

of every possible problem. And when the American people raised concerns, they just said do not worry, we know best. When Congress asked questions, the President threatened vetoes. Well, the Clinton health care plan collapsed.

Unfortunately, they are headed down the same path on the Census. They used some legitimate problems in the 1990 Census as an excuse to totally redesign a 200-year method for taking the Census. But because they used experts, in this case statisticians, to design this unprecedented method, they decided they did not need approval from Congress. How could Congress have any legitimate concerns after all, because the Census Bureau used "expert panels" to create this new concept?

Well, "expert panels" weren't elected by the people. Professional statisticians are not constitutionally responsible for directing the Census. Academics do not have the responsibility for deciding how taxpayers' dollars are spent. That is Congress' job.

By the way, I have a Ph.D. in marketing and statistics, so I understand the theory behind what they are trying to pull off. I believe, however, that the Clinton Administration dropped the ball in informing the Congress, working with the Congress, and seeking approval from Congress.

This serious miscalculation has placed the 2000 Census in danger and the institution of the Federal Government most impacted by a failed Census is the United States House of Representatives. Every State legislature, every city council, every school board needs a successful Census to legitimately represent the people. Let me repeat that. Every State legislature, every city council, every school board needs a successful Census to legitimately represent the people.

If the administration fails in the implementation of their academic theory, all representative bodies in this country will be thrown in turmoil and uncertainty.

The majority in Congress have made it very clear that we do not approve of the administration's current plan. What we want, or more precisely what we intend to pay for, is a traditional Census that is transparent and fair. We understand the problems of the 1990 Census and we want them fixed. We do not believe, however, that we need to throw out the baby with the bath water.

To date, I am not satisfied they have gotten the message downtown. In November, Congress passed and the President signed legislation to continue on an actual enumeration. They have not gotten the message.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the legislation—"that funds appropriated under this act . . . shall be used by the Bureau of the Census to plan, test and become prepared to implement the 2000 decennial census, without using statistical methods. . . ."

It seems pretty clear that the law requires them to prepare for a traditional Census. I don't believe that's what they are doing.

They're budget submission hides behind legalisms and technicalities and says, "The Administration has not included additional funding for nonsampling census activities because that funding is not required by the agreement."

To me, that is yet another slap in the face to the Congress. They seem to have this attitude that Congress' opinion doesn't matter.

The 2000 Census is in deep trouble at this moment. The Commerce Department's own Inspector General has said that. I stand ready to work with the Administration. We want and we need a successful Census in 2000. But the attitude downtown needs to turnaround. They need to understand that we have a role to play—a very major role to play—in the planning, preparation and implementation of the 2000 Census.

POST OFFICE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997 the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, oftentimes, the Federal Government is called to spend billions of dollars to try and repair communities after they fall apart. It is far better for the Federal Government and its agencies to lead by example, and one of the ways that we can lead by example is best illustrated by the impact that the United States Postal Service has on our communities.

Post Offices are the heart and soul of America's small towns, drawing people to main streets and preserving the core of these communities. Despite this vital role, the Postal Service continues to move post offices to the outskirts of town, leaving devastated communities in their wake.

This is happening across the country, not just in my community in Oregon. I have heard similar stories from Washington, Montana, Colorado, Ohio, Louisiana, New York, and everywhere in between. Small downtowns across the country are being stranded despite the protest of town residents.

Mr. Speaker, it is absurd that the Postal Service gives its customers more say in which Elvis stamp to issue than where the post offices are located. Residents of Christianburg, Virginia, know this story all too well. They used to gather at a post office in the center of town to collect their mail and talk about the events of the day. Today, their main post office has moved 3 miles from downtown leaving only a small contact station in its wake. The gathering place for the community has become this window in a grocery store next to the motor oil and the fuel filters.

Fortunately, Christianburg residents refused to take this affront as the final word. Residents of the town, supported by the city council and their Chamber of Commerce, fought back and finally after a 2-year battle, it appears as though the Postal Service has conceded

that a "communications breakdown" occurred and they are apparently ready to reverse this decision.

