

Don't Ask, Don't Tell hurts our troops, runs counter to the values of our Armed Forces, and threatens our national security. Since the law was implemented in 1994, over 13,500 qualified service members have been lost to Don't Ask, Don't Tell, and counting. With each passing day, we lose approximately two service members to this misguided, unjust, and debilitating policy. Furthermore, Don't Ask, Don't Tell continues to undermine and demoralize the more than 65,000 GLBT Americans currently serving on active duty.

Keeping good troops is good policy, and our GLBT troops are among our most talented and dedicated. As the United States continues to work toward responsibly ending the war in Iraq and reengages the threat from al Qaeda in Afghanistan, our GLBT service members offer invaluable skills that enhance our military's potency and readiness. They are linguists, aviators, medics, and highly trained soldiers who are involved in valuable operations that have nothing to do with their sexual orientation and everything to do with protecting our freedom and advancing our national security interests. Above all, however, they offer their lives to serve their country.

I am extremely proud of the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces and truly appreciate the countless sacrifices they continue to make every single day to protect this nation and the American people. They deserve better than Don't Ask, Don't Tell. In order for Congress to have an honest and open discussion about the relevance of the current law, as well as on how to best implement its repeal, its members must hear from those about whom Don't Ask, Don't Tell was written—active-duty GLBT troops. Now is the time to take action.

Madam Speaker, I realize that this issue is considered controversial, but it should not be. As Congress prepares to debate the future of Don't Ask, Don't Tell with hearings in the Senate and in the House of Representatives, we must ensure that we hear all sides of the issue and especially from active-duty GLBT service members. The Honest and Open Testimony Act helps achieve this by addressing a major barrier to an inclusive, transparent, and complete hearing process—fear of retribution for testifying honestly and openly about the consequences of Don't Ask, Don't Tell in the Armed Forces. I urge my colleagues to support this important bill, which would bring us one step closer to repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell once and for all and replacing it with a policy of inclusion and non-discrimination.

INTRODUCING THE END DISCRIMINATORY STATE TAXES FOR AUTOMOBILE RENTERS ACT OF 2009

HON. RICK BOUCHER

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 2, 2009

Mr. BOUCHER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the End Discriminatory State Taxes for Automobile Renters Act. I am pleased to be joined by my colleague from Missouri TODD AKIN as the lead Republican cosponsor of the legislation.

Our legislation addresses a situation that most of our constituents have faced at least

once and perhaps several times. An individual rents a car from a car rental company and is told the daily rate will be about \$25.00. At the end of the rental, the charges from the car rental company are closer to \$35.00 or \$40.00 per day. Questions inevitably arise about the source of these additional charges.

A small portion of the difference between the car rental company's daily rate and the amount charged is state or local sales taxes, which consumers pay on most goods and services they purchase. Increasingly, however, the bulk of these additional charges are state and local discriminatory excise taxes on car rental consumers—local taxes imposed to build sport stadiums, convention centers, etc. No matter what the size or scope of a local project, states or localities have sought to "export" the burden of funding these local initiatives by taxing "out-of-town" visitors renting cars in their state, city, or county.

These discriminatory excise taxes on travelers have become increasingly popular in recent years. In 1976, there was one such tax. Since 1990, more than 115 special rental car taxes have been enacted in 43 states and the District of Columbia. As a result, car rental customers have paid more than \$7.5 billion in special taxes to fund projects with no direct connection to renting a car. In addition to stadiums, car rental customers are also footing the bill for performing arts centers and a culinary institute. A recent study found that the taxes fall disproportionately on minority households; the taxes raise auto insurance costs; and these taxes reduce purchases of cars by rental companies—an increase of 10% in tax relative to the base rental rate reduces rental demand, and, therefore, purchases of new cars by rental car companies, by approximately 12%.

The End Discriminatory State Taxes for Automobile Renters Act would impose a permanent moratorium on discriminatory excise taxes on car rental customers by declaring these taxes an undue burden on interstate commerce. In the past, Congress has enacted similar protections from discriminatory state and local excise taxes for other interstate travelers such as airline, train, and bus passengers, and for the property of interstate transportation industries such as the airlines, buses, trains, and motor freight. Our measure would extend this protection to car rental consumers.

The legislation's moratorium is prospective only. The bill "grandfathers" existing car rental excise taxes to prevent a cut-off of funding for projects financed through these taxes that are already underway, as long as the state or local authorization for the existing taxes does not expire or governments do not try to increase the rate of the tax. And the bill would not in any way restrict the ability of local governments to enact non-discriminatory, general taxes such as sales and income taxes.

Our legislation has been endorsed by a wide range of stakeholders, including the National Consumers League, UAW, and the Big Three automobile manufacturers.

I hope my colleagues will join with us in enacting into law the End Discriminatory State Taxes for Automobile Renters Act of 2009.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF NATIVE ELDER AND LEADER PHILIP D. HUNTER

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 2, 2009

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today during Native American Heritage Month, to honor and remember the life of Native Elder and Leader Philip D. Hunter.

Mr. Philip Daryl Hunter was a citizen of the Tule River Tribe. He was an exemplary leader and a powerful advocate for the needs and rights of Native people; especially those throughout the great state of California and the San Joaquin Valley. Mr. Hunter was a strong spiritual and political leader for his tribe.

Philip Hunter graduated from Porterville Union High School in 1966 and attended Porterville College, where he excelled not only in academics, but also in baseball. During breaks from school he would work for the Tribe as a fire fighter. He went on to serve our nation in the United States Army as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division.

Following his military service, Mr. Hunter graduated from Columbia College with an Associate of Arts Degree, focusing his interests on helping others. He spent fourteen years as a Drug and Alcohol Counselor, consistently placing the needs of others above his own. Demonstrating a strong dedication to his tribe, Mr. Hunter served on the Tule River Tribal Council for over twelve years, with five years in the position of Tribal Chairman. He was the longest-serving member on the Tule River Tribal Council. During his time on the council, Mr. Hunter became a familiar and strong voice in our state's and nation's capitol as he worked to shape federal, state and international California Indian policy, including protections for Native Sacred Places. He represented the Tule River Tribe on the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central California Agency Policy Committee, BIA/Pacific Regional Offices Fee to Trust Consortium, Council of Energy Resources Tribes and the National Congress of American Indians. He was a proud member of the Tule River AMVETS Post 1988 and respectfully honored veterans during times of remembrances.

Philip D. Hunter was acclaimed for being an effective and traditional cultural leader. His knowledge and dedication to tribal members ran deep throughout Indian Country. He was devoted to his wife, Beverly J. Hunter and loved his family, his tribe and his country. Mr. Hunter will always be remembered as a true champion for Native Americans.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF MRS. NETTIE DURANT DICKSON

HON. JOHN M. SPRATT, JR.

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 2, 2009

Mr. SPRATT. Madam Speaker, I would like to call the attention of the House to the death of a remarkable woman. On November 29, Mrs. Nettie DuRant Dickson of Darlington, South Carolina, died at the age of 106. Remarkable not only for her age, but for a life full