



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 106th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 146

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2000

No. 60

House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1638. An act to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to extend the retroactive eligibility dates for financial assistance for higher education for spouses and dependent children of Federal, State, and local law enforcement officers who are killed in the line of duty.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 100-702, the Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, appoints John B. White, Jr. of South Carolina, to the board of the Federal Judicial Center Foundation, vice Richard M. Rosenbaum of New York.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 104-1, the Chair, on behalf of the Majority and Minority Leaders of the Senate and the Speaker and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, announces the joint appointment of Susan S. Robfogel, of New York, as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, amidst the sometimes incendiary rhetoric surrounding the efforts to reduce gun violence, there are times when it is easy for people to overlook a basic fact: the victims of gun violence are real people; they are not statistics. They are not debating points.

The grounds of our Nation's Capitol are filled with memorials to the dead. Our visitors and tourists here are visiting them as I speak, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Korean Memorial, soon we may have a memorial to the soldiers who died in World War II.

Mr. Speaker, if we take all of those memorials to all the soldiers who have been killed since the Civil War, it would be fewer than the number of Americans who have been lost to gun violence in the last third of a century.

It is not enough to simply have another memorial here in our Nation's Capitol; although, something the size of 16 Vietnam memorials would be impressive, because that is what it would take to list all of these victims.

Last Sunday, in Portland, we had thousands of people standing and crowding into our little Pioneer Courthouse Square for our Mother's Day March against gun violence. They were standing on 70,000 bricks that had peoples' names inscribed who contributed to building that public square. It would take 10 acres of bricks with peoples' names to deal with the million victims.

Our job must be to make sure that these victims are not anonymous; that we put a face next to the names, to provide details of the life that would go along with that picture.

It is important to let people know that these victims had parents, rel-

atives and friends. They had jobs. They had hopes. We need to know how it happened and we need to think of what we could do to prevent it. That the United States has the worst record of gun violence of any developed Nation in the world ought to be a concern to every citizen, a sense of shame.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that it is we are less smart than the rest of the world. It is hard to believe that we are somehow worse people. I cannot believe that we care less about our children more than others, and I would hope that we as a people are not somehow more reckless.

I hope that in focusing our attention on the loss, how it occurred, what it means, we will be able to renew our commitment.

Tomorrow, I am going to speak on the floor of this House about one face, a young man named Darrell English. I will talk about the circumstance of his death, and I will be posting that information on my website and dealing with it in public meetings so that others may know the name, the face, the hopes and the dreams.

Every month, as long as I am in Congress, I will continue the discussion on the floor, on the Web, the conversation with the community, as a small gesture that these people not have died in vain.

This hope that we can all do our part to reduce the danger of gun violence. I hope the House of Representatives will act on that, finally, acting on a juvenile crime bill that has been locked in conference committee that has not met for 295 days because of unwillingness to pass the simple common sense steps that have already been approved by the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that citizens back home will take steps to promote their own initiatives and legislation that politicians can use to make their communities safer in the political process, at the ballot box, in the legislature. I hope that every citizen will do

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

H3051

their part as individuals, that no parent allows a child to go into a home without inquiring as to whether or not there is a gun there, if it is locked, if it is loaded.

If Americans can somehow cut in half the rate of automobile deaths in the last 30 years, I know that we can do our part to protect our families. There is no single magic solution, but together we can find hundreds of ways everyday to make America safer, to make our communities more livable, because the most important face is going to be the face that does not appear on a poster like this, a picture that does not appear of one of our loved ones whose life was not lost to gun violence.

IMPORTANCE OF SAVING SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GRANGER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Madam Speaker, yesterday, General Bush came out with some general parameters on saving Social Security and the importance of saving Social Security. There has been a lot of discussion of whether there should be any privately-owned investment owned by the American worker as opposed to continuing to keep on going with a system that is insolvent. What it boils down to is that because of the demographics, because people are living longer, because the birth rate has been going down, there are fewer workers paying their taxes into a system to support and finance existing senior citizens benefits.

It is important that everybody understands that it is a pay-as-you-go program. It is a program where taxes come in one week, and by the end of the week, they are paid out in benefits. If you are an average worker today, then you are going to get an estimated 1.7 percent real return on the money you and your employer put into the system.

If you are a young worker, because we are going to run out of enough money eventually, there is not going to be adequate tax money, coming in to pay benefits, then you are going to get even a smaller return. There are two ways to fix Social Security; you either increase the revenue coming in, or you reduce the benefits going out.

