

deduction twice that of the single taxpayer's deduction.

Current law	Collins bill	Effective date
\$7,600	\$12,000	Jan. 1, 2001.
\$4,500	\$6,000	Jan. 1, 2001.
\$6,650	\$8,500	Jan. 1, 2001.

This legislation will provide taxpayers with over \$30 billion in tax relief this year alone. Over the next ten years, wage earners will see their income tax bills reduced by over \$1.5 trillion. It is anticipated that the Congressional Budget Office will soon update their projected budgetary estimates and report that there will be billions more available in unanticipated non-Social Security excess revenues. That is more reason than ever to provide taxpayers with meaningful tax reductions. Please join me in cosponsoring the Individual Income Tax Rate Reduction Act of 2001, so that we can provide tax relief as soon as possible.

DISAPPROVING DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR RULE RELATING TO
ERGONOMICS

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2001

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to this harmful resolution which will prevent America's workers from safer working conditions.

Over two years ago, Congress mandated that the National Academy of Sciences conduct a study to review the impact of repetitive workplace motions. Now that the results are back, the Republican majority is disappointed. They don't like the results. So, they are trying to kill the rule entirely.

This Disapproval Resolution is simply another attempt to delay and ultimately block implementation of critical ergonomic workplace guidelines. These reasonable standards, already issued by the Department of Labor, will ensure that workplace safety guidelines are in place to prevent increasingly common workplace injuries.

More than 647,000 Americans suffer serious injuries and illness due to musculo-skeletal disorders each year. These injuries are currently costing businesses \$15 to \$20 billion annually in workers' compensation costs. Yet, it has been estimated that the ergonomics standards will prevent 4.6 million injuries over the next decade, and will actually save employers and workers \$9 billion each year.

Tragically, these injuries disproportionately affect women workers. Although women make up 46 percent of the workforce and 33 percent of those injured, 63 percent of repetitive motion injuries happen to women.

Women experience 70 percent of carpal tunnel syndrome injuries that result in lost work time. This is unacceptable and we must act now to prevent these injuries.

Americans who are willing to work hard each day to support themselves and their families deserve reasonable standards to prevent workplace injuries.

Many of the workers who will be covered by these common sense guidelines often work more than one job just to make ends meet. They work long hours loading trucks, moving

boxes, and delivering packages. Their jobs aren't easy, but they are willing to show up every day and do their best.

The last thing these hard-working Americans want is to get hurt. These sensible standards will keep them on the job and prevent costly workplace injuries.

Opponents of these common-sense guidelines claim that they will "regulate every ache and pain in the workplace." This is simply not true. These standards will only ensure that companies make someone responsible for ergonomics standards and that employees are not afraid to report these injuries. This is hardly an overwhelming request.

We must keep the Ergonomics standards in place. These standards protect hard-working Americans who deserve to work without the threat of injury.

I urge all of my colleagues to stand with hard-working Americans and to oppose this harmful legislation.

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY MARCH 17,
2001

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2001

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, on March 17th, again we approach another glorious, joyous Saint Patrick's Day. The Irish people around the globe, along with the millions here in our nation linked to the Emerald Isle by heritage, as well as their friends worldwide, join in celebrating this glorious day honoring the patron saint of that beautiful country of so many warm and generous people.

The American experience is linked closely with the Irish people. Ireland has given us numerous Presidents with links to both the north and south. Its diaspora fought for our nation as early as with General George Washington as we gained our own independence from Great Britain. Today, more than 44 million Americans claim Irish heritage.

It is only fitting that our nation assist the Irish people in finding lasting peace and justice in the north of Ireland and in ending the bitter, divisive, and tragic conflict, that the Irish call the "Troubles." For the past eight years the U.S. Congress in a bipartisan way fully supported President Clinton in all of his Irish peace process initiatives which eventually helped produce the Good Friday Accord of April 1998, under the guidance and steady hand of former U.S. Senator George Mitchell.

The Good Friday Accord is the road map for lasting peace and justice in the north of Ireland, which we and all the parties to that accord, as well as both governments in the region should honor, abide by, and use for the new shared governance created so that both traditions can live in harmony, peace, and equality in the north under the concept of mutual consent. The Irish people north and south approved the accord in referendum. They want peace!

Now, with a new Administration coming to power in Washington, many wonder if the Irish peace process will be given the same priority by the Administration of George W. Bush. We in the Congress stand ready to provide the same kind of across the board bi-partisanship support for the new Administration in the con-

tinuing search for a lasting peace and justice in Ireland. We owe that to the new Administration, as well as to the Irish people, who have given so much to this nation of ours from its very founding until today.

