

hours following a lymph node dissection for the treatment of breast cancer.

I am also very proud to be a cosponsor of H.R. 164, the Reconstructive Breast Surgery Benefits Act, introduced by my colleague and friend, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. ESHOO]. This bill would require health insurance companies to cover reconstructive breast surgery, if they already pay for mastectomies. I am pleased to stand with my colleagues in support of the one out of every eight women who will get breast cancer in her lifetime.

Right now thousands of women are signing an electronic petition. The online petition drive will enable breast cancer patients to become activists on behalf of this legislation that would provide them with the kind of health care they deserve.

Many have shared their personal stories. One New York woman wrote, and I quote, "On August 25 of this year, I learned that I did have breast cancer. A further study showed that the cancer had traveled to my bloodstream. I am 34 years old. I am undergoing chemotherapy and will also have radiation. It is absolutely necessary for you in government to help women all across the country and to take this disease seriously. We depend on our government to protect us, even when a devastating illness has befallen us."

I quote from another letter. I would like to put a series of them in the RECORD. Quoting, "I was not in any high risk group for developing breast cancer. Yet I was diagnosed with breast cancer in November of 1996. I was shocked and it is still very hard for me to accept this diagnosis. I opted for a mastectomy. I am still in the process of reconstructive surgery. I thank government. You must do more to help women like me."

Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure mastectomies and reconstructive surgery are safe and covered. I thank my colleagues for organizing this special order tonight and I salute the women who are facing these issues every day. You are our inspiration and we will continue fighting for you.

REFORM OF THE IRS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss an issue that has received quite a bit of attention over the last couple of weeks and months. However, many have raised concerns about this for a period of time.

Today, however, I think we can bring this discussion to a higher note in a bipartisan manner that reflects greater interest in saving the voluntary tax-paying system that we have in this Nation, but as well, acknowledging that there have been serious problems that have plagued the Internal Revenue

Service as perceived by taxpayers in the variety of stories that they have been able to share with Congress on this very point.

I felt compelled to address this question in my own district, for it is one thing to hear of a national outcry. It is extremely important to allow your constituents to share their own individual cases that may have occurred.

Not one single witness got up and wanted to declare the abolishment of the IRS or to say that they no longer wanted to share the responsibility of this great government, the government that provides with national security your protection, provides for public education, the safety of our air and water, that provides for our national law enforcement, the beautiful national parks and monuments that we appreciate, the protecting of this capital. Citizens to a one concluded that they wanted to be part of this government and part of supporting it.

But each of them could recount for me an unfortunate set of circumstances that made them feel intimidated and unable to deal with addressing their problems of questions about the taxes that they paid or were alleged to have not paid.

In particular, let me honestly say in this hearing that I held on Friday, October 17th, many citizens and constituents that I asked to participate or suggested that they might were, in fact, frightened and intimidated and did not want to come forward for fear of being targeted. That is not the kind of agency we would like to have.

Let me say in defense that representatives of the IRS employees union also came forward and mentioned the many good and dedicated and sincere employees that want to work within the bounds of the law, want to work with taxpayers and want to ensure that that kind of intimidation does not exist.

With that hearing behind me, I thought it was extremely important to compliment the process today of a bill marked up in the Committee on Ways and Means and offer my own legislation, entitled the Taxpayers Justice Act of 1997. I focus on justice for taxpayers.

I agree with those who are supporting elimination of the marriage tax penalty. My bill includes that. We should encourage those who are married, live together, support families and pay taxes. Why should they be penalized because they are not single?

I also support the creation of civil and criminal penalties for IRS employees who work outside the bounds of their job description and scope, who harass or intimidate taxpayers, do not give them a chance to explain their situation.

I am supporting a two-year commission to help simplify the Tax Code so that we are not going through mounds and mounds of paper, some 9000 pages of the Tax Code. That simply cannot be.

I am also interested in creating a taxpayers advisory board of real, plain,

average taxpayers, not the major giants across the Nation, but just the average citizen who, every day of their life, is trying to comply with the laws of this land.

I want to eliminate potential discrimination, job discrimination at the IRS, and potential discrimination of those who may be targeted because of race, sex or ethnic origin or religion or origin to be audited. I also want to be assured or assure divorced women whose incomes are less than their spouses that they are not penalized with the taxes of past mistakes in marriage so that there is some protection for them. And, yes, rather than rushing a taxpayer to the courthouse where their resources are exhausted, I would like to see the utilization of mediation and dispute resolution so that taxpayers and the IRS can sit down and attempt to resolve their differences. There is some form like that, but it is not where it is moved in a direction that reinforces the taxpayer that this is the right thing to do, to sit down in mediation.

Overall, we have a good system that supports this government. But whenever you call a hearing on the IRS and your constituents run the opposite direction rather than come to the table to provide insight and information, you know you have a problem. The Taxpayers Justice Act of 1997 is to compliment the Act of the Committee on Ways and Means, but also to address your concerns, that of the taxpayers of this country who need justice.

I hope Members will support the Taxpayers Justice Act of 1997.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. BROWN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I join my Democratic colleagues this evening in a series of special orders during Breast Cancer Awareness Month to discuss what we should do in this Congress and in communities across the country to prevent and to cure this dreadful disease of breast cancer.

Recently, at a breast cancer awareness forum at the Elyria, Ohio WYCA, a woman recounted the story of holding her ailing mother's hand as she was wheeled down a sterile hospital hallway to a surgical room where she was to receive a lifesaving mastectomy. Another breast cancer survivor shared with us the emotional toll this deadly disease took on her and her loved ones.

This type of meeting to promote awareness and education about this deadly disease is not an unfamiliar sight in the industrial communities I represent in northeast Ohio. A study conducted by the Ohio Department of Health estimates that one in three women in Ohio will develop some form of cancer in their lifetimes and one in nine women will develop breast cancer.