Freedom to Work Act of 2000. I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this worthwhile piece of legislation.

This objective of this bill is simple and straightforward: it would totally remove the future earnings limit for working seniors who receive Social Security.

For too many years, those senior citizens, aged 65–69, who chose to continue to work, have had their Social Security benefits deducted by one dollar for every three dollars earned once their earnings went over the limit. For many years, this limit was $12,500 annually.

The 104th Congress made a much needed change in 1997, by raising the limit to $30,000 by 2002.

I have long believed that more needs to be done on this issue. Ever since coming to Washington, in the 93rd Congress, I have introduced legislation to either raise the earnings limit, or eliminate it, altogether. I believe that repeal of this regulation is one of the most effective things we in Congress can do to show our seniors that we recognize the value of their contributions to both our Nation's economy and to the character of our individual communities.

The Social Security earnings limit is a relic from the Great Depression era, when concern over mass unemployment led many to believe that the imposition of the limit would prevent retired individuals from competing with younger workers for scarce jobs. While the limit's utility in the 1930s is debatable, most everyone agrees with the argument that it has no place in today's work environment.

The earnings limit only serves to discourage seniors from working and diminishes their potential impact on society. It is a condescending regulation that conveys the message that seniors have nothing to contribute and are better off not serving in the work force. In doing this, it both reduces the standard of living for working seniors, as well as rob the country of the valuable experience and workplace skills of those senior citizens who, because of the earnings limit, forego returning to the workplace.

Thanks to revolutionary advances in the field of medicine, Americans are living longer than ever before in our Nation's history. Consequently, senior citizens are the fastest growing component of our country's population.

Moreover, the U.S. economy is currently running at very close to full employment. While the unemployment rate is at a historic low, demand for finished goods shows no signs of abating. Employers recognize this, and are searching for ways to address this challenge. Many have turned to senior citizens, who are a vast, largely untapped, labor resource. Consequently, recruitment of senior citizens by private industry is on the rise, and shows more signs of increasing in the future.

Given this, it simply makes no sense to maintain an arbitrary earnings limit that penalizes those individuals of retirement age who wish to continue being productive members of the work force. Nobody who wishes to enjoy retirement should be forced to work, however, those who do work should not be unfairly penalized for doing so.

Our senior citizens have their own unique and invaluable contributions to make to our society as a whole. I have long encouraged my colleagues in Congress to recognize and reward this initiative, rather than penalize it by clinging to outmoded regulatory relics.

For far too long, the poor budgetary environment made repeal of this limit a practical impossibility. Today's environment of growing surpluses has knocked away this last obstacle to reform. We need to seize this opportunity to provide simple, but effective reform for our working seniors.

Moreover, while important, the repeal of this limit should only be the first step towards improving the economic welfare of our senior citizens. Congress still needs to repeal the earnings limit for those seniors aged 62–64, and this debate should be the prelude to a full review of the taxes levied on our senior citizens, with the goal of repealing all taxes on Social Security benefits, which in effect are a discriminatory form of double taxation.

I am pleased to see that the President has finally stated his public support for the elimination of the earnings limit, and I commend my colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee for their diligence and attention to this issue in their recent favorable consideration of this bill.

I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this timely, and important legislation.

HONORING THE SOUTH BAY WOMEN OF THE YEAR

HON. STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to some exceptional women from my district being honored tomorrow as the South Bay Women of the Year. The honorees are Mrs. Katharine Ward Clemmer, the Honorable Katy Geissert, Ms. Jill Gomes, Mrs. Renee Henry, Mrs. Pamela Kenoyer, Mrs. Elaine Klessig, Mrs. Mary Jane Schoenheider, and Mrs. Darla Voorhees.

This honor is given to several remarkable women each year by the Switzer Center School and Clinical Services located in the City of Torrance, which serves children with learning, emotional, or social challenges. The 2000 South Bay Women of the Year Awards are presented to women who are making a difference in the lives of others. These individuals are being recognized for selflessly giving their time and efforts to improve the community. They are making an impact in the lives of others, not because they have to, but because they want to.

