even playing field for businesses making decisions about where to locate their new facilities. I worked with other Representatives and Senators to provide federal tax support for cleaning up and re-using brownfield sites. In 1997, we succeeded in adding a provision to the federal tax code which allowed taxpayers to expense the costs of environmental remediation of brownfield sites in certain economically distressed areas. Last year, I worked successfully with Congressman Weller and several colleagues to extend the provision, which was scheduled to sunset at the end of 2000, and to apply it to brownfield sites anywhere in the country.

I believe that one additional change should be made to the brownfields tax provision. I think that Congress should make the brownfields provision a permanent part of the federal tax code. Consequently, I have introduced legislation today to make the brownfields expensing provision permanent. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

INTRODUCTION OF THE BUILDING, RENOVATING, IMPROVING, AND CONSTRUCTING KIDS' SCHOOLS ACT OF 2000

HON. JUDY BIGGERT
OF ILLINOIS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, April 4, 2001

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, in 1995 and 1996, the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) released reports outlining the deplorable conditions in many of our nation's elementary and secondary schools. A GAO survey showed that America's schools are in need of an estimated $112 billion in repairs and that $1 billion alone is required to get schools in compliance with federal mandates requiring the elimination of hazards such as asbestos, lead in water, radon, and to improve accessibility for the disabled.

It's no small wonder these repair bills are mounting—the U.S. Department of Education has found that the average age of a public school building is 42 years. And while our school buildings are aging, student enrollments are expanding—putting even more pressure on a crumbling infrastructure. According to the Projections of Education Statistics to 2010 by the National Center for Education Statistics, total K-12 student enrollment in 2010 will exceed 53 million.

The decline in the condition of our nation's schools is not limited to one particular region. Every state has schools that are in need of repair and modernization, and my home state of Illinois is no exception. The Illinois State Board of Education estimates that over the next five years, Illinois' school districts will need more than $8.2 billion in infrastructure work.

Mr. Speaker, as a strong supporter of local control of education, I believe that school construction and renovation are areas best directed by states and local communities. That's why I applaud those states that have passed measures designed to help schools replace and modernize their facilities. Illinois is one of those states that have stepped up to the plate in this regard.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

In December 1997, The Illinois General Assembly passed a school construction law to address the shortage of classroom space brought on by population growth and aging buildings. To fund the program, the General Assembly approved the sale of $1.4 billion in school construction bonds over a five-year period. Illinois Governor George Ryan's "Illinois FIRST" program later added another $1.1 billion to extend the program.

But despite the best efforts of Illinois and other states, the long-term costs of repairing and upgrading our nation's schools are proving more than many state and local governments can bear. In an attempt to assist in these efforts, Congress last year provided over $1 billion in grants for school modernization purposes. But that amount is like a drop in the bucket, and our schools continue to fall into further disrepair and obsolescence.

That's why I rise today to introduce the "Building, Renovating, Improving, and Constructing Kids' Schools (BRICKS) Act"—legislation addressing our nation's burgeoning demand for elementary and secondary education school repair. This legislation is a slightly modified version of legislation I introduced last year and is the companion bill to S. 119, which was introduced in the Senate by my friend and colleague, Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine.

Here is what the BRICKS Act does. First, it provides $20 billion in interest-free and low-interest federal loans to support school construction and repair at the local level. These loans can be used in two ways. One, at least 50 percent of the loans are designated to pay the interest owed by states and localities on bonds that are issued through the year 2003. And two, the loans can be used to support State revolving fund programs or other State- administered school modernization programs. These loans will be interest-free for the first five years, with low interest rates to follow.

The BRICKS Act allocates these school construction loans on an annual basis, using the Title I distribution formula. Monies would be distributed to states at the request of each state's governor and without a lengthy application process.

The money provided for under this bill is used to support, not supplant, local school construction efforts. These loans are designed to allow states and localities to issue bonds that would not otherwise be made due to financial limitations.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, these loans will be distributed in a fiscally responsible manner that does take away from the Social Security program or the projected on-budget surpluses. Specifically, my bill will generate funding from the Exchange Stabilization Fund (ESF)—a fund that was created through the Gold Reserve Act of 1934 and that currently has more than $40 billion in assets. This is a fund that some—including former Federal Reserve Board Governor Lawrence B. Lindsey—have called for liquidating.

