of that market price going down below the loan deficiency payment level that then kicks in so that there is more taxpayer assistance to farmers because of that low price. My strong point and my strong message to USDA is the U.S. Department of Agriculture should not be taking actions which depress the price which then expose the taxpayer to other liability in aid to the farmer. Instead, let the market decide what the commodities market price should be. And so when you monetize and sell one commodity to buy another, you distort the market, and that is what USDA in my opinion has been doing and doing improperly.

I come to the floor tonight to make this very strong message to USDA and any others of the eight government agencies who are involved in the decision to monetize soft white wheat. This is bad policy. We should not be doing it, especially in light of the prohibition on monetization that exists in the current House appropriations bill that passed the Appropriations Committee today and will likely come to this House floor sometime this week, hopefully, and then be reconciled with the other body's version of the supplemental appropriations bill and then be signed by the President most likely at the end of next week.

I am urging caution on the part of the USDA. I have had conversations with the agency. I have had conversations with USAID to try to make the point that help is on the way in terms of money and prohibition on monetization; and my great hope is that the agencies of government who are committed to helping the agriculture industry in this country, the farmers who grow the products that you and I consume, that there will be some restraint on the part of the USDA, that there will be a cancellation of any other notices to monetize soft white wheat so that rice can be purchased, because there is additional money in the pipeline that is going to be coming to the rice growers of the country or the wheat growers of the country to provide the commodity needs that will meet the expectations and the requirements of the people who are suffering in Iraq.

We have 69 million additional dollars. We have $250 million for PL–480 assistance. There is additional money that will help the poor, starving people of this war-torn region. We will do that and we should do that but not at the expense of the commodity growers in the eastern district of Washington State or other States around the country who are affected by a misuse or mismanagement or a distorting impact that comes with monetizing the Bill Emerson humanitarian trust.

I will be pursuing this issue in due course to make sure that the U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies understand the consequences of monetization, the impact on the markets and the impact on the taxpayer. Ultimately, the taxpayers when prices go way down in the soft white wheat market are going to have to bear the burden. That is not what the farmer wants. The farmer wants a market price. We had a market price of $4.80 a bushel some several months ago but because of, in part, additional dumping on the market of U.S. Government agency stocks, the price has gone down, and we now have a further crisis in farm country.

We cannot afford to lose the agriculture infrastructure in this Nation. If prices are so low that farmers are not going to grow commodities, we are going to find ourselves in days and months and years ahead, hopefully not, we are going to find ourselves facing the challenge of being independent agriculturally. We are going to be dependent on other countries of the world for our agriculture. That is unacceptable, and that is what we are trying to prevent by allowing market forces to have an important part in agriculture policy, not a distorting impact because of determinations made by USDA, our own Agriculture Department, which has the mission to help the farmers and the food needs of people in this country.

I would just say, too, as we look at the dependence that we have on fossil fuels, on oil from the Middle East countries, we are now in a war that has as a factor in it the issue of oil reserves and who is producing oil reserves. We are dependent on foreign countries. We cannot allow that to happen in America as it relates to our dependence on agriculture commodities from overseas. That is why we need a robust agriculture economy here and proper administration of the Bill Emerson trust, the humanitarian trust, proper administration of the food aid programs, proper respect for agriculture interests and the value of markets and the value of the movement of markets, prices go up and down; but let the markets operate what the prices are rather than have the government be involved in distorting the market. If we have a hands-off policy or a helpful policy, as opposed to a hurtful policy by our U.S. Department of Agriculture, we will be a lot better off.

I would say to the Speaker and my colleagues, be on the lookout for any market distortion that might be coming out of government agencies as it relates to agriculture, and I urge my colleagues to support this idea that monetization is not a good thing when you are trying to put farmer against farmer by our own Department of Agriculture, because the goal ultimately is to have a robust agriculture economy providing enough food so that we can continue to provide assistance to natural disaster consequences and the people who are subject to natural disasters or food shortages or drought or any other consequence that comes around this great world, that America can help solve by providing food aid.

