

wasn't that long, it was only possibly March 28." Talk about the gang that could not shoot straight, nobody can give us definitive answers where the hard drives were, how they were stored, how long they had been missing, and who checks in and out of this secret vault. Just last week testifying before the Senate, the Secretary said, we are going to institute technology like bar coding and putting bar codes onto the devices.

I mean, we bar code lettuce in the grocery store. You cannot leave a record store without paying for the CD. Otherwise, the security devices at the door will make an alarm so that the detectives or guards there can try and stop a shoplifter. But the nuclear secrets of America, the most sensitive of all data stored by our government, is wandering around with nobody watching, nobody monitoring, nobody taking the blame.

Mr. Speaker, we have got a serious issue on our hands. I think rather than politicize it, we need to get to the bottom of it. If this incident occurred to a corporation, the CEO's head would roll. If this announcement of this problem was a stock market activity, the stock would collapse. If this was a student in school, they would fail. Somebody has to take account for the pilferage or the potential misuse or even the missing hard drives.

General Gordon with this House attempted to set up a separate nuclear agency, if you will, to run the very sensitive lab. We were rebuffed oftentimes by both the administration, the Secretary of Energy and others. I think we need a full and fair explanation of what happened. America deserves it. Our security depends on it.

We urge the administration to come forward with an explanation reasonable to the taxpayers.

IN OPPOSITION TO H.R. 4680, REPUBLICAN PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, later this week, the Republican leadership will bring to the floor a bill purporting to be a new prescription drug benefit for America's senior citizens. Yesterday, I gave a number of reasons why the Republican prescription drug bill is fatally flawed and issued a challenge to the Republican majority to allow the Democrats to put forth our own prescription drug plan. Today, I want to stress the hypocrisy of the Republicans' procedure for considering this important issue.

Rather than allow an open and honest debate on how Congress would provide for a prescription drug benefit for America's senior citizens, the Republicans apparently will script a closed

rule with limited debate predicated on an arbitrary budget resolution which they have shown a willingness time and again to violate when it suits their purposes. Unfortunately, both their flawed insurance subsidy plan and their desire to stifle debate in this the people's House on a question of vital importance to nearly 40 million American Medicare beneficiaries indicates once and for all that responding to the needs of America's senior citizens does not suit the political purposes of congressional Republicans.

The Republicans' claim that no Medicare prescription drug benefit can exceed the cost of \$40 billion over 5 years is false. As such, they have designed a flawed plan that fits neatly under this cap by delaying implementation and limiting catastrophic coverage only to those costs that exceed \$6,000. Under their plan, if the government pays an insurer enough to create a plan where the premiums are not set too high by the insurer that someone can afford it, you still only get a benefit of about \$1,000 less premiums and after that you are on your own until you reach \$6,000. The Republicans know full well that a real, affordable, workable prescription drug plan will cost more but they are opposed to investing in this coverage for America's senior citizens.

During the drafting of the fiscal year 2001 budget resolution, the Republican majority found room for nearly \$200 billion in tax cuts but said that if and when a Medicare prescription drug plan could be developed, it would be limited to \$40 billion. There was no study, no scientific basis, no analysis that resulted in this figure. Rather it was a back-of-the-envelope calculation to make room for the huge tax cut they wanted to fund. Furthermore, during the markup, I offered an amendment to restore funding for teaching hospitals, academic medical centers and other Medicare in-patient costs. My amendment was rejected and I was told that by the Republican majority that any changes to the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 could be addressed out of that \$40 billion set aside. I was also told that money could be used for Medicare reform. But of course that is the same money that was supposed to be set aside for prescription drug coverage.

Now we hear that the Republican leadership has promised to push legislation later this year to make those exact same fixes but they have said they are already spending that on prescription drugs. So clearly the Republicans have no intention of abiding by the fiscal year 2001 budget resolution as long as it does not serve their political purposes.

This is not a new phenomenon. Under the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, agriculture was to be funded at \$11.3 billion in 1999 and \$10.7 billion in 2000. But when it came time for Congress to live by these caps, the Republican majority, recognizing the harsh effects of these constraints, abandoned them. Agriculture was funded at \$23 billion in

1999 and \$35 billion in 2000. The same is true when it came to highways. When Congress set caps in 1997 and then passed a highway construction bill, the Republicans busted the caps. So far they have funded transportation and highway construction far above what was set in 1997. It is true again for defense. In 1997, we set caps for defense spending going out 5 years and we have busted those caps every year.

Mr. Speaker, do not get me wrong. I do not dispute the need at times to adjust balanced budget caps when the need is justified. What I challenge is whether the Republican leadership is really sincere about helping America's senior citizens. They found a way to fessene budget limits for national defense, for highways and for our farmers. They are all worthy causes, but why will they not work around the budget resolution for America's senior citizens? Why will they not do this for the generation that fought "The Great War" and built the Nation? Why will they not do that for those we honored this past week who fought "The Forgotten War" in Korea?

If the Republicans were really sincere about helping our seniors, they would not hide behind artificial budgets and stifle debate. They would allow the Democrats who started this debate in the first place to bring up our bill which provides for meaningful, voluntary, universal prescription drug coverage under Medicare. Let us have the debate on what is best for America's senior citizens even if it means debating a real drug benefit versus large tax cuts. But, Mr. Speaker, let us have this debate.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 22 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Reverence for You, O God, breathes forth a spirit of freedom within us. It is this spirit that gives us true self-esteem, a gracious attitude toward everyone else, and the power to live out our commitments to others with love.

