

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT REVENUE MEASURES

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit my testimony on Select Revenue Measures before the Committee on Ways and Means for the RECORD:

Thank you Chairman Camp and Ranking Member McNulty for holding this important hearing. I would like to bring to your attention a proposal I introduced last Congress, H.R. 3655, the Progressive Tax Act of 2003, which will have a positive impact on millions of taxpayers.

I think it is fair to say that all Members of Congress believe we need to strive for a fair, simple, and adequate tax system. We may disagree on how this has been accomplished, but we have the same goals.

However, I think we can agree on the need for transparency. Transparency in the tax system is necessary to achieve fairness. Transparency permits the taxpayer to understand how fairness is arrived in the tax code. A simplified tax code can provide this transparency, which in turn provides a sense of trust in the government.

This committee should enact my proposal to create a \$2000 Simplified Family Credit, a refundable tax credit that simplifies the tax code by consolidating the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit, Additional Child Credit, and dependent exemption for children into one streamlined Simplified Family Credit. This tax credit will simplify the tax code, provide greater transparency, provide extra work incentives, and provide a stimulus effect.

Families should not have to struggle to understand the eligibility requirements for each of the various family tax breaks in current law. All families should follow the same set of rules.

The Simplified Family Credit is structured to provide progressive tax benefits and a work incentive. The families with lower income will get more benefit, but they are also rewarded for work. The credit would be steeply phased in at the lowest income levels providing the incentive to work and a substantial benefit. As income rises a slow phase out would be necessary to ensure we maintain a progressive tax system.

The cost of this proposal would fall in the range of \$20 billion a year. Given our current deficit problems, I believe that Congress should only create the Simplified Family Tax Credit if it is paid for. In my legislation H.R. 3655, there are several options to pay for this proposal including rolling back parts of the tax cuts enacted in the last 5 years. Those tax cuts only added to the complexity of the tax code and removed any remaining transparency.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

CHALLENGES IN THE MIDDLE
EAST

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, with the world watching, Israel announced on April 18,

2004 its disengagement plan to withdraw Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip and four West Bank settlements. Intended to improve security for Israeli citizens, Israel's disengagement plan also creates a possibility for greater Middle East peace.

Beginning in 1948, hostile nations have denied Israel's right to exist. Today, violence from terrorist organizations not only threatens stability in the region but the sovereignty of the Israeli people.

With the future uncertain, we must recognize one thing: freedom and security can be the future for both the Palestinian and Israeli people. The impending disengagement creates the opportunity for progress towards this goal.

We must recognize the difficulties Israel will face and support our dependable ally. We must also support efforts by the Palestinian leadership to fight terror and create more peaceful, sound Palestinian regions.

And, as Americans who have faced threats to our own existence, we must never forget what freedom is.

A TRIBUTE TO STEVE
DIGERLANDO

HON. CHRISTOPHER COX

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. COX. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a close, personal friend, Steve DiGerlando, on his last day as Chief of Staff in my California office. It is with deep gratitude—and more than a little sadness—that today my staff and I wish Steve farewell. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his twelve outstanding years of dedicated service to my office and to the residents of the 48th district of California.

For more than a decade, Steve has been a tireless advocate on behalf of Orange County residents. Since first joining my staff in 1991, Steve has personally handled more than 5,000 cases and he has helped literally thousands of people resolve their problems with Federal agencies. After a brief leave from my office a few years back, Steve returned in 2003 to take the post of Deputy District Director. Soon thereafter he was promoted to California Chief of Staff, where he demonstrated superb leadership and management skills. Steve has been a loyal and capable director, and his expertise, endless patience and imperturbable spirit have guided the office through the most hectic of times. All of us who have been fortunate to work with Steve over the years are deeply grateful for his generosity, his thoughtfulness and his friendship.

Steve was born and raised in Orange County, and his entire family still resides in Southern California. He is a staunch supporter of his alma mater, California State University, Fullerton, where he earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees. Upon completing his Masters in History at Cal State Fullerton, he went on to become a professor of world history and American history at Cypress Community College and Mt. San Antonio College. Thankfully for us, Steve's vast knowledge of history includes that of Orange County. He has been most helpful in educating members of my Washington staff who have not been

personally familiar with the district, and he could often be found behind the wheel of a car giving his famed Orange County tour to visiting staff.

Though he is an Orange County native, Steve is somehow, mysteriously, an ardent Dodgers fan. As a big Angels fan myself, this has created a friendly baseball rivalry in the office, even though Steve always trumps me in baseball trivia regardless of the team we're discussing. I know he'll be missing those Dodger dogs once he leaves California.

Steve is a scholar and historian in the truest sense. Beyond academia, his wealth of knowledge ranges from the most important to the most trivial of facts. After working with him for more than twelve years, I am now ready to audition for Jeopardy. One particular anecdote I'll always remember relates to the statue of a rather obscure hero in California history that stands in the United States Capitol. Whenever I lead tours down this particular hall, I always bet my visitors that they cannot name the two statues that represent California. Invariably, most are able to name the most famous statue, Father Junipero Serra, the founder of the California missions. To this day, not a single one has correctly identified the second statue—except, of course, for Steve. Not only did he know the name, but he was an expert on the legacy of Thomas Starr King, the little known leader whose eloquent speeches and brave action saved California for the Union during the Civil War. In fact, Steve's knowledge of Thomas Starr King has even made its way to the pages of Orange County's local newspaper.

My staff and I are not the only ones who will miss Steve after he departs the office. A void will be felt throughout the county and the state when he and his family move to their new home in Houston, Texas. While we will miss having him in Orange County, we're excited for the great opportunities that await Steve, his wife Rita, and their daughter Samantha in the Lone Star State.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing Steve DiGerlando on the occasion of his last day as my California Chief of Staff. He will be greatly missed, and I wish him every success in his future endeavors.

GAMBLING EXPLOSION

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I remain terribly concerned about the explosion of gambling outlets, particularly casinos, opening around our country.

I am deeply concerned about the impact this is having on our society. Gambling destroys families and preys on the poor. According to the California Council on Problem Gambling, which operates a crisis hotline, 3,400 callers had lost an average of \$32,000 each. That's \$109 million of lost wealth, many who probably could least afford to lose it. Even more tragic is the fact that this statistic represents problem gamblers in only one state.

Mr. Speaker, I submit for the RECORD a copy of the article When Gambling Becomes Obsessive from the July 25 edition of Time magazine. I recently wrote President Bush