COMMEMORATING THE BIRTH OF CESAR CHAVEZ, AMERICAN LABOR LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to take time tonight as chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to pay tribute to an inspiring and beloved man, Cesar Estrada Chavez. Cesar Chavez, 76 years ago this Monday, marked the beginning of his life dedicated to improving the quality of life for all Americans. We honor and pay respect to a man who brought awareness of the labor injustices to the national light and helped pave the path to educating people about the importance of the plight of the working individuals in the fields of this country. He cleared the way for progress and opportunity. Tonight, we have here members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus; and I want to make tribute to one of our members, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA), and ask him to say a few words in behalf of Cesar Chavez.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Texas for the opportunity to come and speak today. It is my honor to rise today in this House to acknowledge the birth date of Cesar Chavez. Yesterday would have been his 76th birthday. Cesar Chavez, cofounder, along with Dolores Huerta, of the United Farm Workers' Union, led a historic struggle to give voice to the voiceless and empower the poor and powerless, inspiring a people beyond the limits and barriers that had been artificially placed before them.

Cesar Chavez was born and died in the district that I represent, in Yuma and San Luis, Arizona. It is vital that all Americans acknowledge the profound contributions that Cesar Chavez has made to our country. These contributions were not in the form of money, false praise, or the trappings of power. He reinforced the values of this Nation, values such as commitment and of purpose and strength of cause.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to quote directly from Cesar Chavez: ''In this world, it is possible to achieve great material wealth, to live an opulent life. But a life built upon those things alone leaves a shallow legacy. In the end, we will be judged by other standards.''

Another value that Cesar imparted and reinforced for our country is the value of struggle and perseverance. Again let me quote Cesar Chavez: ''When we are really honest to ourselves, we must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us, so it is how we use our lives that determines what kind of men we are. It is my deepest belief that only by giving life do we find life, that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice. To be a man or woman is to suffer for

others. God help us be men and women.''

But the legacy of Cesar Chavez is a legacy of change that he brought to this country, and we are all obligated in our own way to continue and finish a change that sought equality for all people and the opportunity to live without the yokes of poverty, racism and the domination of others. It is time that this great Nation formally declares support for Cesar Chavez through a holiday, a holiday that celebrates nonviolence, the rights of all workers and the strong spirit of all people to overcome. I am proud that in my community where I formerly served as a county supervisor we have a paid holiday for the employees, we have a livable wage for employees as an acknowledgment to the struggles and as an acknowledgment to the goals of Cesar Chavez. In this country, we face tough times, war, peace, our Nation's obligation to the poor and underrepresented in this country. These are issues that this Congress struggles with on a daily basis.

But let me speak for a second on one issue that intertwines what we are facing today in Iraq and what we are facing today on the question of immigration in this country. Even in this Chamber, we hear the shrill anti-immigrant babblings that Cesar Chavez fought so hard against his entire life. I want to pause and read a letter to the editor that appeared in our local newspaper, the Arizona Daily Star, today. The letter starts ''Truly Ironic.''

It is in reference to a March 26 article entitled ''Immigrant Marine Pledged His Life as a Matter of Honor.'' The gentleman who wrote this letter goes on to say: ''I found this story truly interesting. Lance Corporal Jose Gutierrez from Guatemala was an illegal immigrant, or criminal as the haters and vigilantes would call him, who instead of dying in the Arizona desert was able to find a foster family, go to school in America, then die in the Iraqi desert protecting these haters' and vigilantes' right to keep on hating the so-called illegals.'' Mr. Dennis Jones from Kearny, Arizona, wrote that letter. I think it fits well to the times, and it fits well to the dilemmas that this Congress must face and resolve.

By recognizing Cesar Chavez, we recognize ourselves. We extend to ourselves all the traditions and the realities of the faces in this country. Chavez once said, ''It is possible to become discouraged about the injustice we see everywhere, but God did not promise us that this world would be humane and just. He gives us the gift of life and allows us to choose the way we will use our limited time on earth. It is an awesome opportunity.''

In this time when we anguish about the future and confront the present struggles, it is indeed a fitting time to pause and recommit ourselves to the legacy and the challenge that Cesar Chavez has given us, a legacy of hope, compassion and fairness, and a challenge before this Congress to act to help the people of this country, to act to stabilize our world, to act to assure that opportunity and fairness still is and will continue to be one of the cornerstone traditions of this country.

□ 1945

It has indeed been a pleasure for me to make these comments about someone who influenced my life, and I will be very frank. His motivation, his spirit, his tenacity to lead people that were never represented is a legacy and a tradition that should be part of the history of this country. It is indeed my pleasure.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA).

Let me take this opportunity to thank the gentleman for his words and I want to thank him for his leadership. I know that, as a freshman, he has already made some great impacts here at the Congress, and it is great to see two Hispanics from the great State of Arizona representing that State.

