December 6, 2011

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

SQUARING SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE PAYROLL TAX CUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Madam Speaker, topping the list of unfinished business this year is the collision of two closely related crises: the expiration of the payroll tax and the acceleration of Social Security’s bankruptcy.

Last year, Congress voted for a payroll tax cut that averages roughly $1,000 for every working family in America. As warned, it failed to stimulate economic growth and it accelerated the collapse of the Social Security system; but, as promised, it threw every working family a vital lifeline in very tough economic times.

We need to meet three conflicting objectives: We need to continue the payroll tax cut; we need to stimulate real economic growth; and we need to avoid doing further damage to the Social Security system.

First, we need to understand that not all tax cuts stimulate lasting economic growth. Cutting marginal tax rates does so because it changes the incentives that individuals respond to; cutting inframarginal tax rates, such as the payroll tax, does not. But that payroll tax cut did make a huge difference in the ability of working families to make ends meet in a time of declining family income and rising prices. To restore that payroll tax rate today, given the economic pressures on working families, is simply unthinkible.

Yet at the same time, the payroll tax cut is what supports the Social Security system. Last year, that system entered a state of permanent deficit, and this condition will end the Social Security system bankrupts in 2036. At that moment, every retiree will suffer a sudden and permanent drop in benefits of roughly 25 percent.

Further reducing the revenues into that system will hasten this day of reckoning. Just as bad, in the intervening time the expanding Social Security deficit will heap growing burdens on the Nation’s already staggering public debt. Now, some have proposed paying for this payroll tax cut that doesn’t help the economy with a marginal tax hike that actually harms the economy. Surely we can do better than that. Actually, Congressmen LANDRY of Louisiana has done better, and I commend his proposal to the attention of the House. It avoids damaging the Social Security fund while at the same time offering families continued relief from crushing payroll taxes.

His measure, H.R. 3551, the Social Security Preservation Through Individual (Choice) Enhancements (or SSPICE) Act, constitutes the most realistic and innovative approach to these twin and related crises that has yet been placed before Congress by linking the cost of Social Security to the benefits that it provides. H.R. 3551 would give every American the choice of paying a lower payroll tax each year in exchange for working a month longer. That’s all it takes: to pay for itself—a month’s delay in retirement for a year’s worth of tax relief.

For the first time, individuals can make this choice to pay a lower payroll tax based on their own circumstances without further undermining the fiscal integrity of the Social Security system or the financial security of those relying on that system. For the first time, costs and benefits would be linked in a manner that all consumers can understand and judge for themselves based on their own circumstances.

In a difficult year like this, I think most families would rather save the extra tax and work the extra month. In better times ahead, they may choose to pay the extra tax to maintain their retirement schedule. But it will be their choice based on their needs, their plans, and their best judgment, and not the government’s. And by linking costs with benefits, it will protect the long-term actuarial soundness of the Social Security system, a fact that the Social Security system’s chief actuary has confirmed.

I’m excited to cosponsor Mr. LANDRY’s bill and strongly and enthusiastically recommend it to the membership of the House and to the leadership. Mr. LANDRY has done an enormous service to every retiree who depends upon the Social Security system, as well as to every working family struggling in America, by preserving the fiscal integrity of the system while at the same time giving every American a choice that links the tax they pay to the benefits they receive. And it’s an option they can exercise every year without fear that a future congressional act or failure to act might someday deprive them of the chance they can’t afford or hasten the collapse of a retirement system that many depend upon for their economic survival.

CUBS GREAT RON SANTO ELECTED TO HALL OF FAME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIKLEY) for 5 minutes. Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, in case you were wondering, that noise you heard from above yesterday morning was an old third baseman clicking his heels. Finally, on Monday morning, Ron Santo was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. In case you were wondering, in case you were wondering, that noise you heard from above yesterday morning was an old third baseman clicking his heels. Finally, on Monday morning, Ron Santo was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. In case you were wondering, in case you were wondering, that noise you heard from above yesterday morning was an old third baseman clicking his heels. Finally, on Monday morning, Ron Santo was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. In case you were wondering, in case you were wondering, that noise you heard from above yesterday morning was an old third baseman clicking his heels. Finally, on Monday morning, Ron Santo was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.
human moments in the booth, including a burning hairpiece.

