

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

NORTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017

SPEECH OF

HON. HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 25, 2017

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 2061, the North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act of 2017. This is an important piece of legislation and I am pleased to support it.

H.R. 2061 reinstates the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004, which was originally designed to address the "deplorable human rights conditions" for North Koreans, as well as support various human rights groups and provide solutions toward permanent resettlement for North Korean refugees. Since 2004, the United States has resettled 244 North Korean refugees, making it the largest refugee resettlement program in the world. However, Congress has found that human rights conditions still have not improved as refugees remain at risk of losing their lives. As Americans, we have an enduring bipartisan interest to promote freedom for human rights, the transparency of human rights, and the importance of refugee protection. As members of Congress, we should work with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to expedite the resettlement of refugees, to increase our diplomatic efforts to cooperate with neighboring countries, and to urge China to work with us to help tackle the status of North Korean refugees within their territory.

I have seen, firsthand, the positive impact that refugees have had on my community. Clarkston, a city within my district, has received over 40,000 refugees over the past 25 years and almost 1,500 within the past year. These refugees have contributed to our economy and democracy.

Clarkston embodies the American spirit, providing a chance to these individuals who left everything behind in the hopes of finding a better life here in America. I am proud of the hope and opportunity of what Clarkston stands for, and that is why I am pleased to support H.R. 2061.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2824, INCREASING OPPORTUNITY AND SUCCESS FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED HOME VISITING ACT; PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2792, CONTROL UNLAWFUL FUGITIVE FELONS ACT OF 2017; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 26, 2017

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the Rules governing this underlying bill, H.R. 2792, introduced by Rep. KRISTI NOEM (R-SD) and Rep. SAM JOHNSON (R-TX).

I oppose the bill for the following reasons:

SSI is a needs-based program for people with limited income and resources.

It will terminate essential benefits of poor people.

It will deprive poor people of due process.

It will increase mass incarceration.

My amendment would have remedied these criminal justice defects in H.R. 2792, which struck the arrest warrant language because (1) it recklessly targets vulnerable and innocent individuals; (2) this bill deprives citizens of due process, particularly where many poor individuals are completely unaware of any pending warrant, and (4) there have been cases in which warrants were either decades old or, in many instances, it was a matter of a mistaken identity.

The underlying bill amends the Social Security Act (SSA) to make certain revisions that limit payment of benefits to fugitive felons under titles II, VIII, and XVI of the (SSA), by prohibiting Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments to individuals with an outstanding felony warrant or parole or probation violation.

Almost none of the individuals who would be affected by this provision are actual fugitives from justice and most of the warrants in question are many years old and involve minor infractions," the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities said in a letter to Senators who tried to implement this policy.

This bill is merely a continuation of President Trump's \$1.7 trillion budget cuts of programs designed to help the millions of poor and low-income families that need these programs for survival.

Plainly stated, this bill will terminate SSI benefits of very low-income seniors and people with disabilities, because SSI is granted based on financial need.

In creating this bill, the sponsors essentially agree that it is best to incarcerate economically vulnerable people in order to fund the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV).

As the Center for Law and Social Policy, a nonprofit group focused on low-income Ameri-

cans, previously reported of the Trump's budget scheme, this bill would likewise, create an overall assault on a wide range of ordinary Americans for the purpose of providing tax cuts to the wealthiest.

My Democratic colleagues on Ways and Means offered amendments to fully pay for a 5-year reauthorization of the MIECHV program and doubling the funding by closing a tax loophole called the "stretch IRA". Republicans however, would not let my colleagues vote on those amendments.

My amendment and those of my colleagues would have made this bad bill a lot more palatable.

Instead, the Republicans have chosen, once again, to lock people up, and do so in a manner that deprives poor people of their sole source of income, while purporting to safeguard against fugitive felons that are recipients of these SSI benefits.

This bill is unnecessary because under current law, SSI and Social Security payments are already prohibited to people fleeing prosecution or confinement.

Most alarming, this bill will terminate these benefits without any judicial determination of guilt, and thus, usurping recipients' rights to due process.

The presumption of "innocent until proven guilty" is the constitutional principle at the bedrock of our criminal justice system. This principle guarantees that the government cannot deprive citizens of their rights without due process of the law.

The bill maintains that payments could be immediately restored once the individual resolves any outstanding issues, a potentially lengthy and time-consuming process.

Ask the thousands of individuals swept under this broad policy if that is true. SSA already tried to implement this very ill-advised policy and it resulted in thousands of court challenges in 2009 forcing the agency to repay billions of dollars it had withheld from people deemed fugitives.

For example, Miami resident Joseph Sutrynowics' Social Security Disability Insurance benefits were halted in 2008 because of a bad check he'd written to cover groceries in Texas more than a decade earlier.

Under this policy, SSA agreed to repay \$700 million in benefits that were withheld from 80,000 people whose benefits have been suspended or denied since January 1, 2007 in the Martinez v. Astrue case. SSA could also, reportedly, repay close to \$1 billion in benefits to 140,000 individuals in the Clark v. Astrue case.

We have already tried this before and failed miserably. Let us not waste tax payers' money in litigation, while causing poor folks to go hungry. As the old adage says: "don't continue to do the same thing and expect a different result, that's insanity".

Past experiences proved that this policy was detrimental then, and it is so now. It will further exacerbate the epic tragedy of mass incarceration, and the attendant costs incurred by taxpayers, particularly in the well-documented higher cost of incarcerating the elderly and those in poor health.

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