None of us want to reduce benefits. Everybody, including Governor Bush, has committed that we are not going to reduce benefits for current retirees or near-term retirees. So then the question is, is there merit in having privately-owned accounts, and if we get a larger real return than 1.7 percent, then, absolutely, it brings more revenue into the system. In fact, if my Social Security bill had been passed, the first one that I introduced 5 years ago, the 25 year old when they retire would have \$150,000 more than what they are

going to receive under the current Social Security system.

There are safe investments even through the worst parts of the history of this country, on dips in Social Security. We saw that there was no 12-year period where there was not at least a positive gain on Social Security.

There are companies now that will guarantee you a gain, and if you are going to do a reasonable investment, and I would say reasonable for people over 45 is maybe 40 percent in bonds and 60 percent in safe stocks, in most all the proposals, Democrats and Republicans have all agreed that there needs to be privately-owned investment accounts, I mean Senator KERREY, Senator MOYNIHAN respected in this regard, Democrats in the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) has been working on this for years, and he comes to the conclusion that there needs to be some privately-owned accounts, that are put into safe investments, low-risk investments, because it is an absolute certainty: If you leave those investments in more than 12 years, it is going to recover more than the 1.7 percent average that Social Security is going to pay people.

Now, the other part of the problem is that Social Security is running out of money, so we need to do something. We cannot just pretend that the problem is not there. On this chart, Social Security the bottom piece of pie now represents 20 percent of all government spending. This is a graphic impression of what is happening in Social Security. The blue at the top left is this short period of time where there is more tax money coming in than is needed to pay benefits, but over time, for the next 75 years, we are short \$120 trillion.

Tax revenues are short \$120 trillion of what is needed to pay what is promised in benefits today. Another way to say that is that the unfunded liability is short, \$9 trillion today. You would have to put \$9 trillion into an interest bearing account today to come up with the \$120 trillion that is needed over the next 75 years. We have got to do something.

Madam Speaker, suggesting, like the Vice President has, that simply if we pay down the debt, and you are doing that by borrowing the excess money from Social Security and using that money to pay down the debt held by the public, it is like using one credit card to pay off the debt of another credit card; to pretend that is going to somehow solve this red deficit problem is unrealistic.

It cannot be scored by the actuaries over at the Social Security Administration. So I plead with the Vice President, I pled with the President of the United States do not demagog suggestions of how we move ahead to fix Social Security. It is too important a program.

I have met with the President maybe four times over the last 16 months, he ended up saying that he is not going to

come up with a plan because he is afraid it would be criticized. Let us move ahead, let us work together, let us, Republicans and Democrats, make sure that we fix this important program.

ENACT EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. DICKS. Madam Speaker, on Wednesday of this week, the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee will be marking up our appropriations bill for FY 2001. I am very concerned about the fact that the emergency supplemental has not been enacted yet by the other body. In fact, I have written a letter to the distinguished majority leader asking that they take up this emergency supplemental as quickly as possible.

We are now faced with an emergency situation in the area surrounding Los Alamos, New Mexico. We also have nine other wildfires, and I am told 67 forest fires raging nationally, many of them in the west, and the money for fighting these forest fires will run out, the emergency money will run out by the end of May, unless Congress enacts this supplemental.

What we are asking for is \$200 million for the Bureau of Land Management. The BLM does a great job of fighting the forest fires, along with the forest service; we are asking there for \$150 million, or a total of \$350 million.

This year 2000 will probably be one of the worst forest fire years since 1994, and also 1999 was a year where we had many devastating fires as well. I want to compliment the majority in the House for having enacted the supplemental, but now it is been languishing for several weeks, if not months, over in the other body.

Madam Speaker, this is a true emergency. I do not think we should be playing appropriations politics with this issue. We need to get this money out to the BLM so that they can run their emergency center out in Idaho, we need to get this money out to the Forest Service.

Secretary Babbitt has written back in early April a very impassioned plea to the majority leader in the other body urging that this emergency supplemental be taken up as quickly as possible, and there really is not any excuse.

Now, if they do not want to take up the entire emergency supplemental, one possible way to move forward would be to take out these two items. The money for the BLM, the \$200 million and the \$150 million for the forest service, and pass that immediately, and then we can pass it here in the House, get it down to the President and take care of this situation.

We cannot help but be sympathetic to see these people out in New Mexico,