

colleagues to support our bill, H.R. 2221, by becoming a cosponsor.

YOUTH SUMMIT '97

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House about an exciting and successful event that I sponsored in Ayden, NC, Saturday, October 18. This event, called Youth Summit '97, is an annual event for students that I have sponsored for the last 5 years. Each year, I am particularly pleased that the turnout is equal or greater than the one the previous year.

This year's summit brought together an impressive number of youth; over 600 participated. It was certainly an inspiration to see so many students expressing their interests in pursuing an education. Most of the youth were minority students throughout eastern North Carolina. Many came with school or church groups, while others came with their parents.

The youth summit was held this year in Pitt County at a local school called Ayden-Grifton High School. Over the past several years, I have sponsored the event in different counties exposing students throughout North Carolina to the seminar.

The youth summit is designed to expose children to educational opportunities afforded to them, to reaffirm the importance of their skills and competency development, to alert the children to explore all job and career options they have, and to remind and to encourage students that they should pursue their goals to their utmost ability.

The summit also prepares students about the entire process of applying to colleges, from testing procedures to the availability of financial aid. Because I feel that the financial aid is so important to students, particularly those who come from low-income homes, we explained to the students just exactly what has transpired in Congress this session regarding funding for education.

For example, we discussed and explained the legislation enacted granting increases in title I funding and what effects these increases would have particularly on particular families. The increases included, \$1,500 HOPE scholarships, the increase in Pell grants by 26 percent, the largest in the last 20 years, and 20-percent tuition tax credit for families with students in their third and fourth year of college and universities.

These increases are so critical for North Carolina's educational success, and particularly important for the educationally disadvantaged. According to the U.S. Department of Education, North Carolina families will tremendously benefit from the increase in the

scholarships and grants appropriated by title I.

Not only was the event an informational session, but the summit was also a forum where several speakers made their presentation. It also was a social event. Several speakers included guidance counselors, pastors, doctors, professors, judges, county commissioners, and representatives from the military academy. They spoke on a wide range of topics, including testing, financial aid, job career opportunities, parent-child communication, self-esteem, service academies, and the church's role in the development of our youth.

Additionally, our session three students explained just how difficult it was and their struggle from their path to make sure they would become adults.

The youth summit reinforced how essential education is for students and their communities. In order to be entirely successful, however, students must appreciate the importance of developing values and morals in their life, in addition to education they receive in attending class.

I am particularly pleased with the youth summit's success this year and I am looking forward to many future youth summits in North Carolina. These annual events seem to have such a positive effect, not only on the children, but on their parents and other communities. Therefore, I am also recommending to my colleagues that they do similar in their districts.

□ 1100

H.R. 2564, MARRIAGE TAX ELIMINATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. WELLER] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Madam Speaker, today I stand here to speak in favor of H.R. 2564, legislation entitled the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, which many of us believe should be the centerpiece of next year's budget. And I am proud to report that the Marriage Tax Elimination Act today has 222 cosponsors. Members of both parties have joined with us in this very important effort.

Let me explain why elimination of the marriage tax is so important; why bipartisan support is needed and so necessary for the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, with some three very simple questions:

Do Americans feel that it is fair that our Tax Code imposes a higher tax penalty on marriage? Do Americans feel that it is fair that 21 million married working couples pay almost \$1,400 more a year in taxes just because they are married; \$1,400 more than an identical couple living together outside of marriage? Do Americans feel it is morally right that our Tax Code provides a financial incentive to divorce?

I think the answer is pretty clear. The marriage tax is not only unfair, it

is wrong, it is immoral. It is immoral that our Tax Code punishes our society's most basic institution, which is marriage. And, according to the Congressional Budget Office, this marriage tax is imposed on 21 million married working couples for an average of \$1,400 more in taxes just because they are married.

Let me give my colleagues an example of a couple from my district in Illinois, a couple with the combined income of \$61,000. This particular couple, and I will say the husband is a machinist at the Joliet Caterpillar plant, the wife is a schoolteacher at the Joliet public schools. They each have essentially identical incomes, right around \$30,000.

If this couple were two singles, say living together outside of marriage, they would each be in the 15-percent tax bracket, after considering the standard deductions and exemptions. But because as a married couple they file jointly, their combined income, which is almost \$61,000, they are pushed into the 28-percent tax bracket.

For this married couple, this machinist at the Joliet Caterpillar plant, this public schoolteacher at the Joliet public schools, they pay almost \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they got married. And do the American taxpayers believe that it is right that we impose a higher tax on this Joliet couple just because they are married?

Think about it, what that \$1,400 would mean for an average married working couple. Fourteen hundred dollars is several months worth of a car payment, tuition at the Joliet Junior College, or tuition at a local parochial or private or religious school for their child. Of course, even a portion of a downpayment on a home.

Let me quote Mike Reading from Monee, IL, who many have talked with about the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, and Mike says, you know, "You try and be honest and do things straight, and you get penalized for it. That's just not right."

Well, that is really what it is all about. This is an issue of right and wrong. The marriage tax is wrong. We proposed the Marriage Tax Elimination Act to do something about it, and we really want to provide an issue of fairness by giving working married couples the power to choose their filing status. Very simple.

Under the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, this Joliet machinist and Joliet public schoolteacher would be able to choose to file each as single, even while they are married, to be able to enjoy the same tax rate as that couple who lives together outside of marriage. That would save this couple \$1,400, money they could spend to meet their family's needs.

And I am pleased that our efforts to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, which now has 222 cosponsors for the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, is gaining momentum. I am proud our efforts have been endorsed by the Joliet Herald News. The hometown newspaper for