LIVABILITY IN AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this evening to address this Chamber dealing with issues, as I have often done on this floor, of livability: what the Federal government can do to be a better partner helping American families to be safe, healthy, and more economically secure.

□ 2000

And as we approach the notion of how to structure that partnership, there are those that suggest that there are areas of new rules or regulations, tax, fees, new government programs, and they all have their place, I suppose, in the toolkit towards enhancing liveability.

Mr. Speaker, I am of the opinion that the single most important factor that enters into the Federal Government being a better partner with our local communities is simply to lead by example. For the Federal Government to model the behavior that we expect of other entities, corporations, individuals, and governments, for the Federal Government to walk the talk, there is nothing that is more powerful, more compelling, that is going to cost less and be more effective.

For instance, I have worked with many in this Chamber on a simple piece of legislation that would require the United States Post Office to obey local land-use laws, zoning codes, environmental regulations, to engage the American public in a constructive fashion on decisions that affect communities large and small in over 40,000 locations around the country.

It is not particularly revolutionary. It is not going to cost the taxpayer any money. It is not going to be in the long term more difficult for the post office. There is no real difference than their competitors like UPS, for instance, or FedEx. It will help change, however, the relationship that we have with the post office and local communities.

Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on ways that the Federal Government can lead by example, I am struck by how key the decisions that we make regarding the United States Department of Defense for our military which is the largest manager of infrastructure in the world, over $500 billion worth of roads, bridges, hospitals, docks, classrooms and apartments.

The military, however, is stuck in this struggle in terms of how it is going to promote liveability for enlisted personnel and for the communities in which we are surrounded. In fact, there is all the discussion we have in the United States about the consequences of unplanned growth, the consequences of sprawl; but I think we can make the argument that it is the United States military that is affected the most by the consequences of sprawl and unplanned growth.

Think for a moment about the controversies that are facing the military from Hawaii to Puerto Rico, where there is growing resistance to the areas in which the military is conducting its training exercises, people are trying to stop the use of live ammunition and equipment in Hawaii. And as we have seen, the Bush administration has recently announced that in 3 years we are going to stop these activities in Puerto Rico.

Mr. Speaker, the question arises where is the military, in fact, going to undertake these activities that are still essential to maintaining military readiness for the men and women who serve in the Armed Forces?

We are facing a question with this administration, as we did with the Clinton administration before us, what are we going to do with the inventory of military bases and other facilities that are in excess of what are necessary to maintain our fighting forces? Indeed, we have an inventory of military bases that basically reflects a tremendous overhang from World War I and World War II.

We have more inventory than we need for today's military bases. But as is well known to Members of this Chamber that when you try attempting to close them, there is a great storm of controversy.

There are some communities that are, frankly, very apprehensive about the consequences of losing the employment base in their community, but there are others who frankly are more concerned about what is going to be left once you shut down this base of operation. After you have recycled the jobs elsewhere, will there be an opportunity to use this land for productive purposes?

We look at Fort Ord 10 years after the BRAC process closed that base, we have yet to be able to fully transition all of that land to productive private sector uses. As we approach a new round of BRAC decisions, uncertainty about what is going to happen to communities and an unwillingness of the Federal Government to act in a prompt and thoughtful fashion, to clean it up and turn it over adds to the uncertainty.

It is going to make it more difficult for this administration politically, economically, and environmentally to do what is right for right-sizing the scale of American military operations.

It is going to end up costing us more money, and it is going to delay the use of these lands for more productive uses. There is another serious problem that is associated with it. Today we have an all-volunteer Army; and increasingly, we find that the skill level that is required for the men and women who are in uniform is rising ever higher, retaining these highly qualified men and women, the best and brightest of whom can transition into the private sector, have more certainty in their life, higher quality of life, earn more money, and have more career advancement.

In order for the military to retain the highly qualified, technically proficient men and women who make the modern military work we give to them a high quality of life.