Candidate George W. Bush supported the GOP platform in Philadelphia in 2000 which said: "The next President will use the prestige and influence of the United States to help the parties achieve a lasting peace." Candidate Bush himself went on to set out his own approach in a letter to the Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern on September 8, 2000, stating ". . . the entire island of Ireland have a friend in George W. Bush. America should remain engaged in the Irish peace process, and I will work hard and pray always for a lasting peace in Northern Ireland."

For those of us who have observed President George W. Bush in his first weeks of office abiding by and living up to his 2000 campaign promises and pledges, no one doubts that Ireland will be high on his foreign policy agenda, and that the Congress will support him.

Mr. Speaker, I submit the letter from George W. Bush to the Irish Prime Minister at this point in the RECORD and I invite my colleagues to join in wishing our Irish-American friends and all of Ireland a Happy Saint Patrick's Day!

GOVERNOR OF TEXAS,

Austin, TX, September 8, 2000.

HON. BERTIE AHERN, T.D.,
Taoiseach, Republic of Ireland.
Dublin, Ireland.

DEAR BERTIE: I want to extend my personal greetings to you, and to express my admiration for your commitment to peace in Northern Ireland. The road has been long, and it has not been easy, but you have succeeded in furthering reconciliation and bringing an elected representative Assembly to Northern Ireland.

You may be assured of my personal interest and full commitment to helping move the peace process forward. I believe that the support of the United States was an important element in helping the parties achieve the Good Friday Agreement, and that America should be ready, if necessary, to appoint a special envoy to further facilitate the search for lasting peace, justice, and reconciliation.

I am encouraged by the very real economic growth that has come to the entire island of Ireland. At least part of this growth can be credited to the strengthening of business ties between the United States and Ireland, and I strongly support continued and increased private American investment in both Northern Ireland and the Republic.

I am also encouraged by the work of Chris Patten and his Commission in reviewing and recommending reforms of the police authorities in Northern Ireland. I appreciate the importance of tradition and symbols, and the sensitivities of the communities in Northern Ireland on this issue, and support the full implementation of the Commission's recommendations.

Please know that you and the people of the entire island of Ireland have a friend in George W. Bush. America should remain engaged in the Irish peace process, and I will work hard and pray always for a lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH.

EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2001

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the European Court of Justice, the supreme judicial body of the European Union, ruled that a former employee of the European Commission (EC), Mr. Bernard Connolly, was legitimately fired by the Commission after he published a book critical of the European Monetary Union. Although the court, in ruling against Mr. Connolly's appeal of his sacking, attempted to cloak its decision in the right of the EC to take disciplinary action when an employee's behavior undermined the trust and confidence that needs to exist between employee and employer (Connolly had published his book without prior permission from the EC), it went on to ascribe to the EC the right to curb dissent and punish individuals who "damaged the institutions image and reputation." In making this kind of argument, the Court comes disturbingly close to harkening back to the discredited concept of seditious libel.

The European Union is already under fire because of the lack of democracy in the way many of its institutions, particularly the European Commission, has operated. There is a lack of transparency in the manner in which regulations are established and promulgated, there is said to be a significant lack of accountability on the part of certain important categories of senior EU officials, there is said to be too little oversight exercised by institutions representing the citizens of Europe, and the legislative branch, the European Parliament, which under a regular democracy would fulfill such functions, is still in only the initial stages of asserting such prerogatives more than a quarter of a century after its establishment. In the light of this remaining democratic deficit, the European Court of Justice's ruling against Mr. Connolly is not so much surprising as it is alarming.

Mr. Speaker, it has been longstanding policy of the United States to support the creation of first, the European Economic Community, which became the European Community, and then in 1992, the European Union. It made sense from the standpoint of our own interests to have an overarching institution which could serve as a brake upon the possible resurgence of nationalism and conflict on the European continent, and to have our closest trading partners organized as a single market with a single set of regulations for us to do business on the other side of the Atlantic.

Now, however, we are seeing much more ambitious and far reaching efforts aimed at creating, if not a "United States of Europe," then a federated Europe with as many of the attributes of a single state as can be agreed upon by its member nations. The European Security and Defense Policy is one manifestation of these efforts, and it has certainly caused a great deal of concern because of the potential to weaken NATO and undermine the solidarity of the North Atlantic Alliance. Another manifestation is the emergence within the European Commission of much more strident economic and trade policies which have fostered increasingly bitter and divisive disputes between the U.S. and our European trading partners.

