THE SILICONE BREAST IMPLANT RESEARCH AND INFORMATION ACT

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of the House Commerce Subcommittee on Health, I am committed to ensuring patients have complete and comprehensive access to information before they make a decision about a medical procedure.

To this end, I am proud to re-introduce the Silicone Breast Implant Research and Information Act because I believe it is critical to the advancement of women's health and is the first step towards answering the many questions about the safety and efficacy of silicone breast implants.

By re-introducing this bill today, I along with the 41 original cosponsors, hope to draw attention to an issue that has been either neglected or out right ignored for too long.

It is estimated that as many as 2 million women have received silicone breast implants over the last 30 years. Unfortunately, the information provided to these women before they elected to have silicone breast implants has been both incomplete and even inaccurate.

Moreover, results from past studies have only raised more questions about possible negative effects that ruptured or leaking silicone breast implants may have on breast milk, connective tissue, autoimmune diseases and the accuracy of breast cancer screening tests.

Our legislation ultimately seeks to change this by focusing on three critical points—information, research, and communication.

First, and in my opinion most importantly, this bill will ensure that information sent to women about silicone breast implants contains the most up to date and accurate information available.

Current information packets sent to women do not accurately describe some of the potential risks of silicone breast implants. While recent studies by the Institute of Medicine indicate the rupture rate may be as high as 70 percent, information sent to women suggests the rupture rate is only 1 percent.

Second, this bill encourages the director of the National Institutes of Health to expand existing research projects and clinical trials. Doing so will compliment past and existing studies and will hopefully clear up much of the confusion surrounding the safety and efficacy of silicone breast implants.

Finally, this bill establishes an open line of communication between federal agencies, researchers, the public health community and patient and breast cancer advocates.

Women, especially breast cancer patients, want and deserve full and open access to silicone breast implants. Therefore, it is critical that these products are safe and effective, and that women are provided complete and frequently updated information about the health risks and benefits of silicone breast implants.

While I unequivocally support a women's right to choose to use silicone breast implants, I believe we have a responsibility to support research efforts that will provide the maximum amount of information and understanding about these products.

Recently, I met with a group of women who had silicone breast implants. One of them shared with me her story about trying to get health insurance after she received her implants. To my dismay, it is standard operating procedures for several health plans to deny health insurance for women with breast implants. And this was a healthy woman! This story only reinforced my belief that silicone breast implants may cause very serious health problems.

The day has come to answer the questions and find out what is causing so many women who have implants to get sick. I hope each of you join me in support of this important legislation.

THE REFORESTATION TAX ACT OF 1999

HON. JENNIFER DUNN

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Ms. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, on March 11 when I introduced the Reforestation Tax Act of 1999, my statement focused on the benefits of this legislation to the forest products sector of our economy. Today, as I add eight more cosponsors to this increasingly popular effort, I would like to focus my remarks on the benefits for non-industrial forest land owners.

America's privately-owned forests make up almost 58% of our nation's total forest lands and are one of our most valuable resources. They provide wildlife habitat, maintain watershed health, and are used for a wide array of recreational activities such as hiking, camping, fishing, and hunting. In addition, they provide the foundation for a multi-billion dollar forest products industry.

To ensure that our wildlife habitat and watershed needs as well as a reliable supply of timber is available for the future, we need to encourage industrial and nonindustrial landowners to invest in enhancing their forest ownership. Investing in forest land is risky. Trees can take anywhere from 25 to 75 years to grow to maturity, depending on the type of tree, regional weather, and soil conditions. The key to success is good management, which is costly. Furthermore, fire, disease, floods, and ice storms—events that are uninsurable—can wipe out acres of trees at any time during the long, risky growing period.

The Reforestation Tax Act of 1999 will remove disincentives for private investment in our forests and help with the cost of maintaining them. By reducing the capital gains paid on timber for individuals and corporations by 3 percent each year the timber is held—up to a maximum reduction of 50 percent—forest landowners will be partially protected from being taxed on inflationary gains. While this provision would not fully compensate for the negative tax impact of inflation, it would provide a significant incentive for those forest land owners who must nurture their investment for a long period of time.

Today, many landowners cease reforestation efforts when they reach the current $10,000 ceiling on expenses that are eligible for the credit. Removing the cap on expenses eligible for the credit would eliminate a disincentive for private forest land owners to plant more trees. Current law allows this $10,000 in reforestation expenses to be amortized over a seven year period. My legislation not only eliminates the monetary cap but also reduces the amortization period to five years. With these changes, the reforestation tax credit and amortization will encourage forest landowners to operate in an ecologically-sound manner that leads to the expansion of investment in this vital natural resource.

By removing these current law disincentives to sustainable forestry for both our industrial and non-industrial forest land owners, we will increase reforestation and enhance sound environmental management on private land. We believe this will benefit Americans across the country, not just forest land owners.

I am grateful for the broad support the Reforestation Tax Act of 1999 has gained since its introduction, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House to make this bill a reality.

JUSTICE FOR ATOMIC VETERANS ACT—H.R. 1286

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, on behalf on myself and Congresswoman BERKLEY, I am today introducing H.R. 1286 the Justice for Atomic Veterans Act. This important legislation provides a presumption of service-connection for certain radiation-related illnesses suffered by veterans who were exposed during military service to ionizing radiation. These veterans include those who participated in atmospheric testing of a nuclear device, who participated in the occupation of Hiroshima or Nagaski between August 6, 1945 and July 1, 1946 and who were interned as prisoners of war in Japan during World War II and were therefore exposed to ionizing radiation.

During their military service, these veterans put their lives and health at risk. They were, in most cases, sworn to secrecy concerning the nature of their work. They were not provided with adequate protection from radiation. the amount of radiation to which they were exposed was not measured. Albert ''Smokey'' Parrish, a veteran who served at the Nevada test site wrote ''We, the Atomic veterans feel like an innocent man in prison for life, and no one will listen to the facts of the case.''

Under present law, veterans who engaged in radiation risk activities during military service are entitled to a presumption of service-connection for some illnesses, but for other illnesses veterans must prove causation by ''dose reconstruction estimates'' which many reputable scientists have found fatally flawed. Because of the recognized problems inherent in dose reconstruction, last year, the Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Kenneth Kizer, wrote that he personally recommended strong support as a ''matter of equity and fairness'' for legislation similar to the Justice for Atomic Veterans Act which was then proposed by Senator WELLSTONE.

It is not the fault of veterans that accurate records of their exposure to ionizing radiation were not kept and maintained. In fact, many veterans have been not been able to obtain their medical records relating to their exposure during military service despite their best efforts. Records have been lost and records of