

Act will save taxpayers billions of dollars on federal construction costs, return common sense and sound budgeting to federal contracting, and open up opportunities in the construction industry to those independent contractors, and their employees, who currently cannot bid on federal projects because they cannot afford the paperwork requirements imposed by this act. I, therefore, urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting the Davis-Bacon Repeal Act of 1999.

STATEMENT ON K-12 EDUCATION
EXCELLENCE NOW (KEEN) ACT

HON. MATT SALMON

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 11, 1999

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, I am reintroducing the K through 12 Education Excellence Now (KEEN) Act, which would offer tax credits to families and businesses of up to \$250 annually for qualified K through 12 education expenses or activities. Senator KYL has reintroduced the companion in the Senate, where it has been included in the Coverdell-Lott education reform bill (S. 277).

Over the last 30 years, the Federal Government has steadily increased its monetary commitment to education. Unfortunately, we have not seen a corresponding improvement in the quality of the education our children receive. The results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), released last year, revealed that U.S. 12th graders scored next to last in advanced math and dead last in physics. The Department of Education, which promised that the United States would lead the world in math and science by the year 2000, can't even claim bragging rights over war-torn Slovenia. As to reading, which was not measured by TIMSS, 40 percent of fourth graders can't read at the basic level.

The legislation I am introducing addresses the problem of falling education scores by giving families and businesses a tax incentive to provide children with a higher quality education. Specifically, it offers every family or business a tax credit of up to \$250 annually for any K through 12 education expense or activity. This tax credit could be applied to home schooling, public schools (including charter schools), or parochial schools. Allowable expenses would include tuition, books, supplies, tutors, and computer equipment.

Further, the tax credit could be given to a "school-tuition organization" for distribution. To qualify as a school-tuition organization, the organization would have to devote at least 90 percent of its income per year to offering grants and scholarships for parents to use to send their children to the school of their choice. How would this work? A group of businesses in any community could join forces to send sums for which they received tax credits to charitable "school-tuition organizations" which would make scholarships and grants available to low-income parents of children in non-functional schools.

Unlike the big government proposals being peddled by President Clinton and Vice-President GORE, KEEN credits would offer families control over the expenditure of these education dollars, not centralized bureaucrats.

Moreover, the bill would provide an "emergency blood transfusion" to improve America's schools immediately. In Arizona, where a limited version of this operates, inner-city schools are already profiting from an infusion of contributions from area businesses. I encourage my colleagues to enact the K-12 tax credit proposal as expeditiously as possible.

TRIBUTE TO MATT LANGLEY BELL
III

HON. JOE SCARBOROUGH

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 11, 1999

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, on October 15, 1998, the citizens of Pensacola and the State of Florida lost a man who dedicated his career to the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of life. This gentleman distinguished himself as a community leader, a dedicated philanthropist, and the model of an honest and effective leader. The man that I speak about today is Matt Langley Bell III.

It is natural to remember Matt Langley Bell III for his nearly 22 years of tax collecting, during which he served on the Board of Directors of the Florida Tax Collectors Inc. and the National Association of County Treasurers. I could mention the countless awards he has received for effective leadership, especially the Meritorious Service Award that was presented to him by the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped. Or I could applaud his involvement with the March of Dimes and the United Way where he helped raise funds and increase awareness concerning the plight of handicapped citizens. But I am sure that if Matt was with us today he would say that those accomplishments were simply part of his job.

However, in my opinion Mr. Speaker, Matt went above and beyond the call of duty by dedicating his life to helping others. At a time when our nation calls out for principled leadership from public officials, it is fitting that today we honor a professional who always went the extra mile to represent the under-represented and to promote awareness within the community, the State of Florida, and the nation. During his distinguished career, Matt Bell III came to know and respect our rights of justice and he never forgot how important that right is to the American way of life.

Matt's overall attitude and dedication to public service has been a model in the lives of the public servants that he has trained, supervised, and encouraged. His legacy will be a constant reminder that one person can make an extraordinary difference in the lives of many.

As we remember the life of Matt Langley Bell III, we can take pride in knowing that he has influenced so many people in a positive way. As a fellow elected official and as a friend, I appreciate the importance of dedication and devotion to public office. I can't think of a better way to be reminded of that fact than in honoring the life of the late Matt Langley Bell III.

INCOME EQUITY ACT OF 1999

HON. MARTIN OLAV SABO

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 11, 1999

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, the American economy continues to grow at a remarkable rate and to defy the troubles striking many other parts of the world. Yet despite the strength and prosperity of our economy, the income gap between rich and poor in this country is still on the rise. The benefits of the past 20 years of growth are being shared very unevenly—the richest 20% of households now earn as much as everyone else in America put together. It was not always this way. In the years from the end of World War II through the 1970s, economic growth brought with it greater equality. But in the past two decades this progress has been reversed, and our country now has a more unequal economy than we did in the 1940s.

As the income gap grows, working Americans are finding it harder to make ends meet. The dark secret of the 1990s expansion is that almost half of all American families have not seen their incomes return to the same purchasing power as they had before the 1990 recession. With so many people having stagnant incomes and only a few reaping most of the gains from the economy, we risk splitting our society in two.

Although many forces lie behind the growing inequality of income and wealth in America, it is clear that both government and corporate America have roles to play in narrowing the gap. For this reason, I am introducing the Income Equity Act of 1999. This legislation addresses the problem by encouraging corporate responsibility. For too many years, the trend in corporate America has been to pay top executives lavishly, while thinking of other employees as an expense or not thinking of them at all. My legislation will encourage companies to take a closer look at how they compensate their employees at both ends of the income ladder.

The Income Equity Act would place a new limit on our government's practice of subsidizing excessive executive pay through the tax code. My bill would enhance the current \$1,000,000 cap on the tax deduction for executive compensation with a cap set at 25 times the company's lowest full-time salary. For example, if a filing clerk at a firm earns \$18,000, then any amount of executive salary over \$450,000 would no longer be tax deductible as a business expense. This bill will not restrict the freedom of companies to pay their workers and executives as they please. It will send a strong message, however, that in return for tax deductions, the American taxpayer expects companies to compensate their lowest-paid workers fairly.

Economic inequality is a problem that will, if not addressed, tear apart the fabric of our democratic society. Our government has every reason, and every right, to encourage responsible corporate citizenship. The Income Equity Act is not the ultimate answer to the widening gap between the rich and the poor, but it is an important step toward ensuring that all Americans can share in our nation's prosperity.