

I encourage my Colleagues to support H.R. 3874.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, Congress should reject H.R. 3874, a bill reauthorizing the Women's, Infant, and Children's (WIC) program and other childhood nutrition programs, and the flawed redistributionist, welfare state model that lies behind this bill. Although the goals of this legislation are noble, the means toward achieving the goals embodied therein are unconstitutional and ineffective.

Providing for the care of the poor is a moral responsibility of every citizen, however, it is not a proper function of the Federal Government to plunder one group of citizens and redistribute those funds to another group of citizens. Nowhere in the United States Constitution is the Federal Government authorized to provide welfare services. If any government must provide welfare services, it should be State and local governments. However, the most humane and efficient way to provide charitable services are through private efforts. Among their other virtues, private charities are much more likely to provide short-term assistance rather than fostering long-term dependency upon government programs.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you, and many of my colleagues, understand that private charities are also much better able to target assistance to the truly needy than government programs, which are burdened with bureaucratic rules of eligibility, as well as procedures designed to protect the "due process" rights of recipients, which cannot be adequately changed to meet unique individual circumstances. Thus, many people who are genuinely needy do not receive needed help. In fact, more than 40 percent of all families living below the poverty level receive no government assistance. Private charities can also be more effective because they do not have to fulfill administrative requirements, such as the WIC program's rebate system, which actually divert resources from the needy.

Private charities are also able to place an emphasis upon reformation of personal behavior while not imposing the controls on personal life that government programs, such as WIC, impose on the program recipients. When a pregnant woman signs up to receive WIC vouchers, she is trading away a large amount of her personal freedom. Her choices of where to shop will be restricted to WIC-approved vendors and her choice of what foods to buy will be restricted to those foods which match the WIC nutrition specifications. WIC recipients are also required to participate in WIC parenting and nutrition classes.

As an OB/GYN I certainly recognize the importance of proper nutrition for pregnant women and young children. However, as a constitutionalist, I strenuously object to the federal government coercing pregnant women into accepting such services and restricting their choices of food products. The founders of this country would be flabbergasted if they knew that the federal government had monopolized the provisions of charitable services to low-income women, but they would be horrified if they knew the federal government was forbidding poor women from purchasing Post Raisin Bran for their children because some federal bureaucrats had determined that it contains too much sugar!

Mr. Speaker, the fact that the manufacture of foods such as Raisin Bran battle to get their products included in this program reveals the

extent to which WIC is actually corporate welfare. Many corporations have made a tidy profit from helping to feed the poor and excluding their competitors in the process. For example, thanks to the WIC program, the federal government is the largest purchaser of infant formula in the nation.

According to the Congressional Research Service, food vendors participating in WIC received 9.86 billion in Fiscal Year 1997—75% of the total funds spent on the WIC program! This fiscal year, producers of food products approved by the federal government for purchase by WIC participants are expected to receive \$10 billion dollars in taxpayer dollars! Small wonder the lobbyists who came to my office to discuss WIC were not advocates for the poor, but rather well-healed spokespersons for corporate interests!

Any of my colleagues who doubt that these programs serve the interests of large corporations should consider that one of the most contentious issues debated at Committee mark-up was opposition to an attempt to allow USDA to purchase non-quote peanuts (currently the only peanuts available for sale are farmers who have a USDA quota all other farmers are forbidden to sell peanuts in the US) for school nutrition programs. Although this program would have saved the American taxpayers \$5 million this year, the amendment was rejected at the behest of supporters of the peanut lobby. A member of my staff, who appropriately asked why this amendment could not pass with overwhelming support, was informed by a staffer for another member, who enthusiastically supports the welfare state, that the true purpose of this program is to benefit producers of food products, not feed children.

The main reason supporters of a free and moral society must oppose this bill is because federal welfare programs crowd out the more efficient private charities for two reasons. First, the taxes imposed on the American people in order to finance these programs leave taxpayers with fewer resources to devote to private charity. Secondly, the welfare state erodes the ethic of charitable responsibility as citizens view aiding the poor as the government's role, rather than a moral obligation of the individual.

