Solutions for Closing the Digital Divide, approximately 80% of the high technology companies in Silicon Valley do not file EEO–1 forms or affirmative action reports with the Joint Reporting Committee representing federal civil rights enforcement agencies. Clearly there's work to be done to ensure that African Americans have fair access to the lucrative high tech labor market. There is nothing in the current bill that ensures that. Democrats or Republicans did not get a chance to offer any amendments; we were not afforded an opportunity to go to the Rules Committee; and we were not allowed to effect the process, to change the legislation. Democracy was absent in the consideration of this bill.

I would have surely offered an amendment that would require the H–1B employers to report to the Department of Labor how they are recruiting and hiring American workers, particularly those who are members of under represented minority groups. I do not see anything wrong with holding the High-tech community accountable for not only who they hire, but who they do not.

I am very concerned about raising the cap of these H–1B visas. Although it is true that in recent years the high tech industry has fueled enormous growth in the United States and has benefited the corporate information technology, and raising the cap on these types of specialty workers should include an increased commitment to training of U.S. workers. The growing workforce of our country and the strength and growth of the high tech industry in particular can be met effectively by fully developing the skills of our own workers as a first priority, before hiring highly specialized foreign workers. We can have the best of both worlds—expert foreign workers (which create more jobs in America) and trained professional American workers prepared to work in the most sophisticated sectors of the Hi-tech industry.

There has been a lot of discussion in recent months about including immigration provisions with the H–1B legislation. On the Senate side, they call it L.I.F.A., the Latino Immigration Fairness Act. The work ''fairness'' is in the title because how can we possibly lift the cap, and bring in 585,000 foreign hi-tech workers, and ignore the people who are already here? Where is our sense of justice, of equality, of fairness? This H–1B legislation should have: provided relief to late amnesty applicants who have significantly contributed to the American economy; providing parity through the 1997 NACARA law by offering amnesty to Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Haitians.

Our immigration law contains a provision-called ''registry''—that gives immigrants who have been here without proper documents an opportunity to adjust to permanent status if they have been here for a long enough time and have nothing in their background that would disqualify them from immigrant status. This year, a bill that I have sponsored, H.R. 4172, the ''Legal Amnesty Restoration Act of 2000'', is before the Congress. This legislation updates the cutoff date for the ''statute of limitations,'' which is now set at 1972. In fact, the majority of immigrants who would benefit from updating the registry date are those who qualified to apply for legalization in the mid-1980s, but the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) misinterpreted the law. If their applications had been accepted and processed properly when they should have been, many, if not most of these immigrants would already be citizens. It is unfair and incorrect to refer to these people as ''illegal aliens.''

Instead, they have been fighting the immigration bureaucracy for more than a decade and are now threatened with deportation. The provisions in my bill which should have been included with the H–1B legislation, or considered for independent House floor action would ensure that the registry provision is continuously updated by moving the registry cutoff date to 1986. If these people are not given relief, hundreds of thousands of people will be forced to abandon their homes, will have to separate from their families, move out of their communities, be removed from their jobs, and return to countries where they no longer have ties.

The Congress also needs to address Central American and Haitian parity. It is long past time to offer Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Haitians the same opportunity to apply for permanent residence as was extended to the Nicaraguans and Cubans in 1997. Because immigrants from these countries have experienced similar violence and hardship, it is unjust to continue providing unequal treatment. Additionally, while these immigrants have been waiting for their cases to be resolved, they have been contributing to our economy and are needed to support the workforce needs of this country.

I believe that the current high demand market for certain technical specialities is that it should encourage us to retrain displaced workers, attract under represented women and minorities, better educate our young people, and retrain willing and able older workers who have been forced into unemployment.

I am very pleased that Section 12 of this bill provides much needed funding to help close the Digital Divide by putting computer learning centers in Boys and Girls clubs across the country. I sponsored and introduced with Congressman LAMAR SMITH H.R. 4178, the ''Kids 2000 Act'', that would authorize $20 million from the Violent Crime Reduction Trust Fund each year for the next five years to operate the PowerUP program in Boys and Girls Clubs across the country. I am pleased that the exact language from both my bill and the Senate companion version is in this bill.

This bill does not have language to ensure proper training of our incumbent workers. I believe we need more workers and we need to train more American workers as I come from a city that has over 1000 companies that specialize in information technology. This should be a non-partisan issue.