If we are facing a situation where military housing is substandard, and I have seen reports that suggest half or more of a third of a million military housing units is substandard, it is very difficult to retain the men and women in uniform and their family members, because increasingly, these people are, in fact, more mature. They have their own families, and they care about quality of life.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would reference the difficulty the military faces with the exposure to liability for not having cleaned up after itself. Dealing with the environmental problems that are the legacy of military operations for over a century has the consequence, not only of denying productive use of this land to the community, but it is a distinct liability that the United States Government and the Department of Defense cannot escape. Ultimately, we are responsible for cleaning up after ourselves.

The bill is going to come due for the Department of Defense. The longer we evade, the longer we delay in cleaning it up in a forthright fashion, the more expensive it is going to be for the taxpayer, the more damage to the environment.

We are looking at what is happening in the State of Massachusetts with the Massachusetts military reservation where there is a toxic plume that is poisoning the aquifer on Martha's Vineyard, the source of drinking water for some of the exclusive properties in this pristine and valuable land. It has historic significance. It is very significant to some of the best and brightest around the country.

That is slowly being poisoned because we have not been able to move quickly with the Department of Defense to clean up after itself. The liability in Massachusetts on Martha's Vineyard is not going to get smaller over time; indeed, it is going to escalate. More environmental damage, a larger bill for the taxpayer.

One of the areas that I am most concerned about deals with the legacy of unexploded ordnance. We have across the country in over 1,000 sites with potential contamination of 20, 30, 40, maybe 50 million acres or more where we have the legacy of unexploded ordnance from past military activities.

We have had this visited upon people, burst on the scene in unexpected ways. My colleague, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY), had this occur in her district where on Storm King Mountain State Park, overlooking the Hudson River, the park actually was not a military range, but it was near West Point, and as effective and well trained and talented as the men and

women are at West Point, often the targeted were missed.

The shells that they were using were lodged in the land in and around the Storm King Mountain State Park.

We had a situation here a couple of years ago where there was a serious forest fire and the firefighters were out to try to stop the blaze; and all of a sudden, there were a series of explosions where these shells that had been buried, in some cases for up to a century or more, started exploding due to the heat of the forest fire; and we were forced to close Storm King Mountain State Park, one of the examples of where the unexploded ordnance has returned to haunt the American public and the military.

Earlier this spring, Mr. Speaker, I led a group to the campus of American University and to Spring Valley, one of the most exclusive residential districts in the District of Columbia.

I am not talking about some far-flung area in the wilderness that had been used for military operations. I am talking about a location that is about a 25-minute bicycle ride from where I am speaking this evening.

I have here a map, an aerial map that dates from 1922. It seems that the land adjacent to and surrounding American University, in fact, some of the land on the American University campus during World War I was the location of the American testing for chemical weapons.

We have here an aerial view that shows the location of test pits where they had goats and rabbits and hamsters, where they would inflict nerve gas, mustard gas on these animals, where we would manufacture it, where we had over a thousand structures and almost 2,000 men and women working during World War II.

Mr. Speaker, it was one of the most toxic sites in America. Some of the facilities were so contaminated they could not even tear the sheds down. They ended up burning a number of them and burying the residue, burying the leftover chemicals and weapons.

Now what we see, 83 years after World War I, we still have a toxic legacy here in the United States capital. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we had a situation in the mid-1990s after we had gone in with the work of the Corps of Engineers spending over $30 million, removing contaminated soils and materials and bombs.

There were working people out on this site escavating a foundation for one of the multimillion dollar homes for the Spring Valley Development, most of them are between $1 million to $5 million or more, and the workmen were busy with the backhoe.

It hit something, broke something and the work people were sent to the hospital because they had discovered a container of a toxic chemical.

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As they went to the site and started working around it, they found a container of phosphorus where the steel container had rusted away and left the ceramic shell. And when they broke the shell open, the phosphorus came in contact with the oxygen in the air and burst into flames. The question occurs to a thoughtful person, what would have happened if it was a child who had been playing on a construction site who had found this waste from World War I?

