

Freedom to Work Act of 2000. I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this worthwhile piece of legislation.

This objective of this bill is simple and straightforward: it would totally remove the future earnings limit for working seniors who receive Social Security.

For too many years, those senior citizens, aged 65–69, who chose to continue to work, have had their Social Security benefits deducted by one dollar for every three dollars earned once their earnings went over the limit. For many years, this limit was \$12,500 annually.

The 104th Congress made a much needed change in 1997, by raising the limit to \$30,000 by 2002.

I have long believed that more needs to be done on this issue. Ever since coming to Washington, in the 93rd Congress, I have introduced legislation to either raise the earnings limit, or eliminate it, altogether. I believe that repeal of this regulation is one of the most effective things we in Congress can do to show our seniors that we recognize the value of their contributions to both our Nation's economy and to the character of our individual communities.

The Social Security earnings limit is a relic from the Great Depression era, when concern over mass unemployment led many to believe that the imposition of the limit would prevent retired individuals from competing with younger workers for scarce jobs. While the limit's utility in the 1930s is debatable, most everyone agrees with the argument that it has no place in today's work environment.

The earnings limit only serves to discourage seniors from working and diminishes their potential impact on society. It is a condescending regulation that conveys the message that seniors have nothing to contribute and are better off not serving in the work force. In doing this, it both reduces the standard of living for working seniors, as well as robs the country of the valuable experience and workplace skills of those senior citizens who, because of the earnings limit, forego returning to the workplace.

Thanks to revolutionary advances in the field of medicine, Americans are living longer than ever before in our Nation's history. Consequently, senior citizens are the fastest growing component of our country's population.

Moreover, the U.S. economy is currently running at very close to full employment. While the unemployment rate is at a historic low, demand for finished goods shows no signs of abating. Employers recognize this, and are searching for ways to address this challenge. Many have turned to senior citizens, who are a vast, largely untapped, labor resource. Consequently, recruitment of senior citizens by private industry is on the rise, and shows more signs of increasing in the future.

Given this, it simply makes no sense to maintain an arbitrary earnings limit that penalizes those individuals of retirement age who wish to continue being productive members of the work force. Nobody who wishes to enjoy retirement should be forced to work, however, those who do work should not be unfairly penalized for doing so.

Our senior citizens have their own unique and invaluable contributions to make to our society as a whole. I have long encouraged my colleagues in Congress to recognize and reward this initiative, rather than penalize it by clinging to outmoded regulatory relics.

For far too long, the poor budgetary environment made repeal of this limit a practical impossibility. Today's environment of growing surpluses has knocked away this last obstacle to reform. We need to seize this opportunity to provide simple, but effective reform for our working seniors.

Moreover, while important, the repeal of this limit should only be the first step towards improving the economic welfare of our senior citizens. Congress still needs to repeal the earnings limit for those seniors aged 62–64, and this debate should be the prelude to a full review of the taxes levied on our senior citizens, with the goal of repealing all taxes on Social Security benefits, which in effect are a discriminatory form of double taxation.

I am pleased to see that the President has finally stated his public support for the elimination of the earnings limit, and I commend my colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee for their diligence and attention to this issue in their recent favorable consideration of this bill.

I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this timely, and important legislation.

HONORING THE SOUTH BAY WOMEN OF THE YEAR

HON. STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to some exceptional women from my district being honored tomorrow as the South Bay Women of the Year. The honorees are Mrs. Katharine Ward Clemmer, the Honorable Katy Geissert, Ms. Jill Gomes, Mrs. Renee Henry, Mrs. Pamela Kenoyer, Mrs. Elaine Klessig, Mrs. Mary Jane Schoenheider, and Mrs. Darla Voorhees.

This honor is given to several remarkable women each year by the Switzer Center School and Clinical Services located in the City of Torrance, which serves children with learning, emotional, or social challenges. The 2000 South Bay Women of the Year Awards are presented to women who are making a difference in the lives of others. These individuals are being recognized for selflessly giving their time and efforts to improve the community. They are making an impact in the lives of others, not because they have to, but because they want to.

I thank the Switzer Center for recognizing these women and their significant accomplishments. I commend these eight women for their important contributions to the South Bay community. They have touched the lives of many. I congratulate them on receiving this award.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RUBEN HINOJOSA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, because of a transit problem, I unfortunately missed rollcall votes 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33. Had I been present I would have voted as follows:

Rollcall No. 29, Government Waste Corrections Act (H.R. 1827)—“yea”; rollcall No. 30,

To Redesignate the Facility of the U.S. Postal Service in Greenville, SC, as the Keith D. Oglesby Station (H.R. 2952)—“yea”; rollcall No. 31, To Designate the U.S. Postal Office Located at 557 East Bay Street in Charleston, SC, as the Maybelle H. Howe Post Office (H.R. 3018)—“yea”; rollcall No. 32, Congratulating Lithuania on the 10th Anniversary of its Independence, S. Con. Res. 91—“yea”; rollcall No. 33, Recognizing the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War, H. J. Res. 86—“yea.”

CONGRATULATING THE CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

HON. MARGE ROUKEMA

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Church of the Annunciation in Paramus, New Jersey, on the dedication of its restored and renovated church building. This newly completed work not only provides more space for worship and community activity, but reflects the measure of faith it brings to the community and the growth of the church congregation.

The \$2.2 million project will provide more than 8,000 square feet, reconfigured to meet the Second Vatican Council's direction for greater participation of the congregation in services. Modern lighting and sound systems have been added while maintaining the church's classic gothic design. Meeting space for parish organizations and community services has been expanded and the entire complex has been adopted for the physically challenged.

A church is, of course, far more than bricks and mortar. It is a place of prayer, worship and solace for all. As Pastor Michael Sheehan has said, the renovation project is a proclamation of the congregation's faith in the future that the Lord will continue to be with His people in Paramus.

A key element of the spirit surrounding the Church of the Annunciation has been the tradition of Christian charity. Members of this compassionate congregation have worked selflessly to help the less fortunate in the community, providing aid and assistance whenever and wherever it has been needed. They have truly embraced the Gospel according to St. Matthew: “I was hungry and you gave me meat. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came unto me.”

The Church of the Annunciation traces its history to 1951, when Newark Archbishop Thomas J. Walsh ordered the construction of a new church to accommodate the rapidly growing Catholic population in Bergen County. Archbishop Walsh chose the site of the former House of Divine Providence, a Catholic charity hospital for the terminally ill that had remained vacant since it was gutted by fire in 1925. The Rev. William J. Buckley was assigned as the first pastor and held the first Mass in the Midland Avenue firehouse on September 14, 1952. The new church was dedicated the following March on the day before Palm Sunday. The first year of full operation saw 78 baptisms, four weddings and three funerals.