

INTRODUCTION OF THE MAKING
WORK AND MARRIAGE PAY ACT

HON. THOMAS E. PETRI

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

Mr. PETRI. Madam Speaker, today, I am introducing the Making Work and Marriage Pay Act of 2010. This legislation will establish a bipartisan commission to study the negative impact that high effective marginal rates can have on families as they attempt to improve their circumstances through work or marriage. The National Commission on Effective Marginal Tax Rates for Low-Income Families would provide an important opportunity for removing the disincentives that hold many back, in spite of their personal efforts to get ahead.

Federal and state governments provide financial assistance to low-income families through many means-tested programs and a variety of income tax credits. Each of these benefits is income-based, and as income rises benefits are reduced through phase-outs. These reductions occur at various earnings levels and on differing schedules.

While it is appropriate for benefits to be withdrawn as family income increases, little thought has been given to the combined impact on behavior of these multiple phase-outs. Different programs are created within separate Congressional committees and are implemented by assorted federal and state agencies. No one entity has the authority to consider our vast system as a whole. The Commission established under this Act would be given this task and charged with the responsibility to propose a legislative package to remove the disincentives to work and marriage that these high effective marginal rates impose.

Marginal rates matter. Economists have long contended that high tax rates affect the investment decisions of affluent individuals. People at all income levels, however, respond rationally to economic incentives and disincentives. If we want people to work their way into the middle class, we need to change a system which says that if you're poor and you struggle to earn a higher income, you won't be able to keep enough of it to make it all seem really worthwhile.

I have looked at the impact these marginal rates have on a typical single mother with two children living in Wisconsin. From \$17,000 to \$40,000 in earnings, this single parent would experience combined effective marginal tax rates in excess of 50 percent—averaging 59 percent between \$24,000 and \$41,000. At lower income levels, she even approaches a rate of 100 percent. Putting this into perspective, the U.S. corporate tax rate is 35 percent (one of the highest in the industrialized world). The highest U.S. income tax rate for individuals is also 35 percent.

Thus, for every dollar of new income earned by increased effort or the acquisition of new skills, this single mother finds herself only incrementally ahead and, perhaps, wondering whether her hard work is being justly rewarded. Despite the good intentions, these programs, in effect, offer no incentive to get ahead. Rather, the incentives are backwards and low-income workers often are encouraged to stay where they are.

The same dynamic can also affect an individual's decision whether to marry. Experts

from across the political divide agree that marriage is good. Government policy, however, as enacted in this assortment of programs and phase-outs actually discourages marriage among low-income couples.

Varying benefit levels across the fifty states produce different results, but in Wisconsin, for a married couple with two children, the marriage penalty starts rising from about zero at \$19,000 of combined income to \$7,000 in after-tax income at \$28,000 of combined earnings, which is what you get if two people earn minimum wage. At \$42,000, the cost of being married reaches \$8,154. That's a high price for a marriage license.

This penalty results from the high effective marginal tax rates produced by taxes and the phaseout of various benefit programs. As income rises, taxes go up and benefits go down. The couple that has combined their lives and their income sees a steeper loss of income than does the comparable couple that has remained unmarried. If marriage is a recognized good for both society and the individual couples, then government policy should not stand in the way of people choosing to marry.

It's time that Congress rationalizes this web of programs to ensure that hard work brings rewards by removing the punishingly high effective marginal tax rates faced by low-income individuals and families.

This is why I am introducing the Making Work and Marriage Pay Act.

My bill would authorize a Commission made up of Cabinet Secretaries, Governors, and recognized policy experts to recommend solutions for the problems posed by these high effective marginal tax rates. The Commission would be constructed to achieve partisan balance, input from states offering a varying level of income support, and expert participation from government and private sector experts.

The Commission would be charged with seeking a solution along certain policy lines, but would have full authority to offer additional policy recommendations. The Commission's recommendations would be in the form of a legislative blueprint to ease consideration of its comprehensive solution by the wide range of Congressional committees.

For too long, Congress has neglected to clean up the mess of uncoordinated federal benefit programs. The Making Work and Marriage Pay Act is the first step toward a benefit structure that rewards work and effort and reflects our shared belief that marriage is the basis of stable communities. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

HONORING TIMBERLY DINGLAS

HON. CAROLYN McCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Timberly Dinglas, the Award of Achievement Winner for the 4th Congressional District's high school art competition, "An Artistic Discovery." An Artistic Discovery recognizes and encourages the artistic talent in the nation, as well as in each congressional district. The Congressional Art Competition began in 1982 to provide an opportunity for Members of Congress to encour-

age and recognize the artistic talents of their young constituents. Since then, over 650,000 high school students have been involved with the nationwide competition.

