

her to the hospital with continuous painful treatments. Still, she managed to coach the team from her hospital bed and rally them from the sidelines. When Linda passed away in April 1999, her funeral was attended by hundreds of families and friends, including her beloved girls from the softball team that decorated her casket with the winning ball autographed by the players, for that year the girls won the State championship.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no greater sacrifice for children today than giving our love and our patience and our time. She is a true hero. I want to thank Capitol Hill Police Officer Dave Pendleton and Linda's brother Gary for bringing this to our attention.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the letter Linda's brother sent to us.

IN MEMORY OF LINDA ASCHENBACH-HACKMANN
(By Gary Aschenbach)

As a result of a sudden, unscheduled change in staff at Northeast High School, the girls Junior Varsity softball team was left without a coach. Anxious to fill that position, a search was initiated to immediately locate an interested and qualified person. On the overwhelming recommendation of colleagues, Mrs. Linda Aschenbach-Hackmann, a former student of Northeast High and star athlete, was sought to fill the position. Linda accepted the position and began her coaching career at Northeast in 1996, where in the first and second year she successfully led the team to compete in the state finals. In 1999, they triumphed to not only compete in the finals, but progressed to win the JV County Championship with an 18-0 record. The team's achievement had not accomplished in over a decade at Northeast High School.

Without warning, in late 1998 Linda was suddenly stricken with Lymphoma cancer that eventually confined her to hospital care undergoing continuous, painful treatment. Still, she kept a watchful eye on the excellent progress of her talented softball team. She received daily updates and visits from fellow coaches and players as she continued to coach and rally her girls from the sidelines. Through her relentless love of players and the game, she won the respect and confidence of everyone. On April 17, 1999, exactly 30 years to the day after the death of her father, Linda succumbed to the attack of the cancer after a gallant fight. Her funeral was attended by hundreds of family and friends, including her beloved girls from the softball team who decorated her casket with the winning ball autographed by the players.

Linda will always be remembered for her sportsmanship and ability to teach the fundamental rules and skills of the successful ball player. Her enthusiastic personality was complimented by the natural patience she shared with the youth. After her death and in her memory for so many accomplishments, Northeast High School paid special tribute to Linda at the highest possible standard. They immediately offered in her honor an annual scholarship to be given to a qualified athletic student. The criteria for this award required that the recipient continually demonstrate the same community and leadership qualities toward others as they seek to further their own education and career.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

ELIMINATION OF THE MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

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

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to just talk about a very fundamental issue, a fundamental issue of importance to 50 million American taxpayers, 50 million middle-class working Americans. I have often been asked, whether I am at the steel workers hall in Hegwisch in the South Side of Chicago or the Legion post in Joliet or a chamber of commerce or the coffee shop called Weit's Cafe in Morris, Illinois, my hometown, or the local grain elevator, a pretty fundamental question; and that question is, is it right, is it fair, that under our Tax Code 25 million married working couples on average pay \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married?

Folks back home just do not understand why for almost 30 years we have had a marriage tax penalty, which the average is \$1,400 each for 25 million married working couples. In the south suburbs in the South Side of Chicago, \$1,400 is real money. It is a year's tuition at a local community college for a nursing student. It is 3 months of day care. It is a washer and a dryer. It is 4,000 diapers for a child.

Mr. Speaker, we need to address the issue of fairness. We need to address the issue to wipe out the marriage tax penalty suffered by 50 million married working people. It is an issue of fairness.

Here is how it works: what causes the marriage tax penalty is when a couple decides to marry, when they file their taxes, they file jointly. When they file their taxes jointly, their combined income usually pushes them into a higher tax bracket.

Let me introduce Shad and Michele Hallihan, two public school teachers from Joliet, Illinois. Shad and Michele have been married almost 2 years now. They just had a baby, a wonderful young couple; but they suffer almost the average marriage tax penalty.

Now, Shad and Michele have a combined income of about \$62,000. Suppose that they have an equal income, each making \$31,000. Michele here, if she stayed single, would be in the 15 percent tax bracket; but because she and Shad married, their combined income of \$62,000 pushes them into the 28 percent tax bracket, creating well over almost the average marriage tax penalty of \$1,400.

We want to help couples like Shad and Michele. Michele pointed out to me that the average marriage tax penalty would buy almost 4,000 diapers for their newborn baby.

Should not those couples like Michele and Shad be allowed to keep money, keep their hard-earned salary, their hard-earned income, rather than paying a tax just because they are married?

We are working to address that, and I was so pleased that this House of Representatives overwhelmingly supported, with a bipartisan vote, 268 Members of the House endorsed wiping out the marriage tax penalty in order to help couples such as Michele and Shad Hallihan.

H.R. 6, the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, passed this House as a stand-alone bill and addresses one issue, the need to wipe out the marriage tax penalty for 25 million married working couples. If we look at who pays the marriage tax penalty, one half of them itemize their taxes, millions of middle-class families itemize because they own a home or give money to church or charity, have education expenses. Well, we wipe out the marriage tax penalty for those who itemize their taxes by widening the 15 percent tax bracket so that joint filers can earn twice as much as single filers and stay in the 15 percent tax bracket. That will help Shad and Michele Hallihan.

For those who do not itemize, we double the standard deduction, helping those who do not itemize by doubling the standard deduction to be twice that of single people. We also help the working poor, those who participate in the earned income credit, by addressing the income eligibility, eliminating the marriage penalty for the working poor as well.

Mr. Speaker, it is a good bill. It helps those who itemize. It helps those who do not itemize. The primary beneficiaries are those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$75,000, those who suffer the marriage tax penalty the most. We do not raise taxes on anyone. We wipe out the marriage tax penalty. We help stay-at-home moms. We help those who are homeowners.

Mr. Speaker, eliminating the marriage tax penalty is a fundamental issue of fairness, and that is what it is all about. Let us make our Tax Code more fair.

Now, this legislation, the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, H.R. 6, passed the House with 268 votes. Every House Republican and 48 Democrats broke with their leadership to support our effort to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. We have tremendous momentum, and my hope is our friends in the Senate will follow the lead of the House, move quickly to move a stand-alone bill wiping out the marriage tax penalty; not loaded up with amendments or extraneous riders or other poison pills.