Your Lawmakers' Votes

House Votes

C. Brown    A. Crenshaw    R. Desantis    T. Welo    J. Kingston

HEALTH INSURANCE FOR EXPATRIATES: Voting 257-159, the House on Wednesday failed to reach a two-thirds majority needed to pass a bill exempting Americans abroad and foreigners working in the U.S. from Affordable Care Act requirements. A yes vote was to pass the bipartisan bill (HR 4404) over arguments it would open a loophole in the 2010 health law for the benefit of certain U.S. insurance companies.

Brown Crenshaw Desantis Yoho Kingston
No Yes Yes Yes Yes

ACCOUNTING FOR CREDIT PROGRAMS: The House on Monday voted, 230-165, to adopt GOP-sponsored accounting rules that would raise the stated cost of direct-loan and loan-guarantee programs in the U.S. budget by giving more weight to risk. Democrats said that to define programs such as student loans as more costly would make them a more inviting target for spending cuts. A yes vote was to send the bill (HR 1872) to the Senate, where it is likely to die.

Brown Crenshaw Desantis Yoho Kingston
Didn't vote Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes

EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN: The House on Monday debated, 179-217, a Democratic motion to strike a bill on accounting rules (HR 1872, above) until such time as the Census Bureau reports women have reached equal pay with men for full-time, year-round work. A yes vote backed the measure over a GOP argument it was "totally extraneous" to the underlying bill.

Brown Crenshaw Desantis Yoho Kingston
Didn't vote No No No No No

REPUBLICAN SPENDING RULES: The House on Tuesday passed, 230-185, a GOP-sponsored bill to remove inflation from calculations that determine the all-important "baseline" figure in congressional budget deliberations. A yes vote backed the bill (HR 1872) over Democratic arguments it would automatically lock in unwarrented cuts each year in discretionary spending.

Brown Crenshaw Desantis Yoho Kingston
Didn't vote Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes

VETERANS, DISABLED CHILDREN: The House on Tuesday debated, 191-217, a Democratic motion to prevent HR 1871 (above) from triggering spending cuts in programs for student loans, food and aviation safety, veterans' benefits, nursing-home safety and the education of disabled children. A yes vote was to adopt the motion.

Brown Crenshaw Desantis Yoho Kingston
Didn't vote No No No No No

Senate Votes

M. Rubio    R. Nelson    S. Chambliss    J. Nelson

Giving Back Ron Howell

Military retiree finds new way to serve

Man, his family help people 'learn to fish' as RealSense volunteers

When people volunteer, they can change lives — and their own. This week in Reason, we will highlight a volunteer's story of giving back and how that selfless act was a true revelation. The volunteer project is a collaboration among the Times-Union, the University of North Florida, the United Way of Northeast Florida and HandsOn Jacksonville.

By Nancy Wickett-Zuniga

United Way of Northeast Florida

A rainy Saturday kept down the number of clients coming into the Robert F. Kennedy Community Center. But it did not stop the care taken to make sure that the tax paperwork was complete and rides home or umbrellas were provided, if needed.

Ron Howell, a site coordinator for United Way's RealSense initiative, was there to make sure things went smoothly, just as he has for the last 10 years. His wife, Patricia, and daughter, Rhonda, were also there ready to help others.

"We all got involved," said Howell. "My daughter is a tax preparer, and my wife is a greeter."

Serving others is a family tradition dating back three generations. As the youngest of nine children, Howell looked up to his older brothers and sisters in their Sheffield, Ala., home. But it was his brother, Preston, who set the example that they all wanted to emulate.

"We never knew we were poor," Howell said. "We didn't act poor. We didn't know that we were poor."

Preston Howell urged the family to be more faithful and giving, participating in a Boy Scout troop and having them join the local Catholic Church. It was Preston who helped convince his parents to have Ron and his sisters educated at the Catholic school. It was Preston who signed up to serve during the Vietnam War as an army paratrooper with the historic 11th Airborne Division — an act that cost him his life. Preston How- ell's name is carved onto the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Howell remembers his other brothers joining up to serve in the military, each one leaving home to carry a family tradition to give back to their country. The loss of their brother only pushed them to sign up. Service was both an expected responsibility and opportunity for the nine children in the Howell household. But, as the youngest, he had to wait for his turn.

"My parents weren't going to let me sign up," Howell said. "I had to go to college first."

Eventually, he did join the military, becoming an officer in the Navy Medical Service Corps. His last placement brought him to the Jacksonville Naval Hospital.

Retiring from the military meant finding a new way to serve, and 10 years ago, he and his family committed to helping other families through United Way's RealSense initiative.

"We are helping people to be self-sufficient, to 'learn to fish,'" he said.

In addition to his volunteer activities, Howell became the program director of the Northeast Florida Community Action Agency. Under his direction, the agency has partnered with United Way's Real Sense tax and financial programs in Duval and surrounding counties, helping thousands of low-income youth and families improve their financial stability.

"I'm proud of the change we make in people's lives," Howell said. "It's giving them the tools to raise themselves up."

Ron Howell, RealSense site coordinator, with his daughter Rhonda and wife, Patricia, on site at the Robert F. Kennedy Community Center to help clients prepare their tax forms.

CHANGE A LIFE — AND YOURS

If you would like to volunteer for the RealSense program of the United Way of Northeast Florida like Ron Howell, you can get more information from Corinne Dhillon at corinneD@email.org, or by calling her at (904) 330-3962.

Here are some other volunteer opportunities:

- Make a difference by volunteering at Daniel, which helps community children and their families, at fundraising activities, organizing game days or mentoring a child. Contact Daniel at volunteer@danieldks.org or call (904) 296-1005, extension 2007.

- United Way's 2-1-1 hotline, a 24-hour information and referral help line, needs help with resource database updates. Volunteers who can type and who have basic computer skills are needed, but will receive data entry training. Contact Holly Diiz at hollyD@email.org, or call (904) 390-3238.

Check out many more opportunities at www.handsonjacksonville.org and www.unitedway.org.

Denton

more training and support to the still-developing looking for him. "Give him maximum in the 24 hours around the..."