Finally, the school construction and modernization loan program is paid for by a government hand-out. The BRICKS Act requires a State entity or local government that receives funding under this legislation to repay the loan to the Exchange Stabilization Fund. At the same time, this proposal ensures that states and local governments will not be burdened by excessive interest rates—or be forced to repay the loan at an unreasonable amount of time.

After the first five interest-free years, the interest rates on these loans will be no greater than 4.5 percent. Again, no payment will be owed, and no interest will accrue for five years, unless the federal government prior to that date meets its financial commitment to funding 40 percent of the costs borne by local school districts for providing special education services, as is currently required by federal law.

Mr. Speaker, the BRICKS Act is a fiscally responsible answer to a serious national problem. I am proud to offer this legislation for the House's consideration. I also am pleased to note how this legislation will help schools located in the 13th Congressional District of Illinois, which I represent. As my colleagues may know, there are currently 865,000 school children in Illinois, and one in three students attends an elementary or secondary school in our district. As a result, some of the fastest growing communities in the nation. School administrators in my district have made known that school construction and renovation have failed to keep pace with the explosive population growth and increased rates of student enrollment. Time and again, they have told me that the growth in tax revenues from new households has not kept up with the costs of construction needed to serve them. By providing schools with state and states with more fiscal flexibility and options, the BRICKS Act addresses one of the most pressing problems in our congressional district and in districts across the United States.

I urge my colleagues to support the BRICKS Act. This timely legislation makes responsible use of limited federal resources and effectively meets a commitment to giving every child an opportunity to attend school in an environment that is physically safe and conducive to learning.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT

HON. JOE KNOLENBERG
OF MICHIGAN
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, April 4, 2001

Mr. KNOLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer two resolutions under the Congressional Review Act to rescind two egregious regulations promulgated by the previous administration that affect consumers nationwide.

On October 5, 2000, the Department of Energy (DOE) issued proposed regulations on the energy efficiency of clothes washers, air conditioners and heat pumps. Myself, and many of my House colleagues strongly oppose these new mandates.

At the end of the 106th Congress, I introduced H.R. 5613 along with 31 co-sponsors to extend the insufficient 60-day public comment period on these rulemakings. The former Clinton Administration, in its rush to issue a flurry of midnight regulations, overlooked both Congressional and public displeasure with these mandates and issued the final rule in the Federal Register in January.

I am particularly troubled by the proposed rules as they pertain to household clothes washers. Nearly 81 million American households have washers and roughly 10 million
new units are shipped every year. The impact of this new rule would effectively double the price of purchasing a new washer and elimi-
nate consumer choice through a de facto mandate of side-loading washers. Many have ar-
gued that the proposed standards for clothes washers could be met with conventional top-
loading designs, but the reality is that a side-
loading washer design is the only means of achieving these efficiency standards.

The cost increases associated with these pend ing regulations are extravagant. DOE es-
timates the cost to average consumers to be: $240 more for clothes washers, $274 more for residential central air conditioners, and $486 more for residential heat pumps. In fact, these products are available now and people do not buy them. Side-loading washers make up less than 12% of the washers sold in the U.S. today.

Also, the new washing machines required by this regulation would require an average ten-
m inutes in run time per wash. Moreover, these machines will require a special brand of soap manufactured specially for these washers. In addition, fears exist that these appliances will require more expensive servicing.

I am especially concerned that consumers have not been made aware of these mandates, and believe a 60-day comment period was insufficient to receive proper input. The poor, the elderly and those on fixed incomes cannot afford such a drastic change in price for the purpose of cleaning our clothes. The American public is not aware that this mis-
guided regulation is being foisted upon them. We should trust the American people to make their own choices and have control over their own lives.

Accordingly, I am introducing Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolutions to rescind these misguided regulations. The American con-
sumers deserve no less.