Our Nation's governors know that these post office relocations are directly contributing to the decline of their towns and reducing the access of the elderly and disabled to post office services. The governors have now asked for our help. They have asked Congress to eliminate the loophole that is keeping citizens from having a voice in these post office relocation decisions.

They have also asked that we require the Postal Service to comply with the same local zoning and building codes that apply to State and local governments. Governors made this request because they know firsthand the problems caused when the Postal Service claims immunity from the same laws that private citizens, businesses and local governments abide by.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the governors and have introduced H.R. 1231, which would meet their goals. The Post Office Communities Partnership Act strengthens the voice of local citizens in decisions to relocate or rebuild postal facilities. It would give at least 60 days notice before renovating or relocating. It would require the Postal Service to consider a number of additional factors, including the community sentiment, the extent to which the post office is a part of a core downtown, and the effect a new facility may have on a community. And it must comply with all local zoning, planning and land use regulations.

The bill is fair. It does not place unnecessary burdens on the Postal Service. For the first time they would be treated as a responsible member of the community and not above local laws.

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to join with my distinguished colleagues to speak about H.R. 1231, the Post Office Relocation Act. In particular, I want to express my appreciation to Representative BLUMENAUER for organizing this forum and to recognize his efforts in fashioning thoughtful legislation that directly responds to the postal needs and concerns of constituents in every community in our country.

Regardless of where one may reside, the services that the U.S. Post Office provides are deeply rooted in the essence of community and by extension connote a sense of identity. Thus, rural and urban residents understandably react unfavorably when their mail delivery or local post office is altered in some way. A community's reaction is unduly compounded when they have a sense that their concerns and needs were not considered as part of the decision-making process.

In just the last year, I have been approached by several communities in the 18th Congressional District of Pennsylvania that are faced with some type of difficulty regarding postal services. While the circumstances of these cases are quite different, the level of frustration they have experienced with respect to their ability to interject individual thoughts and opinions has been the same.

The residents of Whitaker, Pennsylvania—in my district—have had to deal with having the

operating hours of their local post office reduced to 10AM to 2PM. I don't care where you live, four hours of service is utterly inadequate. In a community nearby to Whitaker, the small, close-knit community of Jefferson Boro is currently being served by four different post offices. Can you imagine four different post offices delivering mail to one community of just over 3,000 households? In yet another part of my district, Rural Ridge has been trying to reach consensus with the U.S. Postal Service on what type of delivery best meets the needs of their community.

While the particulars of these cases are disparate, they all point to the need for greater participation on the part of affected individuals and communities in the decisions arrived at by the U.S. Postal Service. The Post Office Relocation Act is responsive to this need and lays out a reasonable structure through which substantive discourse will occur and collaborative decisions will be reached.

At the risk of being repetitive, I will not outline every provision of the bill. I do however, want to briefly highlight some parts that I think embody the common sense approach taken by Representative BLUMENAUER's legislation. As a starting point, H.R. 1231 would require the U.S. Postal Service to give residents a 60 day notice before the renovation, relocation, closing, or consolidation of their post office. This notice can either be hand delivered or delivered by mail. In addition, a notice of such action must be published in one or more newspapers of general circulation within the zip codes served.

The Post Office Relocation Act does not stop with this good beginning, but also incorporates an allowance for any person affected to offer an alternative proposal and the requirement for hearings to be conducted. Finally, this bill revises the factors that are considered to include the sentiment of the community, whether postal officials negotiated with persons served, and the adequacy of the existing post office.

The Post Office Relocation Act will most assuredly add to the great amount of respect that we all hold for the U.S. Postal Service. I am hopeful that this discussion will lead to more members adding their support to this bill which currently has 49 cosponsors. I also want to offer my strongest encouragement to the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Postal Service to examine this most necessary bill as soon as possible.

Again, I want to recognize Representative BLUMENAUER for introducing H.R. 1231, the Post Office Relocation Act. I appreciate having this chance to express my support for the bill.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. BALDACCI).

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in support of H.R. 1231, the Post Office Relocation Act. I am a proud cosponsor of this legislation and urge its passage.