Farfetched? Well, as I speak, we are spending another $40 million to try and decontaminate the site. As I speak, one can go out to this exclusive residential neighborhood and find little flags in various and sundry properties in the neighborhood where they are taking samples to try and find out where the contaminants are. If any of my colleagues were to go to a cocktail reception at the home of the Korean Ambassador, who lives in a little $10 million bungalow just off this site that I mentioned here, the Korean Ambassador to the United States, I would suggest they not go in his back yard, because they will find that it is all dug away as they are trying to remove the contaminants in his back yard.

Just up the hill and across the road from the Ambassador is the child care center from American University. It is a modern child care center. The playground equipment is visible in the yard. But it is vacant because the levels of arsenic in the soil upon which this child care center is built is 20, 40, 50 times the level that is regarded as safe.

There are young women who were on the rugby team, the girls that played on the girls intramural field at American University, who wondered why the rashes that they suffered when they were playing on that field did not heal properly, and questions have been raised as to whether or not the contamination on that field was a part of it.

I mention Spring Valley not because it is the worst site in America, I mention it because it is here, literally in the shadow of the American Capitol, and it is 83 years after World War I has concluded, after we have spent over $30 million cleaning it up, and we still have not been able to tell the residents around Spring Valley and the university community at American University that we have taken care of the problem.

It is not farfetched to speculate what might happen with children who come across unexploded ordnance in over a thousand locations around America. There was a tragic situation that occurred in San Diego where there were three junior high students, young boys, playing in a field in a subdivision that had been built on a formerly used defense site. They came across a shell. Now, 10-, 11-year-old boys will do what children will do. They were playing with it, trying to figure out what to do with it, if it was real, and seeing if they could open it up. It exploded. It killed two of them.

I have been able to identify 65 Americans who have been killed as a result of unexploded ordnance. And I suspect on America's military reservations, bases, bombing ranges, that if we had full access to all the information, that, in fact, we have probably had far more than these 65 that I have been able to identify.

In Portland, Oregon, just across the river from us, a half-hour's drive, there is a 3,800-acre military reservation, Camp Bonneville. No longer used for military purposes, it has been used for the better part of the last century. It is separated from the public, for most of the 3,800 acres, by three strands of barbed wire. No way we are going to keep out the public. People have been using these 3,800 acres for years. Children have played on it, people have ridden horseback, there are people who have hunted, folks who have used it just for a day hike, even though we attempt to post signs and keep people off it.

The military personnel who are responsible for it advise there is no way to secure it and people continue to use it. We do not yet know what all is on the site of Camp Bonneville. We have had situations where they have found 105-millimeter shells on the surface. Now, these are the shells that are about like this, that have seven and a half pounds that serve to detonate the shells.

There are ambitious plans to return these 3,800 acres to public use, for a wildlife refuge, for a park, and the people of Vancouver and Clark County, Washington, are excited about the prospect, but we have not yet been able to analyze what is on the site. We have not been able yet to understand what we need to make sure that it is clear and that we can turn it back over.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and spend the remainder of the hour that has been allocated to me just talking about these examples. As I work with the men and women in this Chamber, virtually everybody I work with has a problem like this in their community or near it, my colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR), with Fort Ord in California. Ten years after Fort Ord has been closed, we still have not been able to turn over the 28,000-acre former home to the 30,000 men and women who were there.

We have a situation with my colleague, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. UDALL), with Rocky Flats, Colorado, a former nuclear weapons production facility that they are attempting to be able to make the transition for.

We have situations with the Aberdeen Proving Ground, affecting the district of the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. EHRLICH) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST), that contains a number of closed ranges with unexploded ordnance and chemical weapons materials. Now, this is a problem not just for what is on the land there, but the potential of exposing the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and

the potential contaminants in a plume that threatens Harford County's drinking water supply.