As we talk about Cesar Chavez, he was a person who grew up in the fruit and vegetable fields and knew what it meant to work them from dawn to dusk. He knew the injustices that faced labor workers on a daily basis and he knew that something had to be done; and from those fields Cesar rose to head of the United Farm Workers of America, instilling the UFW, the principles of nonviolence practiced by Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King.

When the UFW began strikes in the 1960s to protest the treatment of farm workers, the strikers took a pledge of nonviolence, determined not to detract from the message of improving labor conditions; and I want to tell the Members this was a critical time in my life and in my wife's life, Carolina, because this was a time that we had an individual in our community who talked about nonviolence, one of the first. I had been involved in the civil rights movement during that time, and I was involved in Mexican-American youth organizations during that time, working to get single-member districts and getting Hispanics registered to vote.

My wife also, while in college, worked with Cesar Chavez in those efforts. So both of our lives met both as she struggled to help Cesar Chavez, and I worked with voter education and voter registration. And for those of us who have lived through this time period, we heard of the great odds Chavez faced as he led the successful 5-year strike, boycott. Through this boycott, Chavez was able to forge a national support coalition of unions, church groups, students, minorities, consumers. And everyone came together; everyone understood the struggle of the worker. By the end of the boycott, everyone knew the chant that unified all workers, Si se puede, yes, it can be done. It was a chant of encouragement, of pride and dignity.

Chavez continued to speak out in other areas and helped communities to mobilize by assisting them with voter registration efforts and voter registration drives and insisting that the minority communities had just as much a right to have equitable access to educational opportunities as anyone else.

Cesar Chavez's legacy continues to live on today. His influences can be seen in the legislation that comes to our floor, legislation that aims to provide for our children's education, legislation that aims to help improve our children's health care in our communities, legislation that helps and comes forward in the area of civil rights and liberties and respect for human beings.

We must also continue the fight to ensure that in today's world, the rights of workers are still protected, whether it is the workers in the fields, in the kitchens, or in our factories. The blue collar workers are invaluable to America and to the American economy. It is important that these Americans be treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve, and that all rights afforded to those working in air-conditioned offices be provided to those that work in the sun-heated fields and the like.

America has seen few leaders like Cesar Chavez. He is among a rare group who have left a lasting imprint in American history. We can only hope to fulfill this vision as we walk through the halls of Congress, to create a better tomorrow for the Hispanic community and all Americans.

I want to take this particular time and opportunity to also indicate that as Cesar Chavez struggled and worked, we could see the strength in the man's face as we saw his eyes. He was a man of nonviolence, a person who, as we met this humble individual, gave us strength; and I recall distinctly having the opportunity at various times to meet with him and, various times, to be able to share with him and take some pictures with him as well as helping those boycotts that he had as the struggle continued.

He was a unique individual that had a very strong sense of perseverance that was there and that just his presence, as humble as he was, gave us that strength. So that is why, when we look throughout America, if we look at any Hispanic community whether we are in Arizona or California or Texas, anywhere throughout the Southwest and beyond, we see the street names of Cesar Chavez. We see the building names. Especially, I know in my district in south Texas we have a school named after Cesar Chavez. We see the highways that are named after Cesar Chavez, one of the Hispanics who we can say, here is an individual that has really represented us well, an individual that has not only represented the Hispanic community, but the American community, with the strength of nonviolence and the strength to move forward.

As we celebrate his birthday on March 31 throughout this country, and I know like in San Antonio we have

had marches and we had banquets that allow for the opportunity to continue the struggle, continue the education, that we still have people that are out there. We still have individuals that are working the fields. We still have individuals that need our respect and need the services and need to be treated in a dignified way; and it is important for us not to lose track of the fact that these individuals are the ones that either pick the strawberries or pick the fruits and the foods that we eat, and that we need to treat them in a dignified way. And he brought that to us and he brought that education.

And I know that people like President Kennedy had a great deal of respect and would come to him, and he was able to have those contacts during the time when few Hispanics were able to reach those levels.

Cesar Chavez will never be forgotten, mainly because of what he did and what he represents. So I wanted to take this opportunity tonight to talk about this man and talk a little bit about the things that he talked about, because as we talk about those things now, Cesar Chavez began this road of change, but it is up to those of us who come here after him to continue that struggle, to continue that work, and to continue that vision for a better tomorrow, that commitment to the community, that commitment to making sure that we make things better. And it is important as individuals and it is important as a community that we continue those efforts.