THE RETIREMENT SECURITY ACT
OF 2001
HON. RICHARD E. NEAL
OF MASSACHUSETTS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, April 4, 2001
Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, today I am intro-
ducing along with Messrs. RANGEL, MATSUI, COYNE and ANDREWS, the Retirement Security Act of 2001. This legislation expands and im-
pves pension coverage for low- and mod-
erate-income workers, by providing a direct incen-
tive for these workers to save for their re-
tirement through pension plans offered by their employers or through an Individual Retirement Account (IRA).

There are three provisions in this legislation.

First, the savings proposal allows eligible low-
and moderate-income taxpayers to receive up to a 50 percent tax credit for contributions to an IRA or to an employer sponsored defined contribution pension plan, like a 401(k) plan. The credit is refundable so that workers who have little or no access to a retirement plan now might be encouraged to do so under this bill. It is this group of workers who are most at risk of retiring without adequate retirement savings, and it is this group which has proven to be the most difficult to bring into the pen-
sion system. They need additional incentives to help get them off the ground, which is why a refundable credit is key to any proposal to expand pension coverage to this group.

The 50 percent refundable credit would be available for single taxpayers with adjusted gross incomes up to $12,500, and up to $25,000 for joint returns. The credit amount phases down from fifty percent to zero be-


between $25,000 and $75,000 on a joint return. The maximum credit amount would be $1,000. The credit would be claimed on the federal in-


come tax form. While it might be more appeal-
ing to workers if the money was given to them up front, a tax credit provides the most effi-
cient form of delivery.

The next two provisions of the bill provide tax credits to small businesses to expand pen-
sion coverage and participation. First, a small business tax credit would be given to small


employers of 100 or less employees equal to 50 percent of administrative and retirement education expenses for the first three years of a newly established qualified pension plan.

The second small business credit would be for employer contributions to newly qualified pension plans, also for up to three years. Under this provision, small employers could take a 50 percent tax credit for employer con-


tributions made to any pension plan on behalf of any non-highly compensated employees covered under the plan. All of these provisions would generally be effective after December 31, 2001.

Mr. Speaker, this is a summary of the provi-
sions contained in this bill. I believe it directly and firmly addresses the issues of pension coverage, participation, and savings for a group of workers who need this help because they are currently excluded from our pension system. This bill would expand the number of employees covered by plans and would pro-
vide a strong incentive for many individuals in a plan to save additional amounts for their re-
tirement. In addition, the bill provides needed incentives for small businesses to offer pen-
sion coverage to their employees.

I hope the Committee on Ways and Means will consider this approach carefully as an ad-
ti on any pension legislation that the Com-
mittee adopts this year.

CELEBRATING GREEK INDIPENDENCE
HON. BOB FILNER
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, April 4, 2001
Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate with my colleagues the 180th anniversary of Greek independence. Greece has been a foundation for the world, spreading from the dense forests of India to the shores of the United States. Its contributions pervade the sciences, arts and literature, and political the-
y and practice.

The United States owes many of its achievements to what we have learned, or borrowed, from the Greeks. Our two histories are very much intertwined. We now bask in the light of our own Golden Age. But we must realize that what befell the Athenians, the Spartans, and the Corinthians could happen to us. What we do with our Golden Age dictates our future for years to come. The decisions we make, both domestically and internationally, are critical to our future, even at the height of our power. What will be said of us two millennia from now? Will we be guilty of inciting our ad-
versaries, of manipulating our neighbors and allies? Will we destroy the rights and life of an individual so the majority will not be bothered by criticism and truth?

The United States owes much of its achievements to what we have learned, or borrowed, from the Greeks. Our two histories are very much intertwined. We now bask in the light of our own Golden Age. But we must realize that what befell the Athenians, the Spartans, and the Corinthians could happen to us. What we do with our Golden Age dictates our future for years to come. The decisions we make, both domestically and internationally, are critical to our future, even at the height of our power. What will be said of us two millennia from now? Will we be judged a success—or a failure?

Today, we celebrate the freedom of those who first gave birth to the very concept. The enduring legacy of Greece lies as much in the triumph of regaining independence as much as in its first establishment. We honor the Greek spirit and celebrate the liberation of a people and culture whose gifts transcend all ages.

AMENDMENTS TO THE TAXPAYER RELIEF ACT OF 1997
HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.
OF FLORIDA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, April 4, 2001
Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, today I am intro-
ducing a bill that would eliminate a trap for the