We have Savannah Army Depot, which concerns the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. MANZULLO), some 9,000 to 10,000 acres that we would like to transfer to the Fish and Wildlife Service, but much of the acreage along the Mississippi River is not suitable for transfer or reuse because of UXO.

I could continue on and on and on this evening. I will not. Suffice it to say this is representative of over 1,000 locations around the country where we have these problems. It is something that knows no geographic limits because it is east and west, north and south, and indeed it is the islands that the United States is responsible for off our territorial boundaries in Hawaii, in Guam, and in Puerto Rico. It is a situation where we are today, at today's rate of cleanup, looking at this problem continuing for one century, two centuries, 500 years, perhaps 1,000 years or more given the current rate of cleanup.

It is a situation where we do not even know what the dollar amount is. What we do know is that the estimates that have been provided by the Department of Defense are completely inaccurate. They are unreliable. They understate the problem in a dramatic sense. The most recent numbers are like $13 billion. It is off by an order of magnitude not just tenfold but it could be $200, $300, $400 billion or more to clean this up. But the notion that it is $13 billion is absolutely laughable.

Well, what needs to be done? It seems to me that first and foremost people in the United States Congress need to report to the game. Congress is missing in action in a battle that is still claiming casualties 141 years after some of these materials were deposited during the Civil War, 83 years after World War I, 56 years after World War II, and 25 years after Vietnam. We still have casualties, and not just in the United States.

Frankly, the technology that we should be developing to clean up military waste and contamination, unexploded ordnance, the technology that will help us determine whether it is a hubcap or an unexploded land mine will make a difference, and not just in the United States. Sadly, unexploded ordnance, bombs, shells, and land mines are found in former battlefields and current battlefields all across the world, in Kosovo, in the Balkans, and in sub-Saharan Africa. In Southeast Asia, on a trip with President Clinton this last fall, I looked at the children who were blind, maimed, missing limbs as a result of unexploded ordnance and land mines detonating. There are people in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, as we speak, every single week, who are being maimed and being killed.

We have a situation where there are some people who are so desperate economically that they are mining these fields trying to recover the military hardware at the risk of their lives. If the United States is able to develop the technology to more efficiently decontaminate, decommission, identify and remove, it will not only return tens of millions of acres to the public for reuse, for wildlife, for open space, for housing and parks, but it will help save lives around the world.

I suggest that what we need to do first and foremost is for the United States Congress to no longer be missing in action. I will be proposing legislation in this session of Congress to first of all put one person in charge. Right now the administration, Members of Congress, the public, the media cannot find out exactly what this problem is. There is nobody who is responsible for putting the pieces together. This is unconscionable. And by simply designating somebody in the Department of Defense, in EPA, or an independent agency to be responsible for monitoring, collecting the data, being in charge of the tens of millions of dollars of work that is going on right now to make a dent in it, this will help us in significant, significant ways.

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Second, we need to put more money into cleaning up after ourselves. At a time when this administration can propose spending $100 billion or $150 billion or more on unproven technology for an unproven threat of a missile attack from a so-called rogue nation like North Korea sometime in the next 10 years, with no expectation that after the $130 billion we have already spent on Star Wars, that it is going to be any more successful.

Put aside for the moment that military experts, and I think every Member of this Chamber will acknowledge that if a rogue nation really wanted to inflict damage on the United States, rather than spending a lot of time and money trying to put together a missile that may or may not hit us 10 years from now, which we could track, know who it is and bomb into the Stone Age, it would be much more simple for them to simply float a biological, chemical, or nuclear device into the New York harbor, into San Francisco Bay, into Seattle. They could bring it right here into our Nation's capitol. That is a much more real threat. It poses more danger and could happen tomorrow.

But put aside for a moment the logic, think about the numbers. If we are going to invest $100 billion or more on something that is unproven, against a threat that although unproven, will likely have destabilizing effects diplomatically, should we not put a few billion dollars a year into fixing something that threatens the health and safety and environment of American families all across the country? Absolutely, we should. The amount of money that I am talking about to double or triple what we are doing today is literally rounding error in the Pentagon's $350 billion budget.

