

The Internal Revenue Service Restricting and Reform Act of 1997 will help ensure that the IRS administers the tax laws as Congress intended. Enactment of the new safeguards included in H.R. 2292 will help the IRS will become the customer-friendly agency it was meant to be, and will help the IRS to apply the tax laws of our country in a just manner.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their exceptional work on H.R. 2292 and look forward to continuing to work with them to enact that legislation into law when Congress reconvenes.

HONORING ESSEX CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 40th anniversary of Essex Catholic High School. In 1957 this school was founded by Archbishop Thomas A. Boland with an enrollment of 225 students and a faculty of 7. The school was the first regional high school in the Archdiocese of Newark and has served the young men of the Newark area since that time.

The ability of Essex Catholic to grow and change with the times is perhaps the most important aspect of this school. They moved from the original location at the former Mutual Benefit Life Building on Broadway in North Newark to a larger campus on Glenwood Avenue in East Orange in 1980. At this new facility, the school continues to meet the challenges of serving an area that is consistently changing and progressing. Their ability to meet these challenges stems from the strong moral and religious foundation the school is built upon. This foundation also consists of teaching students to set high standards and goals for themselves. The school continues to emphasize the spiritual and emotional growth of students that is needed to ensure a well rounded education.

The commitment of the Congregation of Christian Brothers and especially the commitment of the Most Reverend Theodore M. McCarrick to Essex Catholic and to our entire community is also to be commended. Their contributions to the school and our area are positive examples to the young men they teach and the community as a whole. This love and dedication to teaching and Essex Catholic is surely one of the school's most valued assets.

Mr. Speaker, without schools such as Essex Catholic many of our young men would not have important educational opportunities available to them. In this year of their 40th anniversary, I would like to congratulate and praise the long-term devotion the Christian Brothers, religious sisters, priests, lay teachers, students, alumni, and parents have for Essex Catholic and the education of our area's young men.

PROTECTING THE RATEPAYERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the recent efforts by the Congress to address an important matter of equity that will ensure that local communities throughout the nation will be able to protect the environment without jeopardizing limited, local government taxpayer dollars committed to water quality improvements. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. We can see the evidence of the Federal, State and local commitment to improving our Nation's lakes rivers and coastal waters. Public awareness of the importance and benefited of sound environmental stewardship exists today that clearly was not evident 20 years ago. Billions of dollars made available to communities under the Clean Water Act to build clean water facilities using the construction grants program has helped to make our waters healthier.

Over the years, local governments that have received these grants have undergone rigorous audits to ensure that the facilities were constructed as planned and designed, in an effort to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are used as intended. At the same time, we have heard from local officials that these audits have often gone beyond the stated purpose of ensuring that grant funds have been used as intended. Instead, they the focussed on whether the funded project should have been constructed as approved by EPA. These re-evaluations occur even though there is no evidence of fraud or abuse in the project's expenditures and after the project has received both Federal and State approvals to proceed to construction. In my congressional district, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District has been seeking to resolve an adverse audit report dating back to 1977. Despite documentation demonstrating that the facility was planned, designed, and constructed in accordance with Federal and State approvals, EPA auditors have sought the return of \$4 million by the local taxpayers.

Simply stated, after 20 years, the auditors now have decided that my constituent could have constructed the project in a better way. This second-guessing of previously approved, eligible project costs should not be permitted. It penalizes the local community for project approvals it did not make and, more importantly, it diverts resources away from water quality improvement projects that the community wants. Instead, the district's resources would have to be spent to contest audit findings that seek to disallow eligible project costs.

Congress attempted to correct this situation most recently in 1987 when it passed the Water Quality Act of 1987. Because the problem of second-guessing and reevaluation persists, the Committee on Appropriations included language in the Veterans, Housing and Independent Agencies Fiscal Year 1998 Appropriations Bill. It directs the EPA Administrator to uphold local government construction grants project eligibilities where the local government grantee has provided decision documents of the EPA, or the designated State agency, permitting use of the funds. I expect

that with the clarification provided in this year's spending bill, EPA will adhere to Congress' directive and uphold eligible project costs such as those of my constituent, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.

THANKING ACTING VA SECRETARY HERSHEL GOBER

HON. RUBÉN HINOJOSA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say thank you to Acting VA Secretary Hershel Gober, who has worked closely with me these past 10 months to make the dream of easier access to health care for veterans in south Texas become a reality. When I took office back in January, one anxiety I heard voiced time and time again was that veterans in the south Texas/Rio Grande Valley area felt the services they received were less than adequate, and also the distances they had to travel to receive quality care were far too great. At that time I pledged to ensure that the level of care afforded veterans in our communities is second to none. To see what could be done I met with the Acting Secretary. He heard my concerns. He looked at our needs. He took action.

The result: In 1998 the veterans of the 15th District of Texas can expect to begin receiving significantly improved and expanded health care services. The counties of Bee (Beeville), Jim Wells (Alice), and Kleberg (Kingsville), have all been approved as future sites for primary care community-based outpatient clinics. Equally as important, a plan has also been developed, which will lead to expanded inpatient services. This pilot program will establish a process for the contracting of routine, non-urgent, nonspecialty inpatient care for stays for 3 days or less.

This is, indeed, a satisfying resolution. To say the least, I am elated.

It is because of the assistance and guidance of Secretary Gober that we will be able to implement innovative programs that provide much needed assistance to countless men and women who have protected our freedoms and who have made our Nation the great country it is. What the Secretary's efforts mean is that there will be real, effective changes for the veterans of south Texas. This is an example of what can be accomplished when everyone joins together and channels their energy toward a common goal.

Mr. Secretary, I could certainly never have done this alone. I want to sincerely thank you for sharing my vision.

RECOGNITION OF DR. CHARLES ROARK, NORTHEAST EL PASOAN OF THE YEAR FOR 1997

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize Dr. Charles Roark as the Northeast El Pasoan of the Year for 1997. In addition to his outstanding work for Hospice, he also