I want to ask every American, because I know Cesar Chavez would operate from the same perspective, that each one of us has a responsibility and an obligation. Just like he started without a formal education, he educated himself, and I know that he would want all Americans, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic, to continue that struggle of continuing to further their education, whether it be formal or informal, that effort of trying to better themselves and making sure that whether they are out there as janitors that they continue to move forward to become whatever they can in terms of either, if nothing else, head janitor of that school and then move forward in advancing themselves.

I know that Cesar Chavez valued education, and he stressed the importance of education, and he worked to try to get the migrant workers to get access to education. And as we talk about education, I know that right now we have those struggles that are going on in education. We know that our present budget, when it comes to Leave No Child Behind, is actually $9 billion behind; and I know that he would be talking about the importance of investing in our kids, the importance of investing in our country, and that education is key to fulfilling that American dream. And to him I know that that American dream would be just to fulfill their lives in a way that would allow them to move forward, whether it would be getting a better education, getting better protection, moving forward in obtaining a home, whatever it was.

He lived in humble ways even up to his death, but I know that as he talked about the importance of education, that we must continue. I know, as Latinos and Hispanics throughout this country, that he would argue about the fact that we still have a long way to go.

We still have too many youngsters that are dropping out of school. I know among the Mexican American community in the State of Texas, some districts have up to 50 percent of our kids that drop out. That is too many. Each one of us has a responsibility, starting with those parents, of making sure that their kids stay in school, starting also with the school system, making sure that they also do everything they can to keep those kids in school, starting with those communities that have an obligation and responsibility to also work with the school system and the teachers to help the teachers out in assuring that those kids remain in school.

Because our Nation is a powerful nation. It is a superpower, and the only reason it is a superpower is because we also have a super economy, and that is directly tied into our education. So it becomes really important. And I know that Cesar Chavez would say that education is key, whether it be a formal education or an education where one begins to educate oneself informally about what needs to happen and what needs to occur. That is important.

I know that Cesar Chavez would also feel very strongly when it comes to the issue of health care, and I know that in the area of health care, Cesar worked very hard to try to get access to health care for our young people; and I know as we look at that issue of health care and we look at the issue of the CHIP program that we have right now, the CHIP program is a program that responds to those kids that are out there, to those constituents and those Americans that are out there that are working, making $20,000, $30,000, maybe more, but find themselves without insurance. A lot of them are working for small companies. A lot of them are working individually and find themselves unable to get the coverage that they need. So that CHIP program that provides that health care is one that is extremely important, one that is critical. So at this point in time we need to be supportive of those kinds of programs.

In addition, I know that the administration is looking at taking the CHIP program, the Medicaid program, which is a program that helps our indigents, those that are the most vulnerable of this country, those that do not have access to resources, those that cannot afford to pay for their access to health care.

That Medicaid program is key. Both the Medicaid and the CHIP program are vital programs in this country, and I know the administration is looking at taking both the Medicaid and the CHIP, in addition to that, taking the disproportional share of moneys that go to our hospitals. Those are moneys that go directly to our hospitals, especially those hospitals that provide the indigent care, where they do not get compensated for the type of care that they provide. So these three programs, the proposal is to lump them up and send them to the State.

I know that it goes also with a cap, but it is important for us, and those programs have worked well independently, and we ask that we work hard to keep them independent. In fact, we need additional resources for Medicaid. We need initial resources for the CHIP program, and our hospitals are having difficulty, our trauma centers, in the type of care that they provide throughout this country.

This is the time for us, instead of looking at a tax cut, to move forward and provide access to care, and those three programs are the most vulnerable of this country.

□ 2000

Mr. Speaker, I know Chavez was always supportive of access to health care. In this country that has the best health care in the world, it makes no sense that that access to that health care is not affordable and not accessible to a lot of Americans. So as we celebrate and pay tribute to Cesar Chavez, it is important that we continue that struggle. And I ask all Americans out there and say that we need to zero in and continue those efforts as it deals with education and as it deals with health care.

In the area of education, one of the best programs that we have ever had that has reached out to the young people has been the program on Head Start. Head Start has been a program that was originally designed to meet a need, because States were not going out and reaching out to those young people, pre-schoolers. We knew that if the States were not doing that, that as a Federal Government we had a responsibility and an obligation to do that. So we started the Head Start program.

