshman year and continued through her senior year. She served as President of the student body and Vice-President of S.A.D.D. Megan excelled athletically as well on the basketball and softball teams.

Therefore, I am proud to join with her many admirers in extending my highest praise and congratulations to Megan Rooney for her selection as a winner of a LeGrand Smith Scholarship. This honor is also a testament to the parents, teachers, and others whose personal interest, strong support and active participation contributed to her success. To this remarkable young woman, I extend my most heartfelt good wishes for all her future endeavors.

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SHOULD PURCHASE FREE WEIGHT STRENGTH TRAINING EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES, NOT COMMUNIST CHINA

HON. WILLIAM F. GOODLING

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 10, 1999

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, the United States has long been the leader in manufacturing. Our ingenuity and efficiency drove our economy from a largely agrarian society to the bustling industrial powerhouse that it is today. However, over the years, many foreign countries with government controlled economies have steadily cut into our markets because their subsidized products clearly have an economic advantage in our open markets.

While I applaud efforts of the United States government to level the playing field by controlling the flood of subsidized imports, I cannot condone the actions by our government that facilitate the continued import of these cheap products. I encountered these troubles during the 103rd Congress when I shepherded legislation through the Congress requiring the U.S. Coast Guard to purchase buoy chain manufactured in the United States because an overabundance of their purchases relied on foreign sources. Today, a similar problem is occurring when the Department of Defense purchases free weight strength training equipment.

Despite having quality, domestically manufactured products available to provide our troops, various installations of the United States Armed Services are purchasing free weight strength training equipment manufactured in foreign countries, predominantly in the Peoples Republic of China. As a result, many of our troops are training with equipment that not only is manufactured by a Communist government that has worked to undermine the national security of the United States, but also may be manufactured with slave labor.

These cheap, lower-grade Chinese products are imported by American fitness companies and sold to our government under domestic labels at the expense of our domestic manufacturers. Consequently, American producers have suffered.

Buy American legislation was enacted to protect our domestic labor market by providing a preference for American goods in government purchases. This Act is critical to protecting the market share of our domestic producers from foreign government-subsidized manufacturers. However, the Buy American Act is not always obeyed.

According to an audit conducted last year by the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, an astonishing 59 percent of the contracts procuring military clothing and related items did not include the appropriate clause to implement the Buy American Act. This troubles me because many of our domestic producers are the ones that suffer.

Despite this audit and the subsequent instruction by the Defense Department to its procurement officials that the Buy American Act must be adhered to, to date, at least five defense installations provide predominantly foreign made free weight products for their personnel to weight train. Unfortunately, I believe this may signify a trend in purchases of foreign manufactured free weights under the Department of Defense.

For this reason, I tried offering an amendment that would prohibit the Secretary of Defense from procuring free weight equipment used by our troops for strength training and conditioning if those weights were not domestically manufactured. Unfortunately, the Rules Committee did not rule this amendment in order.

As a result, I offered a second amendment that would require the Inspector General to further investigate the Defense Department's compliance with purchases of the Buy American Act for free weight strength training equipment. However, I think it is important to note that while this approach could successfully highlight the problem, it would only delay the process, thereby, further punishing our domestic producers.

No one can argue that the physical fitness of our troops is vital. It is well known in the Pentagon that when you're physically fit, you're also mentally prepared for any conflict. It is the cornerstone of readiness. In fact, a recent survey of nearly 1,000 Marine Corps Times, cited fitness as the number one program offered under the Morale, Welfare and Recreation program.

In addition, the importance of using free weights to train our military cannot be understated. The Marine Corps Times article further demonstrated the need for free weights by explaining that access to free weights was the number one requested activity by deployed units and the second most popular request by units about to be deployed; second only to E-mail access. Clearly, the demand for free weights is present.

However, the fact that some of our troops use Chinese manufactured weights when a higher quality domestic product is available, I find remarkable.

Although the Department of Defense may have taken steps to curb Buy American Act procurement abuses in the aftermath of the Inspector General's report on clothing procurement, I am concerned that widespread abuses of foreign free weight procurements may continue unless Congress acts to end this practice.

I believe Congress needs to protect our domestic interests by ensuring that U.S. manufacturers are insulated from cheap imports being sold to the United States government, and that our troops train with a high quality product manufactured in the United States, not Communist China. Accordingly, it is my intention to prohibit our military from spending U.S. tax dollars on free weight strength training products that are produced by a Communist government that has little respect for our national security and human rights.

RETURN UNSPENT CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE FUNDS

HON. TIM ROEMER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 10, 1999

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce important, bipartisan legislation to require Congressional office funds be returned directly to the Department of the Treasury at the end of the year to help pay down the national debt. I offer this legislation with Representatives Fred Upton, Dave Camp and 52 original cosponsors.

At this time, Congress is making tough decisions about federal spending as we debate the appropriations legislation for Fiscal Year 2000. We are working hard to keep the overall spending levels within the caps implemented by the Balanced Budget Amendment, which I cosponsored and voted for in 1996. We are making difficult choices and sacrifices, and it is appropriate for Members of Congress to lead by example.

That is why I have introduced this legislation to show American taxpayers that Congress is tightening its own belt by returning money allocated to Members for official expenses, staff salaries and mail funds. I have introduced this bill in each of the past three Congresses and the language of my legislation has been attached to each Legislative Branch Appropriations bill dating back to fiscal year 1996.