

Joplin Globe (Missouri) Editorial

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In our view: Charitable giving

One of the many complaints about the U.S. tax code, beyond its impregnable complexity, is that it doesn't encourage enough charitable giving. That could change under the Charitable Giving Act, which roared through the House with a 408-13 vote and now awaits action by a conference committee. House Majority Whip Roy Blunt and Rep. Harold Ford were the chief sponsors.

"After Sept. 11, 2001, the world saw the tremendous compassion of American neighbors helping neighbors," said Blunt, R-7th District of Missouri. "In that same spirit, an overwhelming bipartisan majority came together today to endorse a bill designed with one simple goal: promoting charitable giving."

The bipartisan measure, which has more than 80 co-sponsors, is intended to give 86 million Americans who do not itemize on their income-tax returns a place on the tax form for deducting a portion of their charitable gifts. It would also provide incentives for tax-free contributions from individual retirement accounts, and would raise the cap on corporate charitable contributions to 20 percent from 10 percent.

The idea is to invite Americans, who have shown their compassion and their willingness to give time after time in emergency after emergency, to do more to help charitable causes and to reward them for it.

The House bill would also create a "compassion capital fund" through which technical and capacity-building assistance could be channeled to small charities and faith-based organizations that help those in our own back yards. The bottom line is that encouraging greater generosity will help the less fortunate.

This nation has a long, proud history of charitable giving and of assisting the needy during difficult times. The Charitable Giving Act and its Senate companion, called the CARE Act, mirror this tradition and make it easier for Americans to give.