

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR ACT, MAY 4, 2000

HON. JENNIFER DUNN

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 4, 2000

Ms. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, the generous hearts of Americans know no income or class boundaries. Tens of millions of people give annually to support charities such as their local churches, youth and family organizations, and medical research programs. It is a testament to the willingness of families to give back to the community on which they rely on for so much.

Yet, under current law, only a small portion of individuals who contribute to charities receive a tax benefit for their gifts. This is because the deduction that is provided for a gift to charity is only available to taxpayers who itemize on their returns. These filers represent only 30 percent of all taxpayers.

Today, along with Senator PAUL COVERDELL, I rise to introduce the Neighbor to Neighbor Act. This important proposal will extend the charitable deduction to non-itemizers and will grant them tax relief on the first dollar of their gift. Under the bill, joint filers will receive dollar-for-dollar deduction on their donations up to \$1,000 and individuals will receive a deduction on their donations up to \$500. The Neighbor to Neighbor Act will benefit 67 million charitable givers and will for the first time encourage and reward contributions made by all taxpayers. According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, this bill will provide \$52 billion in tax relief over the next 10 years. Most importantly, since the overwhelming majority of non-itemizers are low- and middle-income Americans, this is genuinely broad-based tax relief.

One important element of charitable giving is being able to plan a contribution with the tax deduction in mind. For most taxpayers who now receive the deduction, however, this means performing an estimate of future tax liability and making contributions accordingly. This can be an inefficient and imprecise method.

The Neighbor to Neighbor Act will eliminate the complexities of this current system by allowing both itemizers and non-itemizers the ability to contribute to charities through April 15th and deduct that contribution from the previous year's taxes. As a result, taxpayers will have the ability to contribute after they receive their tax information at the beginning of the year and can precisely calculate their liability and give back accordingly.

The Neighbor to Neighbor Act acknowledges the important role that all Americans play in building strong communities through private charities. By every measure, these groups are more effective at instilling strong values in our youth and transforming society from the ground up. I urge my colleagues in

both the House and Senate to support this important bill.

RECOGNITION OF EQUAL PAY DAY

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 4, 2000

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize California's Equal Pay Day, May 11, 2000. This day allows us to fully recognize the value of women's skills and significant contributions to the labor force.

It has been over 35 years since the passage of the Equal Pay Act and title VII of the Civil Rights Act, but women in America still suffer the consequences of inequitable pay differentials.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research has reported that, the average 25-year-old woman will earn \$523,000 less than the average 25-year-old man will over the next 40 years, if current wage patterns continue. In 1998, women earned 73 cents, to every dollar earned by men. This is an overwhelming difference of 27 percent less.

Today, working women constitute a large segment of this Nation's work force, and a vast majority of households are dependent on the wages of working mothers. These women deserve fair and equal pay. Often, working families are just one paycheck away from economic hardships. Fair and equal pay for women would go a long way toward strengthening the security of families today and enhancing the prospects of retirement tomorrow.

May 11, 2000, will symbolize the day on which the wages paid to American women this year, when added to their incomes in 1999, will finally equal the 1999 earnings of American men.

Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize women for their lasting contributions to the American work force and urge my colleagues to continue their work to bring fair and equal pay to all U.S. citizens.

REBELS IN SIERRA LEONE

HON. TONY P. HALL

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 4, 2000

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today I am outraged at the news that rebels in Sierra Leone murdered seven United Nations peacekeepers on May 3, and that more than 40 others remain hostages.

By coincidence, on that same date this House approved the thoughtful legislation proposed by our colleague, Mr. GEJDENSON. His bill, which I was honored to co-sponsor, is an

investment in Sierra Leone's peace process that is overdue and one which, I hope, will help end the violence there. It funds the effort other nations have joined to disarm and rehabilitate the soldiers—many of them young children—who battled each other for eight long years until the July 1999 peace agreement. It funds a truth and reconciliation commission that aims to heal the wounds of civilians who have been caught up in the war but have no hope for justice under the peace agreement. And it takes other needed steps.

Mr. Speaker, I visited Sierra Leone last year with Congressman FRANK WOLF. We were both horrified by the butchery of innocent people who had lost their hands, legs, ears and noses to machete-wielding rebels. Neither of us will ever forget what we saw in the capital's amputation camp; I am particularly haunted by one charming toddler who will struggle all her life because one of the rebels chopped off her hand. "Give us a hand," the country's president had said in his election campaign. Rebels, driven by greed for the nation's tremendous diamond wealth and for power, twisted President Kabbah's campaign slogan around, telling their victims as they dismembered them, "go and ask Kabbah for your hand."

We also were dismayed to learn of the United States' role in pressing Sierra Leone's elected government to sign a peace agreement that indemnified the rebels who had committed these atrocities. Not only would no one be prosecuted for war crimes, the leader of the rebels would be put in charge of the nation's considerable wealth—wealth he had diverted into the coffers of his rebel forces.

No one, save a regional coalition led nobly by Nigeria, had come to Sierra Leone's aid in any significant way during this war. We sent bandages and food, of course, but our country failed to expend the effort needed to stop this war. We had lots of excuses—"we were busy in Kosovo," a country no less middle-class than Sierra Leone. Or, "it was Africa, and we still feel the loss of our men and our prestige in Somalia." It may have been clever political calculus for our government to figure this peace agreement was the best Sierra Leone's people could get, but the day we made that decision was a dark one for America's honor.

Most observers have been awed by Sierra Leoneans' willingness to accept peace without justice. I too was persuaded by the people I heard there and in this country. Perhaps Sierra Leoneans knew best that this was their best hope for peace if they could live with this shameful agreement, our country should not stand in their way.

But now Sierra Leoneans have neither justice nor peace. Atrocities against civilians continue, with well-documented instances of girls being kidnaped to serve as sex slaves and domestic servants; of villages being attacked and looted; of random murders. U.N. peacekeeping troops have not been immune from

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