The best way to help the poor is to dramatically cut taxes thus allowing individuals to devote more of their own resources to those charitable causes which better address genuine need. I am a cosponsor of HR 1338, which raises the charitable deduction and I believe Congress should make awakening the charitable impulses of the American people by reducing their tax burden one of its top priorities. In fact, Congress should seriously consider enacting a dollar-per-dollar tax credit for donations to the needy. This would do more to truly help the disadvantaged than a tenfold increase in spending on the programs in HR 3874.

In conclusion, Congress should reject HR 3874 because the programs contained therein lack constitutional foundation, allow the federal government to control the lives of program recipients, and serve as a means of transferring monies from the taxpayers to big corporations. Instead of funding programs, Congress should return responsibility for helping those in need to those best able to effectively provide assistance; the American people acting voluntarily.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3874, the Child Nutri-

tion and WIC Reauthorization Amendments of 1998. This bill not only reauthorizes the expiring WIC, Summer Food Service, State Administrative Expenses, and Commodity Assistance programs, it also makes some important improvements to them. We've increased State's flexibility in administering these programs, expanded eligibility and services for after school programs, and taken steps to reduce fraud in the WIC program. My colleagues have even managed to orchestrate a savings of \$69 million over five years. This is a good bipartisan bill that will help millions of children, but I think it could have gone farther.

There is something missing from the bill that would increase participation in the Summer Food Service Program. This bill removes many barriers for sponsors of the program, thus encouraging more organizations to join. Because of expanded outreach efforts by state agencies and anti-hunger groups, many more small community-based organizations and private non-profit institutions are eager to provide summer food service programs.

However, many of these organizations lack the resources to purchase needed equipments such as milk coolers, ovens, microwaves, serving utensils, and food storage equipment. They also need funds to advertise and promote their programs. These one-time, non-recurring costs are often more than small organizations can handle.

Over 80% of children who are eligible for this program remain unserved by it. It's not because there isn't a need for more summer food sponsors, and it's not because these kids aren't hungry. The Second Harvest National Food Bank Network recently found, among those food banks reporting seasonal changes in requests for emergency food, nearly half report that requests for emergency food for children increase during the summer months when school is out.

In my district in Cleveland, for example, 63% of the local charities reported an increase in the number of children requesting emergency food assistance during the summer. Over half of the kids requesting emergency food received free or reduced price school meals and are eligible for participation in the summer food service program, but only 11.3% actually participate. During school, these low-income children receive up to 1/2 of their nutrients from school meals. During the summer, they do not have access to school breakfasts or lunches.

Offering sponsors a boost to help them get started would be a relatively inexpensive way, especially given the savings from the bill, to encourage more organizations to establish summer food service programs. A grant program to help defer the one-time costs associated with beginning a summer food program would allow more organizations to participate in low-income and rural areas that are typically underserved by this program.

I had hoped to work with my friends on the other side of the aisle to bring a grant program like this back to the Summer Food Service program before we brought this bill to the floor. And while it is not a particularly expensive concept and even though no one seems to be philosophically or ideologically opposed to the idea, we were unable to resolve the issue to include it in this bill. I think that is unfortunate for the millions of kids for whom summer vacation means hunger instead of fun.

I'd like to thank the Food Research and Action Center for their support and tireless efforts to increase the reach and scope of programs like Summer Food Service. And I encourage my colleagues to continue our work on this issue. I think there is a lot more we can do for these kids. The Summer Food Service Program is one of the least known and most underutilized of the federal nutrition programs. There is no reason for so many children to be hungry and under-nourished during the summer when we could increase participation in the program by offering one-time grants to help more sponsors get started.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support for H.R. 3874, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Amendments of 1998.

I have always been a strong supporter of WIC because it gives women and young children access to the foods necessary for healthy development. WIC provides specific nutritious foods to at-risk, income-eligible, pregnant, postpartum and breast feeding women, infants and children up to five years of age. WIC gives women and young children the means to obtain highly nutritious foods like iron-fortified infant formula, calcium-rich milk, eggs, juice, and cereal.