I thank the Switzer Center for recognizing these women and their significant accomplishments. I commend these eight women for their important contributions to the South Bay community. They have touched the lives of many. I congratulate them on receiving this award.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RUBEN HINOJOSA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, because of a transit problem, I unfortunately missed rollcall votes 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33. Had I been present I would have voted as follows:

Rollcall No. 29, Government Waste Corrections Act (H.R. 1827)—''yea''; rollcall No. 30, To Redesignate the Facility of the U.S. Postal Service in Greenville, SC, as the Keith D. Oglesby Station (H.R. 2952)—''yea''; rollcall No. 31, To Designate the U.S. Postal Office Located at 557 East Bay Street in Charleston, SC, as the Maybelle H. Howe Post Office (H.R. 3018)—''yea''; rollcall No. 32, Congratulating Lithuania on the 10th Anniversary of its Independence, S. Con. Res. 91—''yea''; rollcall No. 33, Recognizing the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War, H. J. Res. 86—''yea.''

CONGRATULATING THE CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

HON. MARGE ROUKEMA

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Church of the Annunciation in Paramus, New Jersey, on the dedication of its restored and renovated church building. This newly completed work not only provides more space for worship and community activity, but reflects the measure of faith it brings to the community and the growth of the church congregation.

The $2.2 million project will provide more than 8,000 square feet, reconfigured to meet the Second Vatican Council's direction for greater participation of the congregation in services. Modern lighting and sound systems have been added while maintaining the church's classic gothic design. Meeting space for parish organizations and community services has been expanded and the entire complex has been adopted for the physically challenged.

A church is, of course, far more than bricks and mortar. It is a place of prayer, worship and solace for all. As Pastor Michael Sheehan has said, the renovation project is a proclamation of the congregation's faith in the future that the Lord will continue to be with His people in Paramus.

A key element of the spirit surrounding the Church of the Annunciation has been the tradition of Christian charity. Members of this compassionate congregation have worked selflessly to help the less fortunate in the community, providing aid and assistance whenever and wherever it has been needed. They have truly embraced the Gospel according to St. Matthew: ''I was hungry and you gave me meat. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came unto me.''

The Church of the Annunciation traces its history to 1951, when Newark Archbishop Thomas J. Walsh ordered the construction of a new church to accommodate the rapidly growing Catholic population in Bergen County. Archbishop Walsh chose the site of the former House of Divine Providence, a Catholic charity hospital for the terminally ill that had remained vacant since it was gutted by fire in 1925. The Rev. William J. Buckley was assigned as the first pastor and held the first Mass in the Midland Avenue firehouse on September 14, 1952. The new church was dedicated the following March on the day before Palm Sunday. The first year of full operation saw 78 baptisms, four weddings and three funerals.

Rapid growth followed over the next several years, including construction of a rectory and the establishment of a church school for kindergarten–eighth grade. While the school closed in 1983 due to falling enrollment, overall growth has continued and the church today is the spiritual home of more than 1,200 families.

The Church of the Annunciation has been served by many distinguished clergy, but some have a special place in the memory of parishioners. Archbishop Walsh entrusted the Rev. William J. Buckley, an experienced priest of 29 years, with the important job of founding the church, overseeing the establishment of the new parish and serving as the first pastor. A practical man as well as a spiritual leader, the Rev. Buckley's first purchase was a 4-by-7-inch leather-bound accounts book in which to record the church's finances. In 1967, the Vietnam War touched the lives of the parish all too closely when the Rev. Charles Watters was killed in action. Pastor from 1956 to 1963, Father Watters was serving as an Army chaplain with the 173rd Airborne Brigade when his unit engaged a heavily armed enemy battalion. During the battle, Father Watters rushed to the front lines to aid wounded soldiers and give last rites to the dying. He repeatedly ran through intense enemy fire to rescue the wounded or give aid, and was eventually struck and killed. Father watters received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroism. The traditions and standards set by Father Buckley and Father Watters are ably carried on today by Father Sheehan.

The Church of the Annunciation has been a center of community life for generations, a gathering place for weddings, funerals and other passages of life not just for today's generation but their parents and grandparents as well. It continues to play a major role in the lives of its congregation and will do so for many years to come. In these times of moral upheaval and increasing violence among our youth—as evidenced by tragic shootings in schools across the nation—we especially value the dedication and commitment of our churches to the guidance of our young people. This is in the best tradition of building upon the strong foundations of our American democracy.

As the Church approaches the 50-year mark, the promise of its future seems bright. The faithfulness of its clergy, the devotion of its congregation and its dedication to Christian values are evidence of its enduring place in the community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating the Church of the Annunciation on nearly half a century of serving the spiritual needs of its congregation, and wishing this church and its parishioners the best for the future. God bless and Godspeed.

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES SCHULZ

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honor to stand before you today and pay tribute to the celebrated cartoonist Charles Schulz. His legacy will be remembered around the world for years to come. For 50 years, Mr. Schulz gave us the lovable characters that we could identify with, the Peanuts Gang.

