

under conditions that would not be acceptable by today's standards. Now, as the work force at these sites is reduced, we need to act to assure prospective future employers that company health insurance rates will not be adversely affected if they hire these former defense workers. We also need to act to give these workers assurance that they'll have insurance coverage for work-related illnesses.

This is the right thing to do. America has already rightly recognized a special obligation to veterans and to those exposed to dangerous levels of radiation during the cold war—uranium miners, people who were downwind from nuclear tests, and "atomic veterans." Nuclear weapons workers deserve similar consideration, and this bill would provide that.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER ESTATE TAX RELIEF ACT

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 17, 1997

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Farmer Estate Tax Relief Act of 1997. This bill is designed to make it easier for America's farming families to keep farming.

In discussions and visits with farmers throughout my district, I have learned that there is serious concern about the ability to pass farms on to future generations. The \$600,000 exclusion from estate taxes is not enough to preserve these small businesses that are so dependent upon large capital and land investments.

In Maryland, I understand that there are about 1,000 farms valued at more than \$1 million. A typical farm has anywhere from \$20,000 to \$200,000 worth of equipment.

It is a shame to hear stories of sons and daughters that must sell off part of their parents' farm simply to pay off the estate tax. While retaining the \$750,000 "special use" valuation, my legislation would raise the exclusion by \$1.4 million, allowing these heirs to exclude a total of \$2 million of farm assets.

To encourage these heirs to stay in one of America's most crucial professions, my bill offers the total higher exclusion only to heirs that continue farming for at least 10 years.

Maryland farmers have raised a second issue with me that is addressed by my bill. These independent business people, who often do tough, physical labor into their 70's and 80's, must sometimes sell farm assets to pay high medical bills.

The legislation I am introducing today would allow a one-time exclusion from capital gains taxation for up to \$500,000 of medical expenses. Taxpayers could apply this exclusion to the sale of farm or farm assets in the year of, before, or after the medical expenses occurred.

I know that there are many other Members that share my concerns on these issues. While estate taxes can also have a negative impact on other types of family businesses, I am most concerned about the impact on the men and women who put food on our tables.

As a nation, we cannot afford to push these farm families out of business and I am pleased to introduce this bill to provide them with relief. I urge prompt passage of the Farmer Estate Tax Relief Act.

EARTH DAY

HON. WALTER H. CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 17, 1997

Mr. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, the main reason I am an environmentalist is because of a little guy named David—my grandson. Environmentalism is all about what we leave him and his generation.

The district that I live in and represent is one of the most beautiful places on earth—the central coast of California. Living in Santa Barbara, the birthplace of the environmental movement, has taught me a vital lesson. It has taught me that wilderness, nature, and open space has a value beyond what money can measure. While nature can be measured for its trees that can be cut, its fish that can be caught, and its ore that can be mined, its value is priceless as a resource that renews the human spirit.

For this reason, the protection of our public lands is such an important concept. All Americans regardless of where they live, must have access to the natural beauty of this Nation.

The more time that we spend in cars and offices, moving too quickly to think, the more our spirits require the rejuvenation that comes from being outside in fresh air surrounded by beautiful sights. That is what I have enjoyed in my district for three decades. I want to ensure our future generations have the same opportunity.

We are all responsible for the stewardship of our resources—conservationists farmers, ranchers, outdoorsmen, and sportsmen. We must use our resources wisely—in a manner that does not destroy the environment in which we must continue to live. While the strategies for putting that stewardship action are always an issue of vigorous debate, we must work together and remember that the only end game is ensuring a healthy environment for our posterity.

Earth Day serves the purpose of reminding us all of our common responsibilities of good stewardship. Today, we can forget all else and focus on this end—passing on these priceless resources to our grandchildren and our grandchildren's children. It is our responsibility to ensure that they too can live in and find refuge in a healthy natural world. Our children deserve nothing less.

CONGRATULATIONS OFFICER FARRI

HON. VAN HILLEARY

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 17, 1997

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, Saturday, March 15, 1997 was a very special day in the life of my friend, U.S. Capitol Police Officer Vincent Farri. At 11:30 p.m. that night, Vincent's wife Christina gave birth to their first child, a boy named Richard Vincent. The child entered the world at the healthy weight of 8 pounds, 10.6 ounces, and a length of 21 inches.

I have known Vincent for some time now. He is an outstanding member of our Capitol police force. In addition to his fine service

overall, he has been a great help to me personally as I have brought constituents through the Capitol. I thank him for it, and I want to congratulate him on the birth of his son, Richard.

Knowing Vincent as I do, I can say with great confidence that he will be a terrific father. Young Richard may be unaware of it now, but someday he will understand how lucky he is to have such a good family raising him.

It is a true pleasure for me to enter these remarks into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. I am privileged to have the opportunity to play a small part in this special time for the Farri family. How wonderful it must be for Vincent and Christina to enjoy firsthand the miracle of birth! To them I offer my heartfelt congratulations. To their son Richard, I offer my warmest welcome into this world as a citizen of the greatest country on Earth.

TACTILE CURRENCY FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

HON. RICHARD H. BAKER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 17, 1997

Mr. BAKER. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation that encourages the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to consider making Federal Reserve Notes tactually identifiable by the blind and visually impaired. This legislation enjoys considerable bipartisan support from my colleagues on the House Committee on Banking as well as other Members who share the same interests in assisting visually impaired individuals exert their independence.

In March 1994, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing commissioned the National Academy of Science to executive a study entitled "Currency Features for Visually Impaired People." This study explores methods of making currency more accessible for all Americans.

The report concluded that the needs of the blind could be better served if further study on specific changes such as size, color, and tactile marks be initiated.

Currently, the Department of Treasury is engaged in efforts to redesign the Federal Reserve note to prevent counterfeiting. Indeed, the new \$100 bill already been issued nationwide. With this window of opportunity upon us, I believe Congress has the change to assist the millions of visually impaired Americans who strive to live independently by making their money more accessible to them.

My bill simply endorses the efforts of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to study cost-effective tactile changes in Federal Reserve notes and encourages the incorporation of those changes in the national currency.

My bill does not cost the Federal Government any money, nor does it impose and undue, unfair mandates.

Such a minor change in currency will have a significant impact on the independence of visually impaired Americans. Further, a tactual mark can serve other purposes, such as being an additional counterfeit deterrent.

Visually impaired individuals are capable, independent people whose valuable contributions touch all of our lives. It is important that all Americans are afforded equal opportunities to perform at the best of their abilities. My bill