During pregnancy, one of the most fragile periods in a woman's life, WIC enhances dietary intake, which improves weight gain and the likelihood of a successful pregnancy. After birth, WIC continues to promote the health of infants and is responsible for reducing low birth weight and infant mortality. Children who participate in WIC receive immunizations against childhood diseases at a higher rate than children who are not WIC participants. WIC also helps to reduce anemia among children.

As we know, children receiving nutritious meals are in a better position to focus on their daily studies. Proper nutrition is an integral part of our children's educational experience. In fact, WIC has been linked to improved cognitive development among children. WIC children are more prepared to learn compared to those children who lack proper nutritionally balanced diets.

In short, WIC is supported by many people and continues to be a popular program. It yields tremendous returns on our investments and improves the health and well being of pregnant women, infants and children. I urge my colleagues to show their support for the WIC Program by voting in favor of H.R. 3874.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important issue. I support this bill which will guarantee that families are able to access the food they need. In addition, this program will extend funding for state school lunch programs and provide low income families' children with a national food program.

H.R. 3874 reauthorizes this program through 2003 to allow the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program provides nutrition, education and supplemental food to low-income pregnant and post-partum women, infants and children up to age five. These necessary services are provided free of charge to eligible individuals and families. This bill also contains a number of other provisions including ones that extend funding for administration expenses for the State school lunch program and reauthorize a national summer food program for children of low income families.

In my own homestate of Texas, in the 18th Congressional District, a total of 109,596 women, infants and children receive WIC services each month. This means that in Harris County, TX 12,917 pregnant women, 5,259 breast feeding mothers, 9,448 postpartum mothers, how have recently given birth, and 29,934 infants, and 52,038 children can receive the help that they need. One-seventh of the State of Texas' 683,000 WIC recipients reside in Harris County, TX.

This program is not as glamorous as others—the WIC program is formula, milk, juice, and bread. The majority of those served are poor infants and children, those who are most often overlooked. To cut the WIC program does not materially reduce the numbers of women, infants and children who are in need. This program is one of the best run, most efficient and effective programs that the Federal Government has initiated.

According to the Government Accounting Office, for every dollar spent on the WIC program the tax payer saves \$3.50. This is the reason the WIC Program received very strong bi-partisan support throughout its history.

We must continue to support this program. What can be more important than making sure our country's children are healthy and safe? I strongly support this bill and I encourage my colleagues to support it as well.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3874, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, on that, I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3874.

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

There was no objection.

SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND EXPANSION OF HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 208) expressing the sense of the Congress regarding access to affordable housing and expansion of homeownership opportunities.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 208

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that—

(1) the priorities of our Nation should include providing access to affordable housing that is safe, clean, and healthy and expanding homeownership opportunities; and

(2) these goals should be pursued through policies that—

(A) promote the ability of the private sector to produce affordable housing without excessive government regulation;

(B) encourage tax incentives, such as the mortgage interest deduction, at all levels of government; and

(C) facilitate the availability of capital for homeownership and housing production, including by continuing the essential roles carried out by the Federal National Mortgage Association, the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, and the Federal Home Loan Banks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH).

(Mr. LEACH asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, this, I believe, is a non-controversial bill. It underscores principles critical to the American family—the desirability of achieving the dream of home ownership for as many Americans as conceivably possible.

On this front, there is some good news, and also some challenging circumstances. The good news is that home ownership is going up in America, almost 1 percent in the last 4 years, until today it reaches approximately 66 percent of the American public. The principal reason for this relates to lower interest rates caused by restrained monetary policy and the movement from a deficit to a surplus fiscal policy.

It also relates to aspects of tax policy, the importance of quasi-governmental institutions like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac that have served as extraordinarily helpful intermediaries in housing finance, and to certain housing programs of the Federal Government itself.

But what this bill, and it is a small bill, does is simply underscore what are the great principles of American housing, and underscore it in such a way as to make it clear that this Congress is not going to be backed down from those principles, particularly the principle that relates to the interest deduction for home ownership mortgage loans.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing that this is an exceptionally modest bill, but also one that relates to a subject very important to the heart of the American people, I would urge its adoption at this time.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. MINGE).

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I have faced repeated requests from communities that I represent for action at the Federal level to