In conclusion Mr. Speaker, we need to approach the H1–B visa specialty program with two eyes wide open. One eye focused on looking out for our American workers to ensure proper training, and the other eye focused on the under representation of minorities and women in the high tech industry who currently comprise our American workforce.

I support H–1B visas, to improve our hi-tech industry but I also support our American workers. Thank-you Mr. Speaker.

H–1B VISAS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my appreciation to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) and the other Members on the other side who are allowing me to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, last night, under the cloak of darkness, without notice, without the opportunity to participate by voice vote on an unwritten suspension calendar, after we had been told there would be no further votes for the day, at a time when most Members had left the Chamber for evening activities, the House passed S. 2045, legislation related to the increase of H–1B visas.

I was not necessarily opposed to the bill, formally entitled the American Competitiveness in the 21st Century Act. I was opposed to not having a debate about it.

But with such vitally important legislation, in an area of critical importance to this Nation, immigration policy, this House should have had a chance to debate this matter, air the many views that emerged during the House committee consideration of a similar measure, and voted in the light of day on the bill.

It is wrong, Mr. Speaker. It is inexcusable. And the American people deserve to know what some in this House did. The Senate bill increased H–1B visas, in the light of day, to allow some 200,000 additional high-tech workers to come to America from other countries, to work over the next 3 years. I had amendments prepared to expand this legislation to provide these same employment opportunities and training opportunities to the United States workers in rural communities.

Professionals who work in specialty occupations are admitted to the United States on a temporary basis through the H–1B visa category, the largest category of temporary foreign workers. The increase was pushed by many in the business community, especially those in the information technology area, which is experiencing an economic explosion and unprecedented job growth.

The amendments I had prepared would have made sure that those living in rural America would have the opportunity to secure a position in this rapidly expanding job market before employers look outside the United States to bring in foreign workers. Not that we are against bringing in foreign workers, we just want the same opportunity for those who live in rural America.

The House Committee on the Judiciary marked up and reported H.R. 4227, the Technology Worker Temporary Relief Act. Among the many bills introduced, there were three others related to the same subject, increasing numerical limitations on H–1B visas, that also should be considered. Those bills were H.R. 3983, H.R. 4402, and H.R. 4200.

Despite the rosy economic picture in America, too many Americans are being left out. For those Americans, many of them living in rural America over at least a 20-year period, there has

been a troubling trend, a trend that affects the very quality of their life. During these 2 decades, income and wealth inequality, the disparity in income and wealth due to wages, accumulated wealth, investments and returns, have been well documented.

It is an alarming and disturbing trend because among those rural Americans left behind, fewer can afford healthy meals, fewer can afford health care for their families, and fewer can afford a college education for their children. It is an alarming and disturbing trend because rural America has been disproportionately affected. Consequently, rural America lags far behind other communities in personal access to the Internet as well as the total use of the Internet.

This disparity exacerbates the persistent poverty, high unemployment, inadequate health care and education resources. Thus, as the economy rapidly expands, rural communities find that it is far more difficult to participate.

Moreover, technological advances, which could provide some solutions to these conditions, elude rural communities because of digital disenfranchisement. Such advances as telemedicine, distance education and electronic government, depend upon Internet access.

It is clear that the competition among service providers that is driving the Internet explosion is not as concentrated in rural communities. The lack of population densities, the absence of essential infrastructure and the fact that rural communities are often spread over great distances are reasons cited for this lack of enthusiasm. Even the Department of Commerce has concluded in its Report, ''Falling Through The Net,'' that, ''Disparities clearly exist (and) . . . access comes hardest for Americans who are low-income . . . less educated, single-parent families, young heads-of-households, and (those) who live in the South, rural areas and central cities.''

However, these barriers should not, must not remain as impediments. A rising tide should lift all boats.

It is for these reasons that this House should have had the opportunity to debate, vote on and support amendments that would require education and training for American citizens who reside in rural and other depressed areas; amendments that would require both public and private sector entities to make reasonable and diligent efforts to find American citizens who are willing to be trained in information technology positions; that would raise the H–1B visa fees; and that would use those increased revenues to, in part, carry out the other amendment mandates.

Mr. Speaker, this House has not had the will to pass a modest increase in the minimum wage, an increase to help move millions of America's workers out of poverty. But we did find the will to pass a bill that mandates that foreign workers earn a minimum of $40,000 a year. That is what the H–1B Bill that passed provides.