But for many years on the field, people didn’t know that while racking up 342 home runs and hitting more than 1,300 RBIs, Ronnie was struggling with diabetes. That’s because Ronnie accomplished all of this from the roster, not the disabled list, despite his physical struggles.

Ronnie wanted to be a great player, not a player “under the circumstances.” He fought hard on the field for his team, and courageously in private for his health. He raised $60 million and a lot of hope for juvenile diabetes research and inspired many to persevere against the odds.

Ronnie died too soon, exactly 1 year ago this week. I wish he had lived to see this, but I know that he and Harry are sharing an Old Style together and toasting to their favorite team. Here’s to number 10, Ron Santo. Go Cubs.

ARMY PRIVATE FIRST CLASS
CODY R. NORRIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. OLSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. OLSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Army Private First Class Cody R. Norris, who was killed on November 9 during combat operations in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan.

Cody was a proud Bulldog, a 2010 graduate of La Porte High School in La Porte, Texas, in Junior ROTC, a member of the Color Guard and the Rifle Team. He was also a member of the Military Museum.

Cody deployed to Afghanistan while he was assigned to Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, 1st Infantry Division—the Army’s oldest division, the “Big Red One”—in Fort Riley, Kansas.

He was a typical American teenager. He enjoyed working on his 1952 M37 Riley, Kansas.

Cody’s lifelong dream was to join the Army. His time in Junior ROTC in high school motivated him to enlist in the Army to serve his country.

He always put others before himself and did so with a smile on his face and a kind word for those around him. He had a gift for winning people over with his caring personality and always managed to cheer up those around him.

Cody’s mother said that he lived life on his terms and always did what he believed was right, regardless of trends or what others thought. Cody also well liked by his platoon mates and gained the admiration of others by constantly carrying more than his fair share. According to his brother Michael, now a cadet at West Point, in Cody’s last battle, when his platoon was attacked, Cody carried extra ammunition. When he was killed, that extra ammunition ultimately helped save his fellow soldiers, his friends.

I never had the honor to know Cody Norris personally, but I stand here today humbled by the fact that he and the hundreds of thousands of American troops serving in our Armed Forces are willing to sacrifice so much so that we may sleep peacefully under the blanket of freedom they provide.

As a former naval aviator, I know all too well the sacrifices families make to support their loved ones who serve in harm’s way. Cody Norris and his family, and the thousands of other families who have lost the defenders of our country, have paid the ultimate price for our freedom. For them, in many ways, the war never ends.

America can never repay the debt we owe to Cody Norris and his family, but we can honor his family and his eternal contributions to our liberty. Madam Speaker, Cody Norris is a true American hero, and a grateful Nation says thank you.

EXTEND THE PAYROLL TAX CUT, UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE AND DOMESTIC RENEWABLE ENERGY TAX INCENTIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, the leader brought legislation to the floor which would have slashed Federal employee wages and benefits while arbitrarily downsizing the Federal workforce.

As the Bureau of Labor Statistics noted, public sector employment continues to shrink by tens of thousands of jobs. A job is a job, whether it’s in the public sector or the private sector. One is not better than the other.

If Republicans had not been successful in cutting 535,000 public sector jobs in this country, unemployment would actually be 0.35 percent lower. It would be down to 8.25 percent today, not 8.6.

Cutting Federal employee pay and slashing the workforce would actually be down to 8.25 percent today, not 8.6.

Not surprisingly, some even have proposed expediting approval of the Keystone XL pipeline in exchange for the payroll tax extension. Again, we already have pipelines from Canadian tar