

Had I been present I would have voted "nay" on 210 "nay" on 211, "yea" on 212, "nay" on 213.

FARM EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 16, 1999

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, recently I, along with a bipartisan list of cosponsors, introduced H.R. 1874, the Farm Employment Equity Act, also referenced as the "Unemployment Tax Act." The proposal reduces the unemployment tax burden on smaller American agricultural operations—the kind typically know as family farms.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to report today, the Colorado General Assembly has endorsed my proposal by the passage of Colorado House Joint Resolution 99–1053 sponsored by State Representative Brad Young, and State Senator Mark Hillman. Colorado's concern for small agriculture producers is now a matter of official public policy, and I commend the leadership of Representative Young and Senator Hillman. Mr. Speaker, this Congress should fully consider and embrace the recommendation of the Colorado General Assembly on this important matter of farm tax relief. Accordingly, I hereby submit for the RECORD, Colorado's official position put by House Joint Resolution 99–1053.

Whereas, Employers who pay cash wages of \$20,000 or more to farm workers in any calendar quarter or employ 10 or more employees at least part time during at least 20 different weeks in a calendar year are required to pay federal unemployment taxes in accordance with the federal "Unemployment Tax Act", and

Whereas, The \$20,000 threshold has not been adjusted since 1978 when federal unemployment tax liability was first imposed upon farm and ranch employees, and the average size of farms and ranches continues to increase as the number of farms and ranches decreases; and

Whereas, While farm production and efficiency have increased, rising costs, imports, and falling commodity prices all threaten the economic security of the nation's family farmers; and

Whereas, Given the crisis situation in American agriculture, America's family farmers need tax relief to maintain their operations and their families; and

Whereas, Unless America's farm families obtain needed tax relief, these farmers may be forced to sell their land, opening the door for development and threatening the well-being of local economies dependent upon small farms; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Sixty-second General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the Senate concurring herein: That we, the members of the Sixty-second General Assembly, request the Congress of the United States to pass legislation to amend the federal "Unemployment Tax Act" to increase the maximum amount of wages that a farmer can pay for agricultural labor without being subject to the federal unemployment tax on such labor, to reflect the effects of inflation on such maximum amount of wages since such tax was first enacted, and to provide for an annual inflation adjust-

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

June 17, 1999

ment in such maximum amount of wages; be it further

Resolved, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, the Secretary of the United States Department of Labor, and to each member of Colorado's delegation to the United States Congress.

SUPPORT OF THE AIR 21 LEGISLATION

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 16, 1999

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Air 21 legislation. I believe it is a fair attempt to ensure the safety and economic well being of our nation and its airports. I also support the Shuster manager's amendment. Mr. Speaker this legislation is fair and right. For those who oppose immediate elimination of slots this amendment postpones the elimination of slots at O'Hare for two years until 2002, and for New York's Kennedy and Laganardia airports until 2007. This will allow many of the smaller airlines increased access to larger airports ultimately increasing flight availability, reduced flight delays and decreased airfares.

It is imperative that Congress seize this opportunity to invest in our nation's aviation system and protect the flying public. Mr. Speaker, while airports are crowded today, air travel is forecast to increase by over 50 percent to one billion passengers over the next 10 years. We desperately need more funding to curb the increasing demand on our nation's airport. Capacity constraints and air traffic control outages have caused many flight delays and cancellations. Air 21 will enable America to continue to prosper and avoid gridlock in our aviation system. If we fail to invest in our nation's aviation system we will compromise aviation safety, increase delay time and hinder much needed technological innovations. Air 21 is exactly what we need, it provides airport modernization, improves capacity, and increases fair competition.

For this reason I support Air 21 and urge all of my colleagues to vote in support of this very important legislation.

HELP FOR THE UNINSURED: H.R. 2185

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 17, 1999

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, on June 14, I introduced H.R. 2185, the Health Insurance for Americans Act, to provide refundable tax credits for the purchase of health insurance through a consumer co-op type of mechanism.

We must act to revise America's health care system. The current system of employer-based coverage is dying, as the following quote from a May 1999 study for the Health Insurance Association of America by Dr. William Custer, makes clear:

There were 31.8 million uninsured non-elderly Americans in 1987. In 1997, this number had risen to 43.1 million, which represents a 35.5 percent increase. From 1996 to 1997 alone, the number of non-elderly Americans without health insurance rose by 4.1 percent. And this report forecasts that the number of uninsured Americans will climb to 53 million during the next ten years and could, if the nation experiences an economic downturn and higher-than-predicted health-care cost inflation, reach 60 million by 2007. This would mean that almost one of every four non-elderly Americans would lack health coverage.

The primary reason for the increase in the number of Americans without health coverage over the past 15 years has been the increase of health care costs relative to family income. Almost six of every ten uninsured Americans lives in families with incomes of less than 200% of the federal poverty level. And while public programs such as Medicaid provide health coverage to about half of those in families with incomes below the federal poverty level, these individuals account for nearly three out of every ten uninsured Americans.

Is there hope that other proposals will noticeably reduce the number of uninsured? For example, various Republicans are pushing the idea of Health Marts and Association Health Plans as forums where small businessmen can buy cheaper health insurance policies for their workers. But we know from polling of many small businesses that they have no interest in being in the health insurance-providing business. Even if it didn't cost them a penny, a majority of small businesses have said they didn't want to be involved in this process!

In addition, a May 1999 study by the National Coalition on Health Care entitled "Small Employer Health Insurance Purchasing Arrangements: Can They Expand Coverage?" reports:

The central conclusion of this study is that while Health Marts and Association Health Plans will offer advantages to some small firms and may somewhat reduce the deterioration in health insurance coverage in the U.S., they will not by themselves solve the problem of the uninsured. That is primarily because, on balance, neither Health Marts nor Association Health Plans are likely to reduce health costs enough to significantly entice most small firms not now offering coverage to buy health insurance. In addition, benefit packages that are significantly less comprehensive than typical do not seem to have broad appeal, and may still be too costly for most small businesses

Even the most optimistic estimates of the impact of eliminating state mandated benefits or implementing Association Health Plans suggest that between 80% and 80% of the 43 million Americans who are uninsured today would remain uninsured.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we need to try new approaches to a problem which is growing evermore serious. Following is a summary of the tax credit bill I have introduced. I hope my colleagues will join me in exploring this approach.

SUMMARY OF HEALTH INSURANCE FOR AMERICANS ACT

REFUNDABLE TAX CREDIT FOR PURCHASE OF QUALIFIED HEALTH INSURANCE

Amount: \$1,200/adult; \$600 per dependent child, \$3,600 max per family. Dollar amounts