

Social Security without limits

The Social Security earnings limit always struck me as one of the most ill-considered parts of the federal tax code. Government shouldn't be in the business of discouraging adults from working, regardless of what age they are.

Until last April, Social Security recipients age 65 to 69 lost \$1 in benefits for every \$3 they earned above the earning limits, which was \$9,600 in 1999. Beneficiaries subject to that penalty were being assessed, in effect, a 33-1.3% marginal tax rate after having paid into the Social Security system all their lives.

This punished and discriminated

against seniors who remain active and productive in the workforce. It gnawed away at the idea that individuals should be allowed to decide how to spend their retirement years without government interference.

This earnings limit was the survivor of a bygone era, a product of the Great Depression when unemployment stood at 25%. At that time there was a national consensus that an individual should retire completely after reaching a certain age, and make room for other, younger people badly in need of a job.

But in today's low-unemployment economy, it is important for those with

experience and skill to stay in the workforce as long as possible. The continuing participation of older Americans is increasingly critical to the health of the U.S. economy. The 40 million-plus Americans age 60 and over represent a vast store of human capital. Economists estimate that removing the earnings limit could increase the labor supply by 5.3% by allowing individuals to continue working without tax penalties.

So, in March of this year, Congress

unanimously passed a bill eliminating the earnings penalty and it was signed into law the following month, directly affecting the hundreds of thousands of Social Security recipients who are working this year.

The repeal is retroactive to Jan. 1, so the 415,000 working seniors will get refunds for the money already deducted from their Social Security checks.

In addition to the basic issues of fairness and the desirability of main-

taining a skilled workforce, the repeal will strengthen the retirement security of American by giving seniors the choice of working longer and saving more - an important consideration when more people are living longer than ever before.

Breakthroughs in medicine and biotechnology mean future retirees will live even longer. Repealing the earnings limit will help to raise the standard of living for many, many seniors, as well as strengthen our

overall economy.

This was a correction to the tax code we could afford to make.

No recipients are receiving higher benefits than they would have otherwise.

We have balanced the budget and begun to pay down the debt. We anticipate healthy surpluses. There was no reason not to make this adjustment in basic fairness.

Getting rid of this tax on working seniors was the right thing to do.

From the Office of U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison

Hunters Extravaganza is Aug. 4-6 in Houston

Texas hunters have the best whitetail hunting in the world! Although the pressure was on, Texas came through with flying colors in 1999 with a great number of super impressive whitetail being harvested from across the state. We can only dream of what's on tap for the upcoming season.

Well, if you're waiting to get your batteries charged for the coming season, you're sure to get fully charged up at the Hunters Extravaganza!

Honoring trophy-class whitetail deer, this year's celebration will host Texas' biggest non-typical whitetail taken last season. Emphasis is on the future of whitetail and hunting.

The Texas Trophy Hunters Association celebrates its 25th (Silver) Anniversary this year. The Association, which places emphasis on whitetail deer, produces the 24th Annual Hunters Extravaganza in a number of cities across the state.

Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center is the place to be Aug. 4-6. It's the time of year when hunters think of the upcoming seasons.

Of course, as hunters, we all love to hunt dove in any part of the state where we can find them and Sept. is when it all begins. What better excuse could we have to make a trip to our deer lease to check on things than to

plan a bird hunt when the North and South Zone dove seasons open. After all, there is much to do like tightening the tie down wires on all the deer stands, cleaning out the owl nest and spraying a little wasp killer during the day. Inevitably, we always seem to remember a spot we wished we could have had a deer stand or a feeder the season before.

See everything in the world of hunting. Start thinking now about all the things you intended to do at the end of last season at your deer lease, because there isn't a better place to shop for all the hunting gear you need than at Hunters Extravaganza, Aug. 4-6 in the Brown Convention Center.

Those of you who have been living in the Houston area for 20 years or more have probably been to a Hunters Extravaganza. Unlike the normal hunting and fishing shows that have come and gone, the Extravaganza is a pure hunting show! You'll find most anything that's made for hunting, especially white-tail deer hunting.

It doesn't matter if it's a new set of camo clothing, a bottle of deer scent, or a grunt call, you'll find every variety at the Hunters Extravaganza, and most likely find them on sale or a special deal, plus free instructions. If you don't have a place to hunt, there

are plenty of guides and outfitters to talk to face-to-face. Top outfitters for deer, caribou, elk, bear, hogs, upland game birds, waterfowl, pronghorn antelope and exotics will be at the show.

If you spend any time visiting with the hundreds of exhibitors, it will be difficult to cover the whole show in one day because the hall is literally jam-packed. Most people end up spending at least two or three days, because there is just too much to see!

Do big whitetail deer heads excite you? See 30-30, the most spectacular whitetail that has ever lived! This year you'll see the most awesome display of past Texas Trophies that have ever been put together under one roof. Each year, members of the Texas Trophy Hunters bring their whitetail heads harvested the previous season, to compete in the annual Whitetail Competition. Bucks will be entered from North, East and South Texas regions as well as from Mexico. A special division for bucks taken out of state is also included this year. Awards are given for first through third places.

Texas Trophy Hunters Association is sponsoring its 5th annual Taxidermy Competition. Texas taxidermists will be competing for thousands in cash. This promises to show visitors the very best in taxidermy on whitetail deer. You'll also see the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's

"Wall of Shame", a collection of trophy whitetail confiscated from outlaw hunters.

