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OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 2013

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was \$10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is \$16,738,116,336,111.15. We've added \$6,111,239,287,178.07 to our debt in 4 and a half years. This is \$6 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE JAMIE KOTULA FOUNDATION FOR OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 2013

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Jamie Kotula Foundation, an organization set forth to enrich the lives of others in Northeastern Pennsylvania through "random acts of kindness," a strong value of Jamie Kotula. The Foundation will also host the third annual Kick-Off Classic on August 31 and September 1, 2013, marking the outset of the fall sports season at Marywood University in Scranton.

Jamie Kotula, who tragically passed in a car accident on the morning of January 14, 2011

at the age of sixteen, lived a life of service towards others. His selfless character was revealed as a student at Holy Cross High School in Dunmore, Pennsylvania, where he served as secretary of the Student Council and a member of the boys' varsity soccer, swim, and track teams. In addition to being a dedicated class leader and a skilled and energetic athlete, Jamie was extremely well-rounded as a member of the National Honor Society, the Pro-Life club, chess club, foreign language club, and the show choir.

In honor of Jamie Kotula, who lived his life in the present each and every day, the Jamie Kotula Foundation was created to support like-minded individuals and groups in Northeast Pennsylvania who enrich lives and communities through acts of kindness and selflessness. Since its creation in 2011, the Foundation has distributed more than \$100,000 in both scholarships and donations to charitable causes, such as helping out the victims of the school violence at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut.

In recognition of the community contributions of the Jamie Kotula Foundation's largest event, the Kick-Off Classic, I add my congratulations and best wishes for continued success and service.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PERMANENTLY ENDING RECEIPT BY PRISONERS ACT

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 2013

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Permanently Ending Receipt by Prisoners Act, also known as the PERP Act. I am pleased to be joined by Representatives TODD YOUNG, MIKE KELLY, TIM GRIFFIN, JIM RENACCI, TOM REED, and CHARLES BOUSTANY, all Members of the Committee on Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee, which I chair. As a former sheriff and now Chairman of this Subcommittee that has jurisdiction over the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, this bill blends the expertise I developed in my past career with my present committee responsibilities.

Under existing UI program rules that operate in all States, an individual must be able, available, and actively seeking work in order to be eligible to collect UI benefits, which are paid to those who are unemployed through no fault of their own. Individuals confined in jails, prisons, and other penal institutions are by definition not "able and available" to work and have historically been presumed to be not eligible for UI benefits.

Despite this fact, news articles in multiple States have revealed a nationwide epidemic of unemployment benefit payments to incarcerated individuals. Recent headlines include: Illinois: "State: More than \$2M in Unemployment Benefits Went to Inmates" (10/9/12); New Jersey: "Audit Says 20,000 Inmates Were Mistakenly Paid Nearly \$24M in State and Federal Benefits" (5/29/13); Pennsylvania: "Inmates Collect Millions in Unemployment Benefits in Philadelphia Jails" (2/20/13); and South Carolina: "Government Waste—Inmates Collecting Millions in Fraudulent Unemployment Checks" (2/21/13). The list unfortunately does not end

there, and these and other articles make it clear that taxpayers are wasting millions of dollars each year on unemployment benefit payments to prisoners.

We must make it very clear that incarcerated individuals should not be receiving unemployment benefits, and that States need to make affirmative efforts to end this obvious abuse. Unemployment benefits are designed to support people who are able and trying to find work and provide for their families, but who have fallen on hard times. It is an injustice that the tax dollars of law-abiding citizens are being used to provide assistance to people who have broken the law and simply should not qualify for these benefits.

The PERP Act provides the solutions to this problem by taking the following steps:

Barring States from paying UI checks to local, state and federal prisoners, strengthening a current implied prohibition because prisoners are not "able and available" for work; and

Requiring State UI agencies to regularly compare UI rolls with currently available inmate rosters to ensure UI checks are not paid to current inmates. At a minimum, States must access and use prisoner information the Social Security Administration has collected and used since the late-1990s to prevent the payment of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit checks to currently incarcerated individuals. This current data match is simple, quick, and efficient, and can readily be replicated by States to ensure that UI benefit checks are not paid to prisoners.

During 2011, the UI program made a staggering \$10.3 billion in improper payments, some of which were to individuals in our nation's jails and prisons. Those payments were made because under current practice too many States rely on the inmate to report their change of residence to the jail so that their UI benefits would end. Not surprisingly, few inmates volunteer to stop collecting these checks, and no benefit program should rely on the honesty of inmates to ensure taxpayer funds are properly spent. This legislation ends the practice of relying on self-reported information by inmates to prevent this type of UI benefit misspending. It does so simply by expecting all State UI agencies to tap into an existing Federal database of prisoners, already used to ensure that inmates do not collect disability checks. This system is fast, efficient, and affordable.

Again, I want to thank my colleagues on the Human Resources Subcommittee, Representatives TODD YOUNG, MIKE KELLY, TIM GRIFFIN, JIM RENACCI, TOM REED, and CHARLES BOUSTANY, for their support as original cosponsors of this bill. I invite all Members to join me in supporting this important legislation and look forward to its speedy consideration so that we can ensure we put an end to the outrageous practice of prisoners collecting benefit payments intended for the truly unemployed.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 2013

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, last week, July 18, 2013, I was speaking with a documentary group about the civil rights movement, and I was unable to make it to the floor