

"On behalf of the more than 1,000 organizations and 1.8 million businesses of the Tax Relief Coalition, we urge you as a member of Congress to support the full elimination of the double taxation of dividends, the increase in the small business expensing allowance, and the acceleration of all the scheduled income tax rate reductions when the Committee on Ways and Means considers the economic growth reconciliation legislation. As companies and organizations representing businesses that employ tens of millions of Americans, we believe these provisions are necessary if we are to jumpstart the economy and put people back to work.

"The full elimination of the double taxation of dividends within the framework of a \$550 billion tax relief package is achievable and will have a singularly positive effect on the economy in both the short term and the long term. It will spur consumer spending by putting more money in the hands of shareholders who will pay less in taxes, receive higher dividend payouts and accumulate increased wealth as a result of the upward pressure on stock prices. The resulting increased demand and lower cost of capital will sustain economic growth and create jobs as companies invest in the new equipment, build new plants and develop new products. Many economists also believe eliminating this double tax will boost the stock market from 10 to 20 percent.

"Since small businesses create two-thirds of the new jobs in the United States, the importance of the small business provisions of the President's proposal should not be underestimated. Approximately 85 percent of small business owners file tax returns as individuals and represent nearly 80 percent of the taxpayers at the top income bracket. Accelerating all of the scheduled income tax rate reductions to this year, 2003, will provide approximately \$10 billion in tax savings to small businesses that file as individuals. Allowing small business owners to expense critical investments will facilitate economic expansion, so we urge you to support raising the small business expensing limit from \$25,000 to \$75,000 and indexing it for inflation. These changes will create savings for small businesses that will put money directly into the economy and create new jobs.

"Any proposal that does not include the critical small business provisions and result in the full elimination of the unfair double taxation on dividends will significantly compromise the economic benefits of the President's package and jeopardize the hundreds of thousands of new jobs that would otherwise be created.

"In our view, representing tens of millions of working Americans and businesses, if you do not include the dividend tax reduction and the critical small business provisions, the jobs and growth package will simply not have the same effect.

"This has been respectfully submitted by the Tax Relief Coalition."

Mr. Speaker, I am just very honored to have been here tonight with the gentleman from North Carolina to present on behalf of nearly 1,000 business associations, businesses and other think tanks that are proposing that we reduce taxes and the tax burden on the American people. I just cannot wait until tomorrow, and I hope the American people follow the debate. I am confident that just as we had the debates following the tax increases of 1993, which when those tax increases were put in place that we heard were so good tonight, the immediate effect was that a Republican Congress was elected for the first time in over 40 years.

And so people do understand these issues. I know in the State of South Carolina that we understand those issues because, in fact, not only was there a new Republican majority in the House here in Washington, but for the first time since 1877 there was a Republican majority and the first Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives in the entire South, David Wilkins, was elected. The American people do understand these issues. We have gotten excellent leadership in our State and here in Washington. The Republicans then achieved a majority in the State Senate in 2001 for the first time since 1877 because people do understand the philosophical differences between the two parties. They understand that we as Republicans are working for limited government, expanded freedom. On the other side, they have tax-and-spend policies. They are well meaning, but they are wrong.

□ 2100

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HENSARLING). The Chair would generally remind Members to address their remarks to the Chair and not to those outside the Chamber.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

MENTAL HEALTH CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, as the Democratic Chair of the bipartisan Congressional Mental Health Caucus, which we recently began, I am pleased

to anchor at this time along with my Republican cochair, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY), who spoke a few minutes. He was granted some time by my good friend to make his remarks, and I hope that he will be able to return.

Mr. Speaker, this week is National Suicide Awareness Week, and we want to highlight that fact. Approximately 30,000 people, 30,000 people, commit suicide in the United States every year, making suicide the 11th leading cause of death nationwide. Suicide is particularly a problem among young people, communities of color, and seniors. The States with the five highest suicide rates are Nevada, Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico, and Arizona.

Everyone should be screened by the health care providers in our schools for mental health and/or risk of suicide. Because of the associated stigma of the crazies, we cannot count on people to seek out help on their own. Another key point is our need for more mental health professionals to break down financial and language barriers to mental health.

Mr. Speaker, I will right now take the time to introduce the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) to address this same issue.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO) for taking this opportunity to talk about suicide and the mentally ill. I think one of the difficulties that we encounter is the fact that when it comes to the mentally ill, it is usually one of the last that we talk about, and in fact it is usually an afterthought in terms of providing resources that are drastically needed for not only for the mentally ill but for the issue in terms of preventing suicides.

Mental disorders are common in the United States, and we sometimes do not realize how common they are. There is an estimated 22 percent of Americans age 18 and older and one out of five adults who suffer from diagnosed mental disorders throughout a year. Tragically, mental disorder is often linked with suicide. Of the 29,350 people who died by suicide in the year 2000, more than 90 percent of the people who killed themselves have diagnosable mental disorders, commonly depressive disorders as well as substantive abuse disorders and other dual diagnoses.

At this time I would also like to focus my remarks on critical segments of our population, and that is our veterans. Today while we continue to deploy troops in Iraq, it is important to remember that the wounds of combat that would disable and harm our troops are not merely just physical. Many combat wounds will affect the minds, the brain, and the spirit of our Armed Forces and their loved ones. So often we forget that long after the visible battle wounds are healed, many veterans continue to suffer not only physically but also mentally. For our heroes of today as well as yesterday's