HONORING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF FAMILY SERVICES OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

HON. CURT WELDON

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 2, 2000

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate Family Services of Montgomery County for its century of accomplishment to be celebrated on Tuesday, October 3, 2000. Family Services' mission is to strengthen the quality of life for individuals, families, and our community, by providing preventive intervention and essential support during times of need. Family Services of Montgomery County and all of the wonderful people associated with this fine organization are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people in our community through an innovative and comprehensive range of human services.

Family Services reached its present form when three smaller Montgomery County nonprofit organizations merged—Family Service of Pottstown, the Lower Montgomery County Service Society, and the Main Line neighborhood (with the earliest beginning in 1900). Currently they have a central office in Norristown, three major branch offices, and several satellite facilities.

Family Services' formalized programs include: Foster Grandparent Program, Meals on Wheels, Professional Counseling, Project HEARTH (helping elderly adults remain in their homes), Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Project HOPE (HIV–AIDS prevention and support services, Families and Schools Together (FAST), Plays for Living, Parent-to-Parent Internet Support Group, Employee Assistance Programs, Student Training, Project Yes, and Safe Kids. The services have also included helping people to access housing, fuel and other material needs, linkage to medicare, identifying peer support systems, and locating resources to prevent future problems.

Throughout the last one hundred years, Family Services and their predecessor organizations have been on the ''cutting edge'' of social services in our community. They have consistently led the way in helping people who are experiencing a crisis in their lives to help themselves.

Family Services continues to provide innovative and timely programs in response to community requests. Examples of recent additions to their services are the ''Parent-to-Parent Internet Support Group,'' ''Project Yes'' in Rolling Hills, ''Safe Kids'' in the Lower Merion area, and the ''New Beginnings'' prison ministry. They have also recently experienced expansion of the ''FAST'' program to the Abington and Methacton School Districts, staffed new locations in Pottstown, Phoenixville, and Royersford with the ''Foster Grandparent'' program, acquired a van for additional efficiency in their ''Meals on Wheels'' program, and more than quadrupled the size of their HIV/AIDS ''Peer Prevention and Education'' program.

There is no doubt that many people will face difficulties during their lives. At those times, responsible assistance coupled with sensitive caring go a long way to help ease problems. Mark Lieberman, Executive Director of Family Services, and all of the wonderful people associated with this fine organization can take pride in all that they have done, and all that they continue to do each and every day.

The continued need for Family Services is determined by the challenges that individuals, families and our community face. They are moving into their second hundred years of service by building upon community partnerships that will develop and provide essential services for people who need preventive intervention and essential support in order to enhance the quality of their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you and all of our colleagues to join me in wishing Family Services of Montgomery County a most joyous 100th anniversary celebration and our appreciation for a job well done.

SMALL BUSINESS LIABILITY RELIEF ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL G. OXLEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 26, 2000

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, a number of comments have been made about the process of producing H.R. 5175, the Small Business Liability Relief Act by opponents of the legislation. I find these comments unfair and misleading. The following timeline should help set the record straight. Contrary to the impression that some Members imply in their statements, Minority staff on the Transportation and Commerce Committees have been aware of the basic proposal behind H.R. 5175 for months.

First, during the 103d, 104th, 105th, and early 106th Congresses, the Commerce and Transportation Committees held dozens of hearings with hundreds of witnesses outlining the tremendous problems with the badly broken Superfund program. Dozens of hearings outline that Superfund is an unjust litigation nightmare and has a devastating impact on small businesses. The Committees held hearings on a number of Superfund bills during this time which have provisions that would provide significant relief for small businesses.

On August 5, 1999, H.R. 1300, a comprehensive bill to reform Superfund, passed the Transportation Committee by a vote of 69–2. The bill contains a de micromis exemption, an exemption for small businesses that provide ordinary garbage, and the de minimis and ability to pay settlement policy—generally, all components of the later, H.R. 5175. The Clinton-Gore Administration opposes the bill even though it now has 149 cosponsors, including 69 Democrats.

On October 13, 1999, H.R. 2580 passed in Commerce Committee by a vote of 30 to 21. The bill includes the same legislative language as H.R. 1300 providing a de micromis exemption, an exemption for small businesses that provide ordinary garbage, and the de minimis and ability to pay settlement policy.

In early November 1999, the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) showed both Majority and Minority staff of the Commerce and Transportation Committee a draft small business liability relief bill which they claimed was the product of two weeks of discussions with the Environmental Protection Agency. The draft clearly had been faxed to NFIB staff from the Office of the Administrator at EPA. NFIB states that this version and earlier versions of the draft bill had been produced at EPA and provided to them through their discussions. NFIB further claims that Administrator Browner was both fully aware of the draft and found the draft bill to be acceptable to EPA.

In June through July of this year, Majority staff of the Commerce and Transportation Committees gave the NFIB–EPA draft fill to legislative counsel to put into proper legislative drafting form. This text was provided to Minority staff. Majority and Minority staff met to discuss this and other Superfund issues.

On August 18, 2000, EPA sent a letter in response to the request of Representative DINGELL about the NFIB–EPA discussion draft bill. EPA noted one problem concerning the prospective application of the de micromis exemption.

On September 14, 2000, a bipartisan group of cosponsors introduced H.R. 5175, the Small Business Liability Relief Act which largely reflects the NFIB–EPA 1999 draft bill and addresses the issue raised by EPA in August 2000. The most significant change between the bill and the NFIB-EPA discussion draft was to address the issue raised by EPA in its August 2000 letter.

On September 19, 2000, NFIB staff met with EPA and Department of Justice (DOJ) staff to review H.R. 5175. NFIB states that EPA and DOJ staff provided line by line comments on technical concerns within the legislation. These comments were relayed to Commerce and Transportation Majority staff.

On September 21, 2000, Majority and Minority staff of the Commerce and Transportation Committees and representatives from EPA and the Department of Justice met to discuss comments on H.R. 5175.

On September 24, 2000, a draft with minor revisions was delivered to EPA and Minority staff offices to address a number of the concerns raised at the meetings of September 19 and 21.

On September 25, 2000, Majority staff invited EPA and Minority staff to meet or to provide any written comments on the revised bill. Neither EPA nor Minority staff accepted the invitation.

On September 26, 2000, H.R. 5175, revised to address certain Minority and Administration concerns, was brought up for a vote.

The small business liability relief issue has had extensive process going back years. The basic NFIB–EPA discussion draft bill had been provided to Minority staff as far back as November 1999. Mr. DINGELL received responses from EPA to his questions concerning the draft in August 2000. The substantive arguments being made by certain Members against the bill—such as those concerning the burden of proof or the size definition of small businesses—are arguments over language that is in these early drafts. There was more than enough time to provide specific written comments to improve the bill.