

think the American people can relish, is that Members from our own body are going to try to bring some common sense back to our own, to our own brethren, to try to realign where we have gotten off stray. It is exciting to be part of this and what I hope to see would be a grassroots swell of support from the people in Nebraska and Omaha, in Memphis, TN, and in Georgia to see it happening from the grassroots up. So I am privileged to be part of this.

I thank my colleagues for their colloquy tonight.

Madam Speaker, I have a few comments before we close this evening. I thank you for your indulgence through this evening. In a few weeks we will be taking on this fight, this fight to expand our tort reform to take a look at all civil areas and so that we can expand in to take tort reform not just to product liability but to all areas of civil torts. One of the things that I am most encouraged about is that there is over 75 signatures on a sheet that we circulated today, just 1 day of circulation, that there is a lot of support in grassroots America and in the House of Representatives for what we are talking about.

And if there was ever a time to bring some common sense to legal reform, it is now.

Mr. HEINEMAN. Mr. Speaker, meaningful tort reform is of great importance to all Americans—not just big business as the trial lawyers would have you believe. By limiting runaway punitive damage awards, we have the opportunity to help local groups such as Little League and the Boy Scouts, city and town government, entrepreneurs, small businesses, doctors, and other providers of services.

The great majority of States have no standards or guidelines that juries or the courts can use to determine the maximum possible award in a case. As a result, the frequency, and more importantly, the size of punitive damage awards have increased markedly in the past years.

A Rand Corp. study found that in Cook County IL, there was a 2000 percent increase in punitive damage awards over a 20-year period. Perhaps even more startling was the size of the awards. Over that same period, the average punitive damage award increased from \$7,000 to \$729,000.

Dr. Peter Huber of the Manhattan Institute estimates that our tort liability system, in effect, imposes a direct tax upon us all to the tune of \$80 billion a year.

However, the primary impact is not in the courtroom, but at the settlement table, where more and more defendants settle out of court to bypass arbitrary awards.

Punitive damage awards are not only unfair to corporate defendants, they hurt the consumers of products and services. A recent study of the economic impact of punitive damages in Texas found that huge punitive damage awards penalize everyone across the board as costs are shifted to the consumer in the form of higher prices and fewer innovative goods being produced. Without innovation we cannot compete in the global marketplace.

However, punitive damage reform limited to product liability cases addresses only a small

part of the current abuses in litigation. There is a compelling need for a Federal standard for all cases in which punitive damages are sought.

In last week's Wall Street Journal, Creighton Hale, the CEO of Little League Baseball, chronicled how frivolous litigation seriously threatens Little League. The astronomical cost of litigation and the fear of being sued scares away volunteer coaches, umpires, and even the kids.

Little League has seen its liability insurance skyrocket 1000 percent—from \$75 per league to \$795. So, instead of buying protective equipment to enable more children to bat, throw, run and catch, Little League subsidizes those who take advantage of the current system.

Unbearable litigation, insurance costs, and fear of being sued unnecessarily is a common problem to all nonprofits. That is why expansion of the substantive reforms contained in the Commonsense Legal Reform Act will provide the predictability and proportionality in all civil tort cases.

My 38 years in law enforcement taught me that those accused of a crime have the constitutional protection to have notice of the charges and what punishment they face. Similarly, we should afford businesses, municipalities, and charitable organizations the same protection.

I certainly don't seek to avoid just compensation for those who have suffered legitimate losses as the result of neglect, misconduct, or indifference. Injured parties should be promptly and fairly compensated. The Commonsense Legal Reform Act allows equitable awards and in no way proscribes compensatory damages in any tort action.

Nor am I attempting to eliminate punitive damages. But fairness requires that damages bear a reasonable relationship to the person's actual injury. Unfortunately, in today's litigious society that simply is not the case.

Passage of the Commonsense Legal Reform Act is a vital step forward to provide equity throughout our civil justice system for all Americans. Let's reign in those who are abusing the system and are shutting down small businesses, the YMCA, the United Way, the Boy Scouts and Little League.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. MOLINARI). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nebraska?

There was no objection.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CRAPO (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today, on account of illness in his family.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legis-

lative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. DELAURO) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. ORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. CHRISTENSEN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. SAXTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. TORKILDSEN, for 5 minutes, on February 22.

Mr. BRYANT, for 5 minutes, on February 22.

Mr. GRAHAM, for 5 minutes, on February 22.

Mr. HILLEARY, for 5 minutes, on February 22.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and on February 22.

Mr. SCARBOROUGH, for 5 minutes, today and on February 22, 23, and 24.

Mr. MICA, for 5 minutes, on February 22 and 23.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EWING, for 5 minutes, today.

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

By unanimous consent, permission to revise and extend remarks was granted to:

(Mr. MOAKLEY, and to include extraneous matter, on House Resolution 88 today.)

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. DELAURO) and to include extraneous matter:)

Mr. BECERRA.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida.

Mr. UNDERWOOD.

Ms. RIVERS.

Mr. KLECZKA.

Mr. COYNE.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. CHRISTENSEN) and to include extraneous matter:)

Mr. CRANE.

Mr. PACKARD.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana.

Ms. HUNTER.

Mr. TATE.

Mr. DAVIS.

Mr. GOODLING.

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut.

Mr. BUNNING of Kentucky.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 257. An act to amend the charter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars to make eligible for membership those veterans that have served within the territorial limits of South Korea; to the Committee on the Judiciary.