Timberly Dinglas, a resident of the 4th Congressional District, is currently a junior at Valley Stream South High School in Valley Stream, New York. Ms. Dinglas offered her piece called "The Black Eye", which was a colored pencil portrait of a young man with a black eye. Timberly's eye for color and blending skills are evident in this piece and are certainly a testament to her achievement.

The contest in the 4th Congressional District continues to flourish and I owe it to all of the talented students like Timberly from our high schools that submitted their art to be displayed in this distinguished contest. It is essential for art programs and curricula to remain in our schools and communities. I believe that having a forum for our young people to express themselves in a creative way is extraordinarily important and I will continue to work in Congress to ensure that the arts are preserved.

The future of this country depends on the hopes and dreams of its children. Our community, and our nation, are enhanced by the contributions of students like Timberly Dinglas. Additionally, I would like to recognize the work of the teachers and administrators at Valley Stream South High School who dedicate their lives to their students. The staff is the backbone of the students' success and I thank them for all that they do on a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, it is with pride and admiration I offer my thanks and recognition to Timberly Dinglas.

CONGRATULATING THE CLEMENTS
RANGERS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

Mr. OLSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Clements Rangers Baseball team on an outstanding season. They were the Region 3 Champions which qualified them for 5A Texas finals.

I congratulate their coach, Israel De Los Santos, for his steering the team to this successful season. The Rangers made their community and school very proud through their play. I wish their seniors Brian Heathcoat, Dillon Huff, Ryan Berger, Kenny Hutchison, Tyler Kruse, Andrew Riddle, Matthew Sugar, Scott Ballard, John Stanford, and Mike Garcia the best of luck in all their future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF
RICHARD BURTON

HON. BRIAN P. BILBRAY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

Mr. BILBRAY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Richard Allyn Burton and the contributions he has made to our nation. Mr. Burton, born to Clarence and Fern Burton in Pleasant Hill, Missouri, is a shining example for future generations to follow.

Mr. Burton came to California during the Great Depression with his four brothers and

mother in search of work. Denied access at the state line, they made the arduous journey back to Missouri, yet upon their return they received word that Richard's uncle had found work for them in Escondido, California. After making the trip once again, the Burton family settled down in Escondido.

Upon the United States' entry into World War II, the Burtons answered the call to service and all four brothers enlisted in the military. After completing basic training and 16 weeks of "A" School to become an Electrician's Mate, Mr. Burton served with Task Forces 92 and 94 in the North Pacific supporting offensive operations against the Japanese. He then passed through the Panama Canal and supported operations in the Caribbean. Upon his separation from the military, Mr. Burton had been awarded the Combat Action Ribbon, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal (with a bronze star), the American Campaign Medal and the World War II Victory Medal.

After returning from the war, Richard married Ms. Eloise Flanders of Escondido, and the two enjoyed 53 years of marriage. They raised two children, two grandchildren, and a great-grandchild.

Mr. Burton is the epitome of what we now refer to as the "Greatest Generation." He served his country well in her time of need, and he has exemplified the hard work and determination that makes America great.

HONORING SUZANNE M.
OVERDORF

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mrs. Suzanne "Sue" Overdorf for her years of service as a devoted teacher, wife, mother and influential community member. Sue deserves the utmost admiration for her service as a dedicated mentor and role model to the youth of the community. As Sue's friend, I am honored to recognize her many achievements.

Suzanne Mae Fox was born on April 11, 1943 in South Buffalo, New York. She began her education at St. Thomas Aquinas elementary school, later graduating from Mount Mercy Academy in 1960. Sue went on to study at Buffalo State College for two years before beginning her teaching career at St. Bonaventure Elementary School. Sue continued on the path toward teaching excellence when she pursued her degree in education at St. Rose College in Albany, graduating *summa cum laude* in 1979.

Sue married her high school sweetheart Ted "Ozzie" Overdorf 46 years ago. While living in Lansing, Michigan they began their family which continued to grow when they relocated to Albany. In 1979 Sue, Ted and their six children moved back to their hometown of Hamburg, New York where Sue taught and coordinated CCD at St. Peter and Paul Parish and Nativity Parish in Orchard Park. The Overdorf family grew with the addition of 2 more children and in 1993, now the mother of eight, Sue continued her teaching career at Mount Mercy Academy and Bishop Timon St. Jude High School. Sue demonstrated great love and dedication to her roots by teaching the

young men and women in the neighborhood where she was raised. One year later, Sue became a religion instructor and senior class moderator at Bishop Timon St. Jude High School. Sue was a beloved and respected teacher who served as a role model and spiritual guide for her students. She retired on December 1, 2009, after 16 years of devotion.