The ruling of the European Court of Justice in the Connolly case strikes at the heart of our common traditions and institutions which are pinned upon basic precepts of human rights. None of which is more fundamental than freedom of speech. If the EU truly believes that it can set itself up to be beyond the reach of spoken or written criticism of its policies, then Mr. Connolly's statement, "The Court is acting as the sinister organ of a tyranny in the making" is completely accurate, and those of us who value the trans-Atlantic relationship need vigorously to speak out against it. Our relationship with our friends in Europe will only ensure so long as we continue to hold in common our belief that human rights are fundamental in our society, and our faith in the traditions and institutions that underpin our democratic form of governance.

CERRO GRANDE FIRE ASSISTANCE

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2001

Mrs. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, last year was a difficult one for our country's public lands and the people and communities who live near them. It was dry and hot and firefighters worked long, back-breaking hours to extinguish flames that seemed to go on without end. My colleagues in this House know of the tragedies Americans experienced last year because of forest fires. It was a very hard year.

But some situations were made even worse when the fires weren't natural disasters. Some were started by the very people we trusted to steward the land. The National Park Service started a fire in my home state of New Mexico during a particularly dry and windy week. More than 400 people lost homes and businesses to the Cerro Grande fire, and hundreds of acres of tribal lands were also devastated.

Congress acted quickly, though, and passed The Cerro Grande Fire Assistance Act, S. 2736. It was attached to the Military Construction Appropriations bill and was signed into law on July 13, 2000. This legislation made up to \$455 million available to fire victims so they would be quickly compensated for their losses and could begin rebuilding their lives.

Things seemed to progress well, save for a few kinks that were worked out. But it's tax season, and there are hundreds of people in my home state of New Mexico who are waiting to file their taxes because they need information about how to characterize federal government compensation for the May 2000 Cerro Grande fire.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has issued and will continue to issue hundreds of payments in response to filed claims for compensation. However, there remain several unresolved questions regarding this compensation. As the April tax-filing deadline quickly approaches, taxpayers need to know what portions of the compensation they receive are taxable and how that will be determined. In spite of repeated requests from the New Mexico congressional delegation, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has still not issued a written decision resolving these questions. These Americans deserve answers now.

The Internal Revenue Service is not playing fair. Although very clear about its tax filing

deadlines and penalties for noncompliance, the IRS is not extending the same courtesy it requires. How can taxpayers meet deadlines when they lack information the IRS must provide?

The federal government started this fire and must continue to take responsibility for it. This disaster never should have happened. I am committed to doing everything I can to ensure that the federal government moves quickly, makes the necessary decisions, and allows the victims of this horrendous fire to rebuild their lives.

RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH, AND A TRIBUTE TO SENATOR CYNTHIA JOHNSTON TORRES

HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2001

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of March as Women's History Month and March 8 as International Women's Day. I would also like to honor the late Honorable Cynthia Johnston Torres, a distinguished member of the Third Guam Legislature.

Women's History Month is a time to pay tribute to the women of our nation, in appreciation for their contributions to the political, social, economic, and cultural development of our country, in recognition of the many struggles and obstacles that they face, and in honor of the integral role that women have played in American history. Women make up over half of our country's population, or about 139 million in 1999, and have changed our nation in positive ways. Women have made their mark in various fields such as science, business, education, health, the public sector, the arts, entertainment, and the list goes on.

The progress of women today must be considered in conjunction with continuing challenges. Today women affect and are affected by the major issues on our nation's agenda, including health care, Social Security, Medicare, tax reform, etc. Most recently, ergonomics issues are impacting women, who represent 64 percent of repetitive motion injuries that result in lost work time. It is encouraging that six in ten women participate in the labor force, however employment discrimination and unequal pay still exist. The future looks promising as women are demonstrating increased participation in all levels and branches of government. Unfortunately, expectations still exist about their "traditional" roles.

Today, women are marrying at later ages, yet domestic and family violence continues throughout the country. Also across the nation, women's studies and gender studies are on the rise in higher education institutions, however women still need to be acknowledged as critical players in the history of America. Today I would like the opportunity to recognize the achievements of women amidst such challenges, challenges that our entire nation must face from within the fifty states to the five territories.

Women's History Month has its own history that illustrates the gains women have accomplished in the last century. In order to reflect on international connections among women,