You can attend a number of free clinics. Clinic speakers and topics will include Mike Biggs and his unbelievable "Whitetail Show" featuring action slides like you've never seen before; Jerry Peterson, President of Woods Wise Callmasters, will teach deer vocabulary and share hunting secrets for elk and turkey. Meet Dr. James Kroll, known in the industry as "Dr. Deer", and find out the latest in Trophy Deer Management.

Last, but not least, Horace Gore, Wildlife Biologist and Editor of Texas Trophy Hunters magazine, will demonstrate deer rattling and turkey calling techniques and answer all your questions about Texas wildlife.

Free seminars will run continuously throughout the three days. In addition to the seminars, don't miss the South Texas Snake Handlers and their pit full of diamondback rattlers!

The Hunters Extravaganza runs Friday, Aug. 4, from 5 to 10 p.m.; Saturday, Aug. 5, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Sunday, Aug. 6, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is \$8 for adults; and \$4 for children. Advance tickets are available at all area Boot Town locations.

For details, call 210-523-8500 or visit us on the web at www.thha.com.

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Foot Facts



By Dr. Eric R. Tepper, Podiatrist
DO I NEED FOOT SURGERY?

Surgery on the foot and ankle is often recommended after several attempts at more conservative treatments have proven unsuccessful. A number of foot ailments may be improved by surgery, including sprains and fractures, bunions, ingrown toenails, and bone spurs. Most foot and ankle procedures are done on an outpatient basis, using either local anesthesia or light sedation. After surgery, the foot typically needs to be immobilized so it heals correctly. Patients may wear a splint, cast, bandage, or a supportive shoe or sandal to immobilize the area. To promote recovery, patients are encouraged to use the muscles as soon as possible and resume their normal daily activities shortly after surgery. Some people require physical therapy after surgery.

Surgery is sometimes the only definitive way to end a persistent problem and to prevent associated and progressively serious conditions. Fortunately, there is a broad range of sophisticated surgical treatments available today, many of which can be performed in an out-patient setting. Our goal is to recommend the procedure that fits your unique health care needs and bring you back from the painful steps that plague your daily existence. For more information about the topics we cover in our column, or to make an appointment for foot care, please call 234-5571, at Rice Medical Center.

P.S. Surgery should be considered carefully and discussed thoroughly with a podiatric surgeon.

Farm Bureau applauds House trade agreement

Recent passage of Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with China by the U.S. House of Representatives goes a long way towards opening more export markets for farmers and ranchers. The trade agreement allows for additional imports of U.S. goods by China with lower imposed tariffs.

"China's population is the largest in the world. They definitely need more of our agricultural products to feed their country. Farmers and ranchers here in Texas and across the nation would benefit greatly from this trade agreement," said Colorado County Farm Bureau President Charles Harbich.

House members voted 237 to 197 for the "one-way" trade agreement in which the United States did not offer concessions to China.

The Senate must still vote on the legislation.

The American Farm Bureau Federation estimates in the first year of implementation U.S. agricultural exports will increase from approximately \$2 billion to \$3 billion annually.

In the first 10 years of the agreement, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates one-third of U.S. export growth will be in U.S. agricultural products destined for China.

"We are ready to sell more of our food, fiber and timber to the Chinese. I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead, not only the economic benefits of selling more products to China, but also the ability we will have to contribute to a better lifestyle for the Chinese people," Harbich said.

U.S. commodities should benefit from PNTR with China.

The five ag commodities which will be most impacted are beef, citrus, cotton, timber and wheat.

"China just adds to the list of growing overseas markets where we can still sell our agricultural goods. The potential is tremendous," Harbich concluded.

Schulenburg Festival set for this weekend

Welcome to the "National Party of Texas", the celebration of the 23rd Annual Schulenburg Festival. "The Festival" and CPRA Rodeo are set for Aug. 4-6.

This year's entertainment promises to be better than ever as it showcases Rick Trevino on stage at 10:30 p.m. Opening for Trevino will be West 84 from 6:30 to 8 p.m., then Pat Green will follow from 8:30 to 10 p.m.

The Rodeo, presented by Hat Brand Co. of Corsicana, will be held both Friday and Saturday nights at the Wolters Park Rodeo Arena. There will be eight exciting events with Lindsey Ruppert (Gospel singer) performing before and during the rodeo.

Saturday, we'll keep you entertained with lots of free music under the pavilion beginning with Cheyenne at 12 noon. Telstars will start at 4 p.m. followed by a battle dance between Texas Unlimited and Roger Creager from 8 to 10 p.m.

Sunday's acts will promise something for everyone with The Dujka

Brothers starting at 12 noon. Back for the second time, Vince Vance & The Valiants will perform beginning at 2 p.m. Then, Texas Unlimited will start at 6 p.m. and close out the evening.

There will be lots for everyone to do at "The Festival". There's the ladies' and men's softball tournament, a RAD (Run Against Drugs), chili cook-off, volleyball tournament, arts, crafts, antiques, collectibles, Go Tex-an events, horseshoe pitching, cow chip and egg toss, 3-on-3 basketball tournament, dunking board, petting zoo, tricycle races, homecoming carnival, and lots of food booths and ice cold refreshments.

Don't forget to catch the kiddie parade Saturday at the park and the grand festival parade Sunday, downtown to the Park.

For more information, call Roxann Redding 979-247-4710 or Sheila Brossmann at 743-3576 or check the Internet at www.schulenburgfestival.org.

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