Sue continually went above and beyond the norm during her teaching career. She found time while raising a family of eight children to found the Peace Club and the Thanksgiving for Others and Christmas for Others programs at Bishop Timon St. Jude High School. There, she was also awarded the Franciscan award twice and was received into the Franciscan Order Holy Name Province as an affiliate.

Madam Speaker, it is my distinct honor to recognize Sue Overdorf for her service as a devoted teacher, counselor, friend, wife and mother, excelling in all areas. Sue was a guide as a religious educator to her students, and also showed her values through her charitable and extracurricular activities. Her involvement in community life benefitted everyone around her. It is my honor to congratulate Sue Overdorf, a woman I am pleased to call my friend, for a career filled with such accomplishments.

HONORING THE AIR FORCE
THUNDERBIRDS

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor the long and dedicated service of the United States Air Force Thunderbirds Aerial Demonstration Team and to commend its latest of many visits to Duluth, Minnesota, in my Congressional District.

The theme for the 2010 Duluth Air Show is "Generations"—the generations of aircraft and American men and women who have flown them for more than a century. No other unit reflects this theme more than the Thunderbirds, who have captivating audiences with their precise, intricate aerial performances for half of a century. The Air Force Thunderbirds truly span generations, with thousands of pilots and many different aircraft, from the F-84 Thunderstreak to the current F-16 Fighting Falcon. Since 1953, the pilots and support crew of the Thunderbirds have displayed unparalleled professionalism, dedication, patriotism and ability. Their commitment to the communities they visit is unmatched. Whether on the ground or in the air, the Thunderbirds bring great credit to themselves, the Air Force and the United States.

On behalf of the millions of people who have witnessed the Thunderbirds' extraordinary flight demonstrations, I wish to offer my hearty thank you to the men and women in the unit and acknowledge their service to our great nation.

IN MEMORY OF JUDGE TERRY D.
LEWIS OF FORT WORTH, TEXAS

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I proudly rise today to honor the memory of one of Fort Worth's most respected and active community leaders, Judge Terry D. Lewis. Judge Lewis worked his entire life supporting his family, serving God and the Fort Worth community for which he cared so deeply.

Terry D. Lewis was the 4th child of 10, graduating from Dunbar High School in 1969, where he was an Honor Student, receiving the National Merit Achievement Award at graduation. While he was there, he was a member of the Charles L. Scott Jazz Band, on the debate team, four-year letterman in football, and Vice President of the Student Council. He was recruited to go to the University of Chicago by a former Dunbar student, Dr. Calvin Lee Dixon. He attended the University of Chicago for four years and graduated in 1973 with a bachelor's degree in Political Science. While at the University of Chicago, he was a member of the school wrestling team, and developed a passion for the martial arts. From there, he became a commissioned officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he was twice promoted before leaving active duty in 1976. While serving as a Marine Corps Officer, he participated in the evacuations of both Saigon and Cambodia.

After leaving the Marine Corps, Terry went to work in the business world. He worked for Johnson & Johnson, Xerox, and Jewel Food Stores prior to finding his calling of working with juvenile delinquents and emotionally disturbed teenagers in Chicago.

In 1987, while holding a full-time position and raising a family, he attended Chicago-Kent School of Law and served on the Law Review Committee, receiving his Doctor of Jurisprudence in 1991, and being honored with the Golden Gavel Award from his graduating law class for his publications and volunteerism while in law school. He was then employed by the Office of Cook County Public Defender, where he specialized in law concerning the abuse and neglect of children.

Upon moving home to Fort Worth in 1995, he acquired his license to practice law in the State of Texas, and worked with his brother, the Honorable Glenn Lewis and the Tarrant County District Attorney's Office. At the time of his death, he was serving as a Municipal Court Judge with the City of Fort Worth, where he was perhaps most proud of his efforts to match homeless people who appeared before him with social service programs. As recently as June 4, 2010, he is said to have written in an email to his colleagues:

Some people share the socio-political philosophy that government should not or cannot afford to help those on the lower economic rungs of our social ladder . . . Then there are those of us who believe that government cannot afford to neglect them. We all share this City whether our income is considerable or nil. Fort Worth Star-Telegram (June 16, 2010).

Madam Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise today to remember Judge Terry Lewis for his legacy and service to the city of Fort Worth and specifically the community in which