The United States Congress should step to the plate and put $500 million, a billion dollars extra into accelerating the cleanup.

Second, they should put more money into research. I mentioned earlier a problem we have got. We have highly sophisticated techniques to detect metal way under the surface. But as I said, we do not know if that is a 105 millimeter Howitzer shell, a hub cap, or a land mine. If my colleagues meet with people in industry, as I have, they will tell my colleagues that with more concentrated research money, we can develop the technology to make it much more efficient and cost effective to know what is there and to move forward with the decontamination.

Finally, we need to make a long-term commitment to solve this problem.

When it is driven by political considerations, when something like Spring Valley happens, and it happens in the backyard of the rich and the famous in the shadow of the United States Capitol, then we can find $40 million extra to try to clean it up right, 83 years after we made the mess in the first place. But this is taking away from other problems around the country.

Mr. Speaker, we are just shifting from serious problem to serious problem based on what has the most media cache, what has the most political pressure. It should not be that way, and it is not the fault of the Corps of Engineers or the Department of Defense. They should not be in a situation where they are making these tradeoffs. It is the responsibility of the United States Congress to adequately fund the cleanup.

I would hope that before we recess for the summer we have stepped up and made a significant financial contribution to the research and the cleanup and we have put somebody in charge. What will happen if we do that? Again, if my colleagues talk to the firms that are involved with the military cleanup right now, they will tell my colleagues that if they make a concerted effort with adequate funding and a commitment for multiple years, you are going to see the private sector leap into action. They will invest more themselves.

We are going to have the research. They are going to develop their own techniques, and in fact we can issue contracts that enable them to do the research and to retain some rights in terms of developing the patent, the techniques, so they profit by helping us solve the problem. What that will do is it will bring more competition. It will drive down the per unit costs. We will have more momentum, and we will be able to decontaminate far more acreage than if we were sitting around doing this in fits and starts, bits and pieces.

Once we do that, the savings to the public multiply. As I mentioned, the liability for the Federal Government cleaning up after itself as the largest polluter of superfund sites in the United States, it is the Department of

Defense. It is the Federal Government itself.

We cannot evade that responsibility by just putting up fences and pretending that it does not exist. And by going faster and being more efficient, what we have done is not only lower the per unit cost, we eliminate long-term responsibilities.

If we do not pollute the aquifers in suburban Maryland that threaten the Chesapeake Bay or Martha's Vineyard, we are going to save the Federal Government a huge bill in the future.

Once we decontaminate that land, we are creating value. Right now these abandoned bases, the contaminated areas, are a liability. We spend money trying to keep people away. The trail in West Virginia that has a sign on it that says stay on the path, it is safe on the path. If you go off, they warn of explosions. Or the grade school children in Hope, Arkansas who take home flyers every year describing to children what the potential military waste looks like and that they should not touch it.

We are spending a lot of money now trying to keep people away from these destructive forces. If we are able to return the land to productive use, we are going to strengthen the environment. We are going to improve wildlife habitat. We will have more recreational opportunities in communities around the country where open space is a premium. We see unplanned growth and sprawl, and being able to turn these facilities back to the public, back to local government, back to park and recreational districts, which add value and quality of life.

Many of these facilities, abandoned bases and bombing ranges and military maneuvers, when they are returned have opportunities to be turned into commercial and housing uses, but they must be safe. Once we certify it is safe and we can turn it over, there are opportunities for colleges to be built and airports to be constructed, for parks and recreation, opportunities for commercial activities. These have tremendous, tremendous value.

In a nutshell, we will be adding value to communities, saving money and meeting our responsibilities for the environment.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that the American public is often ahead of the Federal Government and Members of this Chamber. In the energy debate of late it is interesting to note despite some of what I think is misleading information which has been presented by some in the Federal Government, the American public has a pretty good idea of what they want to have happen as far as energy is concerned. They want wise stewardship. They want conservation. They want us to have more fuel-efficient vehicles. The last thing they want to do is spoil the environment, drill in the Arctic Refuge and build massive numbers of power plants.