Rural areas like my district especially feel the pinch when the post office announces the move of a local office. Post offices in such rural areas are the social and information centers in the town, and are usually located in the heart of the business district. Downtown areas in rural America are often fragile and many local businesses depend on the foot and car traffic which post offices attract.

One town in particular, Castine, is a small coastal town that is the home of the Maine Maritime Academy, faced a similar dilemma. Castine's post office, one of the oldest continually operating post offices in the country, was built in 1814 and has changed very little over time. Probably to the Postal Service it looks like a dilapidated, inefficient place to conduct business. But to the citizens of Castine, it was a treasured facility, an historic sight, and the heart and soul of the community.

It was Castine's bicentennial year and the townspeople were faced with losing a part of what makes their community so unique.

The Postal Service decided that Castine's office should be relocated out of the heart of downtown Castine, but the citizens had other ideas and many of them thought they could create the space needed to ensure quality mail service and they should not be shy about sharing them with the post office. And as a result of this outcry from the public and attention from national news organizations, the Postal Service reconsidered their proposal.

Mr. Speaker, this is good legislation. I appreciate being able to support the legislation.

UNFAIRNESS IN TAX CODE: MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997 the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to be here before the House to discuss an issue that is so important to the people of the district that I represent. I have the privilege of representing one of America's most diverse districts, representing the south side of Chicago, the south suburbs in Cook and Will counties, bedroom communities like Morris, or the small town I live in, as well as a lot of cornfields and farm towns. Whether I am at the union hall, or the local VFW or the business and professional women's club or the local grain elevator, there is a common series of questions that my constituents ask time and time again:

Do Americans feel that it is fair that our tax code imposes a higher tax penalty on marriage? Do Americans feel that it is fair that 21 million married working couples with two incomes pay on average \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married than an identical couple with two incomes that lives together outside of marriage?

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Do Americans feel that it is right, that it is fair, that our Tax Code actually punishes marriage and provides an incentive for divorce? In fact, really, for many married couples, the only way they can avoid paying the marriage tax penalty is to file the paperwork for divorce.

My colleagues, the marriage tax penalty not only is unfair; it is wrong that

our Tax Code punishes society's most basic institution: the institution of marriage. It punishes 21 million married working couples, on average, of \$1,400.

Let me give Members an example of a south suburban couple, a couple I have the privilege of representing in the south suburbs of Chicago. This particular couple, we have a machinist. He works at the local Caterpillar manufacturing plant where they make heavy equipment like bulldozers and cranes and earth movers. This particular machinist makes \$30,500 a year.

Now if he is single, after the standard deduction and personal exemptions, this particular machinist is in the 15 percent tax bracket. Now say he and his girlfriend decide to get married, and his girlfriend is a tenured schoolteacher in the Joliet public schools. Say she is making an identical income of \$30,500. Now, if she stays single, she would also be in the 15 percent tax bracket.

But because this machinist at the local Joliet Caterpillar plant and this tenured schoolteacher at the local Joliet public schools decide to get married, just because they get married, they, of course, file jointly on their income taxes; and in that case, with this couple, this machinist from Joliet and the schoolteacher from Joliet, since they are married and file jointly, their combined income of \$61,000 produces the average marriage tax penalty of almost \$1,400.

Is that right that this south suburb couple, this working couple with two incomes, should pay higher taxes just because they are married?

When we think about it, \$1,400 may be a drop in the bucket here in Washington, D.C. We do have a 1.7 trillion dollar budget. But for this working couple in Joliet, \$1,400 is one year's tuition at Joliet Junior College, it is 3 months' worth of day care at a local child care center and several months' worth of car payments, and it is also a significant portion of a downpayment on a home.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WELLER. I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman for bringing to the attention of the Members this very vital issue.

At home, I have been saying that the surplus that we seem to be generating, part of that in tax cuts should go to alleviate this problem. So it fits well with the need to bring about some tax justice.

I thank the gentleman very much for bringing it to the attention of the House.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania, who I believe is a cosponsor of our legislation.

It is so important we look for ways to allow middle-class working families to keep more of what they earn. As we