Late last night, Mr. Speaker, those who favor large business interests won. But, the American people, especially those who live in rural America, the many willing and able unemployed workers and this Nation, lost.

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that rural America indeed lost. In fact, the Nation lost. Indeed, I think we should make an opportunity for American workers as well.

TRIBUTE TO LT. BRUCE JOSEPH DONALD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a man from my district, Lieutenant Bruce Joseph Donald of Poughkeepsie, who was killed last Friday when his F–18 Hornet strike fighter crashed in the Persian Gulf.

Lieutenant Donald, known by his call sign, ''Straydog,'' was a 1995 graduate of the Naval Academy where he earned a Bachelor of Sciences degree in Ocean Engineering. Following graduation, Lieutenant Donald spent 6 months at his alma mater on temporary duty prior to being sent to Pensacola, Florida, to begin preflight indoctrination training. Afterwards, he traveled to Corpus Christi, Texas, for primary flight training, and then completed advanced jet training in Kingsville, Texas.

According to his superior officers, Lieutenant Donald performed exceptionally during flight school and, in February of 1998, he earned his Wings of Gold and an assignment to F–18 replacement pilot training at VMFAT–101. Having successfully completed replacement training, ''Straydog'' reported to VFA–25 in July 1999.

As a member of the ''Fist of the Fleet,'' he excelled as a strike fighter pilot and served as the squadron's naval aviation training and operations procedures standardization officer, air-to-ground training officer, coffee mess officer, and landing signals officer. Lieutenant Donald was an exceptional pilot with sound judgment and was a designated combat section leader.

Although we live in a time of relative peace, we must never forget that the men and women who serve this Nation are constantly putting their lives on the line. We owe a tremendous debt to these men and women and to their families who love and support them through their training and deployments so that we may continue to live in a world of hope and the promise of peace.

Having dedicated much of his young life to the service of this Nation, it is only fitting that Lieutenant Donald can be commemorated here. Lieutenant Bruce Donald is survived by his parents, Patrick and Elaine Donald, his brother Brian, all of Poughkeepsie, New York. I offer the Donald family and their friends my deepest condolences.

OIL DRILLING IN ALASKA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to refute some of the comments that were made previously on this floor by Members of this House that know little about what they talk about, and that is energy and energy policy.

I noticed the gentleman from New York was talking about the fragile environment in Alaska. He showed a picture, very frankly, that is not the area which would be drilled in Alaska that George W. Bush suggested last night. He showed a picture that is far south. This is the area of Prudhoe Bay, 74 miles away from the 1002 place where we would drill.

If you notice the caribou here are around the oil rigs. In fact, our caribou herd has increased tenfold from where it was prior to the exploration in Prudhoe Bay, which provided to this Nation of ours every bottom barrel that has been delivered of the 16 billion barrels of oil. That is 16 billion barrels of oil that you would not have to import from the OPEC countries.

You have to keep in mind, Mr. and Mrs. America, that we are now so totally dependent on oil, approximately 57 percent this year, that if there is not a policy change, it will be 60 percent by the year 2005.

I watched the debate last night, and everybody else watched the debate, and I would suggest respectfully that George W. Bush's idea about energy production is vital to you. As you are sitting watching this, if you are a senior citizen and worrying about heating oil prices, right now we are importing, keep in mind, about a million barrels a day from Saddam Hussein. The area which we would like to explore, which is 74 miles away from the pipeline, 74 miles, has the potential, has the potential, of 39 billion barrels of oil. We could increase the production, going through the present pipeline, about a million barrels a day, equal to what we are importing from Saddam Hussein. We would not be dependent upon the OPEC countries. But that is just a small part. Alaska is just a small part.

This administration, the Vice President and the President himself have closed 34 refineries since 1992 in the United States of America. The Vice President asked us to use our reserve to lower the prices, which it will not do so. But as we do take that oil, if he is successful in his attempt, the oil will have to be shipped and refined in Venezuela and then shipped back to the United States because they have discouraged the building of new refineries.

The refineries themselves we have in place are running around 95 percent, which is unhealthy for the refineries because it is hard to maintain them at that level.

□ 1530

We must consider the production and the refining capability, and this Nation with this administration has not done.