The same way when it comes to making our communities livable. Citizens would like us to do our job for the Federal Government to be a better partner with them. In over 500 referenda on the State and local level across America, the public has voted at the ballot box to purchase open space, to clean up contamination, to protect watersheds, to provide more transportation choices, to fight against sprawl.

The Federal Government has an opportunity to work with the citizens to kind of run to catch up with them, maybe not lead the charge, but to be a full partner. There is nothing that the Federal Government can do that will make more of a difference for improving the livability back home than for us to take these sites, whether it is Spring Valley near the American University campus here in Washington, D.C., Camp Bonneville near Portland, Oregon, the Massachusetts Military Reservation, or any of the other 1,000 sites across the country, clean up after ourselves and enter into a partnership with the American public.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful during this session of Congress we will no longer be missing in action. We will put the structure in place so somebody is in charge. We will put more money into research so we can do this job better. We will fund adequately over a specific period of time so the private sector can do its job, and we can make it easier to promote the livability of America's communities and make our families safe, healthy and more economically secure.

FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REHBERG). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, the subject I want to address tonight is one that has been in the news a lot lately, and a lot of people are confused and many Members of Congress are confused. I want to review some of the basics, and that is about the faith-based initiative or the so-called Community Solutions Act that will be marked up presumably next week in the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Ways and Means, as well as hopefully brought to the House floor right after the July 4th break.

This is an area that has, as I said, a lot of controversy in it, a lot of conflict in it, and at the same time is so basic to how we are going to deliver social services and how we might address the problems of the United States that it is absolutely essential.

I would like to go into a little bit of overview as to what all of the fuss is about and why so many people are talking about faith. One would think from some of the media coverage this is a brand new idea discovered by President Bush and it was never talked about before in American history. In fact, it has been part of the United States from the very beginning. It has just been in recent years that we have tended to deny this.

The Pilgrims came here because they wanted to practice freedom of their faith. The Catholics in Maryland came because they wanted freedom for their faith.

The Quakers in Pennsylvania came to the United States because they wanted freedom to practice their faith. We have seen multiple revivals in American history, when George Whitfield came through and it swept through America right through the American Revolution, the Wesley brothers came and settled in south Georgia and then moved up the United States, and there was another evangelical revival.

On Monday on the House floor there is a proposal to build a memorial to John Adams and John Quincy Adams and Abigail Adams, but particularly focusing on John Adams.

The current second best-selling book in the United States by David McCullough, if you read that book, at the very beginning, it talks about how John Adams was raised in a religious family, and his father was a minister, and how John Adams initially started as a schoolteacher, and his dad wanted to be a minister. And it was only after deciding to become an attorney that he decided not to become a minister himself.

At the very end of that book when John Adams is giving advice, he says, ''Walk humbly and serve God.'' John Adams, from the beginning, the middle, and the end was a very religious man.

But it was not just John Adams. John Quincy Adams' son who died in Statutory Hall, which used to be the old House Chamber, his last words were that he was ready to meet his maker and he was ready to go to heaven. He wrote a special book for his son giving him advice from the Bible and telling him how to avoid all of the perils of the European culture when he was over in Europe.

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But it was not just the Adams family. Even those who were the least religious in the founding of our American Republic, arguably Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson was concerned enough about it that he did his own, in my belief, a phony Bible; but he took many of the teachings of the Bible with it because he believed it was a historic and important document for America's faith.

Ben Franklin repeatedly called on Congress at the very time when we were supposedly debating about the separation of church and state, right after they passed the religious liberty amendment Ben Franklin was among those who called and passed a resolution saying Jesus Christ was the one and only son of God and was the saviour of mankind.

Ben Franklin also had George Whitfield, probably the greatest evangelist ever to come to America, at his