I would also like to inform my colleagues of Schulz's generous contributions to the National D-Day Memorial Foundation in Bedford, Virginia. The Foundation is a group of veterans and volunteers designated by the U.S. Congress to build and maintain a memorial to Allied Forces who invaded the Normandy coast of France on June 6, 1944. The Foundation is charged with designing, building and operating a national memorial that will provide a place of reverence and solemnity honoring those who sacrificed so much on D-Day. The Foundation is committed to educating citizens of the world, especially young people, about the scope of the invasion; the role of individual American service men and women; the sacrifices made by the families and communities on the home front; and the critical importance and significance of D-Day.

Since its creation, Charles Schulz provided great support to the Foundation and the advancement of its goals. All donations in Charles Schulz's name should be directed, per Mr. Schultz's request, to The Campaign to Build The National D-Day Memorial and Education Center.

Again, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognition of this man's support for such a worthy cause.

COMMUNIST CHINA'S THREAT AGAINST TAIWAN

HON. DANA ROHRABACHER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, communist China recently issued a so-called ''white paper'' threatening to attack the republic of China on Taiwan, almost immediately after a high level Clinton Administration delegation led by Strobe Talbott visited Beijing. Reportedly, Talbott told the Chinese dictators that President Clinton wanted ''a constructive strategic partnership.'' Through the militant ''white paper'' Beijing stated it would militarily conquer Taiwan if Taiwan's democratically elected leaders refused to meet Beijing's timetable for reunification talks. This is a new condition meant to frighten voters in Taiwan prior to Taiwan's presidential election on March 18.

This latest bluster by Beijing is comparable to the 1996 Chinese ''missile test'' in the Taiwan Strait during Taiwan's first democratic Presidential election. Beijing failed to deter Taiwanese voters from electing President Lee Teng-hui. On March 18, the first time in China's 5,000 year history, Taiwanese voters will democratically choose a new president to replace a democratically elected leader.

Communist China's threats against Taiwan are deplorable. Taiwan is a vibrant democracy and its people should have every right to elect their new leader without any sort of outside interference. Beijing should recognize the fact that the Chinese people now have two separate governments—one democratic and the other a militant dictatorship. Reunification talks between Beijing and Taipei should be conducted as between two equal entities, allowing both sides to discuss the creation of a new democratic China through the free will of all Chinese people.

During this sensitive period, we should make clear to Beijing that the United States Government has zero tolerance for Beijing's bullying gestures toward the brave people of Taiwan. There current actions are sound reason to deny any trade agreements, such as the so called Permanent Normal Trade Relations proposal.

ORGAN DONATION AND TRANSPLANTATION IMPROVEMENTS ACT

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to join with my colleague, RAY LAHOOD, in introducing the Organ Donation and Transplantation Improvements Act of 2000, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to improve the national system of organ allocation and transplantation.

Under the provisions of the National Organ Transplant Act (NOTA), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has the responsibility for establishing and administering a national organ allocation program. In April of 1998, the Department published a regulation which directs the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) to address a number of inefficiencies and inequities in the existing organ allocation program. UNOS, the United Network for Organ Sharing, and a number of transplant centers, strongly objected to the regulation. The groups in opposition sought and secured a rider to the Omnibus Appropriations enacted in 1998 which blocked implementation of the Secretary's proposed regulation.

In October, 1998, the Congress suspended implementation of the Final Rule for one year to allow further study of its potential impact. During that time, Congress asked the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to review current Organ Procurement Transplantation Network (OPTN) policies and the potential impact of the Final Rule. The IOM study was completed in July of last year and provided overwhelming evidence in favor of the new regulations. Nevertheless, at the end of the last session of Congress, a second moratorium was added onto the Work Incentives Improvement Act, that provided for an additional 90-day delay of implementation of the Final Rule.

In the midst of this debate, last October, the House Commerce Committee debated and reported legislation, H.R. 2418, that would divest the Department of Health and Human Services of any authority to require anything of the OPTN. Functions of a scientific, clinical or medical nature would be in the sole discretion of the OPTN. All administrative and procedural functions would require mutual agreement of the Secretary and the Network.

Opponents of H.R. 2418, including the Governor of the great state of Illinois, believe that the legislation would create an unregulated monopoly of organ allocations, and allow UNOS to run the organ allocation program unfettered. The legislation also favors small states with small centers at the expense of patients waiting for transplants at larger centers.