

“sneak and peak” at taxpayers’ confidential tax filings, and, which H. Con. Res. 528 corrects, is just one example of the controversial changes and omissions included in the 3,000-page Omnibus package.

The Omnibus Appropriations bill includes another serious threat to taxpayers’ privacy, one that we are not fixing today. Behind closed doors, the Republicans stripped from the massive bill a House-passed amendment which would have prohibited the Internal Revenue Service from using private bounty-hunters to collect back taxes. That provision, which enjoyed strong-bipartisan support, would have prevented 2.6 million tax returns a year from being turned over to private debt collectors with personal financial stakes—receiving 25 cents on every dollar in making people “pay up.” This policy all but openly condones strong-arm collection tactics. Additionally, while IRS employees must respect taxpayer privacy or be liable, the bounty hunters will have no such restrictions. They are free to do as they please, and we have no reason to believe that they will not abuse the power the Republicans want to give them in order to increase their profits at the expense of taxpayer privacy.

Furthermore, 6 million employees are in danger of seeing the 40-hour work week eroded because of another glaring omission from the Omnibus Appropriations bill. In a blow to America’s workers, the Omnibus fails to include the Obey-Miller amendment to the Labor-HHS Appropriations bill that passed the House. That bipartisan provision, which also passed the Senate, would have ensured that the Administration’s new overtime rules do not harm Americans who depend on overtime to make ends meet, instead keeping in place a vital protection and keeping them from having to work longer hours for less pay.

There are also provisions included in—or excluded from—the bill that would undermine a woman’s right to choose, undercut environmental protections, and put workers’ retirement security in jeopardy if their employers chose to convert from defined benefit to cash-balance plans. But, unfortunately, it is not only the policy riders and omissions that are harmful to millions within our country. The funding levels of too many vital programs are shameful and jeopardize our citizens and our future.

For instance, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program, which has helped put thousands of police officers on our streets, is cut by roughly 20-percent. The Small Business Administration’s budget is reduced by 18-percent. There is no funding for the 7(a) loan program, which is the SBA’s flagship program for helping small businesses get access to capital. Although we are bringing home new veterans every day, the funding level for veterans’ health care is at least \$1.3 billion less than what the bipartisan Veterans’ Affairs Committee says is needed just to maintain the current level of services. The President’s own No Child Left Behind Act is underfunded by \$9.6 billion. Many key housing programs are slashed. Housing for the elderly was cut by \$27 million, and housing for people with disabilities was cut by \$9 million. Assistance for the homeless also saw a \$9 million cut. Community Development Block Grants are funded at \$212 million less than current levels. Contrary to Congress’s call in 2002 to double the National Science Foundation’s budget over the next five years, the omnibus

cuts NSF’s funding by \$61 million below Fiscal Year 2004’s level. While those cuts may seem small, they could truly decimate those programs, many which were already severely underfunded. At the same time that millionaires are not being asked to give up one penny of their tax cuts, investments that will make our country stronger are being cut.

Despite its containing controversial changes to the law and gross underfunding of essential government services, facts only known to a handful of powerful Republicans, my colleagues and I were given only a few hours to read the bill which funds 13 government departments, dozens of domestic agencies, and is one of the largest government funding bills to come before Congress. Not even the most accomplished speed-reader could have gotten through the bill in time, which is exactly what its authors were counting on when they rammed the bill through in one day. Such treatment of a bill of such importance is a discredit to the institution of Congress and a serious disservice to our country. One resolution fixing one issue cannot make up for the abuse of power and the abuse of the American taxpayer, employee, student, senior, and family that H.R. 4818 embodies.

DIRECTING CLERK OF THE HOUSE
TO MAKE TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS
IN ENROLLMENT OF H.R.
4818

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT C. SCOTT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 6, 2004

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I support this provision to fix the misguided insertion in the Omnibus Appropriations bill allowing Congressional staff to view individual tax returns. However, I protest the process through which that insertion, and others, were inserted into a 3,000-plus page spending bill without the knowledge of most members and without an opportunity to correct all of them.

One such additional insertion is a provision which effectively eliminates one of our most effective tools to fight crime—the Federal Prison Industries program. Study after study—some of them covering as much as 16 years of follow-up data—have shown that inmates who participate in the Federal Prison Industries program are more likely to be employed and less likely to commit crimes than those who do not take part. And corrections officials tell us that Federal Prison Industries are critical to their maintaining safety and security in the prisons by giving inmates something productive to do with their time. Crime victims and the inmates’ dependents benefit, as well. Last year alone, inmate workers paid more than \$3 million from their wages in the form of restitution to victims and support payments to dependents.

Inserting provisions in a 3,000-plus page bill with no opportunity to know about them or review them prior to voting on them, not only violates House rules against legislating on an appropriations measure, but violates principles of transparency and regular order in legislating, as well.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Mr. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall no. 543, Technical corrections in the enrollment of the Bill H.R. 4818, I was absent due to a medical family emergency. Had I been present, I would have voted “aye.”

HONORING D.C. UNITED AS THE
MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER CHAMPIONS

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate D.C. United on winning the Major League Soccer Championship Cup on November 14, 2004. D.C. United beat the Kansas City Wizards 3–2 to win its fourth MLS championship in the league’s nine-year existence. Alecko Eskandarian scored United’s first two goals, leading D.C. to the MLS title. D.C. United has been the District’s most successful sports franchise in recent history and has been called the most successful club in MLS history. The team is a metaphor for the extraordinary progress our city itself has made—balanced budgets and surpluses, retaining and attracting homeowners, and a renaissance in economic development throughout the District of Columbia.

The mighty Black and Red recently celebrated their triumph with a victory rally at RFK Stadium, giving more than 1,000 fans an opportunity to get up close and personal with players, pose for pictures and get autographs. During the rally, Mayor Anthony Williams hailed the “dedication, teamwork and vision” of the champs, declaring November 17 “D.C. United Day” in the nation’s capital. Team captain Ryan Nelsen thanked “the 12th man”, the great fans of D.C. United.

In a season dominated by news about the signing of our big catch, 15 year old soccer phenom Freddy Adu, first-year coach Peter Nowak moved the focus off the media hype and with his team-oriented philosophy steered United to capture its first Cup since 1999. Nowak said, “They have real attitude and a winning mentality, they’re always going to come first and they’re always going to be the winners. They shared my vision and they got the cup at the end.”

Giving Adu his “props,” however, Freddy became the youngest player ever to win a championship in a major U.S. professional team sport. The unassuming teenager, though, preferred to focus on the team’s accomplishments rather than his own.

D.C. United also won championships in 1996 and 1997. Unfortunately, after its 1999 MLS Cup, the team missed the playoffs in 2000, 2001 and 2002. But the road back to the top of the league became painted with hard work, patience and a determined eye toward winning the Cup back.

The team is currently conducting its annual United Holiday Toy Drive benefiting Children’s National Medical Center. They invite the public