It is this same spirit that urges us to seek out even greater freedom within ourselves and work for the good of our brothers and sisters wherever they may be in this country and beyond.

Thomas Jefferson taught us, O Lord, that "the very God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time." Help us never to separate these two great gifts. Make us instruments of life and liberty now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PASCRELL led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain 15 one-minutes on each side.

THE NEED TO ADDRESS OIL PRICE FIXING

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, recently gasoline prices have increased at rates not seen since the 1970s. While the Clinton-Gore administration vows that it will not tolerate companies who fix prices here at home, it remains reluctant to get tough on foreign countries that simultaneously receive U.S. aid and engage in oil price fixing that affects every American.

Although it is almost too late, it is time that the administration begin working for the American people.

Mr. Speaker, many Americans are seeing their family vacation plans evaporate as prices rise. I call upon the administration to adopt a national policy with other oil-consuming nations to take steps towards reducing, suspending, or even eliminating assistance or arms sales to exporters engaged in price fixing.

The hard-working American families deserve more than just a vacation. They deserve national leadership that is concerned about their future rather than the hollow rhetoric and empty promises of the Clinton-Gore White House.

FIREFIGHTER INVESTMENT AND RESPONSE ENHANCEMENT ACT

(Mr. PASCRELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I am the proud sponsor of the Firefighter Investment and Response Enhancement Act, better known as the Fire Bill. It has almost 280 sponsors.

The bill will provide competitive grants directly to over 32,000 paid, part-paid, and volunteer fire departments across America.

On April 12 of this year, we had a hearing on this legislation before the Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations and Emergency Management of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. At this hearing, a colleague from across the aisle stated that my legislation does not have the support of the administration. He challenged me to get it. Today I am here to present the administration's unwavering support of H.R. 1168 to the House.

I have a letter from Jack Lew, who is the Budget Director for the White House. This letter expresses, and I quote, "the Administration supports passage of the Firefighter Investment and Response Enhancement Act."

We owe it to the firefighters of America, Mr. Speaker, who put their lives at risk every day to save ours, to bring this legislation to the floor. It is about time we took care of the other side of the public safety equation, our firefighters.

INTERNATIONAL ABDUCTION

(Mr. LAMPSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell my colleagues the story of Anthony and Timothy Azarmgin. Anthony and Timothy were abducted from Missouri by their noncustodial father, Mr. Tony Hossein Azarmgin, during their father's visitation period on January 2, 1991.

By August of 1991, both warrants for kidnapping and unlawful flight to avoid prosecution were in place. In 1992, Ms. Lewis, the boys' mother, was contacted by Mr. Azarmgin when he insinuated that he and the boys were in another country. In 1994, the Interpol developed reason to believe that Mr. Azarmgin, Anthony, and Timothy were in Tehran, Iran.

In 1994, Ms. Lewis established phone contact with Mr. Azarmgin, but it has been irregular at best. Mr. Azarmgin is not willing to return to the United States unless the charges are dropped.

Mr. Speaker, there are 10,000 American children just like Anthony and Tim who have been abducted to foreign countries. I urge this House to continue to work with me and help bring our children home.

MOVE FORWARD WITH BROWNFIELDS LEGISLATION AND CLEAN UP COMMUNITIES

(Mr. GARY MILLER of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GARY MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, there are almost half a million pieces of property in the United States that are polluted and useless because people are afraid to buy them to clean them up.

We have seen these properties. Many of them are fenced with chain-link or

have signs that say "hazardous material, keep out." The problem with that is individuals will not buy these properties, because when they do, they accept the historical problems that go along with that, and they accept the liability with EPA and likely to be sued because of that.

We need to change the law. We need to say that individuals and businesses can buy these properties and clean them up and put them to a useful purpose without being concerned about EPA taking them to court and suing them because pollution occurred 40 years ago.

We have done nothing on this. We need to move forward rapidly with Brownfields legislation and help clean up our communities throughout the United States and help put these properties that are polluted, that are continuing to pollute our environment to a good purpose.

WORLD'S FIRST CANINE TRAVEL AGENCY

(Mr. TRIFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRIFICANT. Mr. Speaker, the world's first canine travel agency opened in Austria. No joke. A company advertises health spas for Rottweilers, massage parlors for Dobermans, beauty parlors for poodles.

If that is not enough to throw up one's Alpo, they offer a frequent flier program for doggy owners who vacation with Fido. Unbelievable. What is next, Mr. Speaker, fire hydrants on all 747s?

Think about it, with children starving all over the world, doggy discos are popping up like beagle patties. Beam me up.

I yield back all the rabies and fleas that have evidently constipated the minds of these rich canine owners who have simply gone to the dogs.

AMERICA NEEDS ENERGY POLICY TO PROTECT AMERICA'S INTERESTS AND FAMILIES

(Mrs. CUBIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CUBIN. Mr. Speaker, driving is not a luxury to most Americans, it is a necessity, especially in the mountain West where I live where one might have to drive 100 miles to go see the doctor.

Americans need their cars, and they need their cars to get to work, to school, to church, and to the grocery store. Truckers need their rigs to deliver food, clothing, and other goods across the Nation.

When gas prices get out of hand, it is more than just inconvenient, it is a considerable financial problem. Truckers across the country are having their livelihoods threatened because they