The studies that we have for the Head Start program reveal that it is a great program. It has great statistics, although it needs more resources. Right now it is only covering about 40 percent of the young people that are qualified for it. So we still have a large number of young people that could qualify for that. So Head Start is a great program. Of the early childhood programs, we only cover 2 percent of early childhood under Head Start. So it is a minimal program that could be expanded. It is under the Department of Health for a good reason, because it also reaches out to those families; it reaches out to the parents of those kids. The data shows that a Head Start baby, a Head Start youngster does a lot better in school and is able to go

through, and the data shows and the statistics indicate that that youngster and those kids under Head Start can do a lot better.

So Cesar Chavez would be extremely supportive of those kinds of programs. As we once again take this time to pay tribute to the legacy of Cesar Chavez, we look at the struggles that he had in meeting the needs of those farm workers, in meeting the needs of those people that work out in the field. And those kids and those Head Start programs that are out there, meeting their needs is important, and it is one of the areas that we need to continue.

This administration is choosing to basically do away with Head Start. Right now it is locally controlled. It is a program that has been doing well and we will say, why mess with it? Well, I think they see the resources there, they are choosing to send out those monies to the State and do away with it. We are hoping that that does not happen. So I ask Americans, if we have a good thing and we have a good program, it is doing well, why mess with it? So as we look at programs such as Head Start, we know that we can improve on those programs and we need resources. So this is the time to look at investing in Americans, investing in the educational opportunities of individuals.

When I was elected, and I have been in public office now for 29 years, I see my responsibility is the responsibility of making things happen, of being able to fulfill and solve the problems that confront us both in our back yards, in our States, in our communities, and in our country as a whole. As we look at those problems, one of the things that we know is that we have to continue to enhance our educational capability as a Nation. It is important. A lot of people will talk about the fact that we have too much immigration coming, but we forget that immigration has also been healthy. And if we do cut immigration, then we better educate our people, because we have also been a brain drain on the rest of the world.

When we look at the figures from 9–11, Mr. Speaker, we had, on the average, we produced 12,000 to 13,000 doctors and bring in 5,000 doctors from abroad. Here we have five people that are qualified to go to our medical schools, and yet we tell two of them, two of those young people, I am sorry, we do not have room for you, we can only accept three to our medical schools; and yet we bring in on the average about 5,000 from abroad. And that is just in the medical field. In engineering and all of the others, it is the same. So if we decide to stop immigration, then we better start educating our own, we better start getting our own engineers, we better start building our medical schools to produce more doctors. I have not seen the will in the House. We have to create that vision of investing in ourselves. We have to be able to make sure that as we move forward we have the qualified people to be able to be our professors, to be able to be our doctors, and to be able to be our engineers in this country.

As we look in terms of our future, we know that in our universities, the expense of higher education, and we have to make sure that we provide that education that is needed.

So I would challenge all Americans out there, in the form of Cesar Chavez, to continue that struggle, to making sure that people can fulfill their American dream, whether they want to become an attorney, whether they want to get the job training to be able to get a better job, whatever it is, we have to make those programs available, we have to make those opportunities available. Sure, they have to be able to come up to the plate and be able to get the work done in order to make it happen. But it is important for us to make sure that we provide those opportunities and not to cut those opportunities. Because we have great people out there. We have youngsters that can be attorneys, but they need that help and that assistance at an early age. They need those programs such as Head Start that can be the basis for making something happen. They need those programs, those after-school programs that are required in order for them to be able to excel and be able to move forward.

I wanted to take this opportunity, as we pay tribute to Cesar Chavez, not only to talk about his work, but the work that also needs to take place now, the work that each one of us has an obligation, each one of us has a responsibility as Americans to make sure that our elected officials are held accountable, to make sure that our communities do the right thing, that our school boards do the right thing when it comes to education. As we move forward, each one of us has a responsibility to participate in the democratic process and to vote.

One of the things that concerns me is that as Americans we take our freedoms very lightly. It is not something that should be taken lightly. Just as we have a right right now, that right might not be there tomorrow. Freedom comes through struggle, and it is an endless process. It does not stop now; it continues. It is one that we have to be vigilant and be able to move forward, especially as we find ourselves now in war with terrorism, because a war with terrorism is also a war of ideologies. So we have to make sure that we move forward in a positive way and that we do not forget the reason why we have been a powerful country and that is that we have been a country of opportunities, we have been a country of immigrants, we have been a country that allows a person to fulfill their greatest potential individually.

So as we take this time, once again, to pay tribute to a great man, Cesar Chavez, who was there for the most needy of this country, those that work out in the fields, those that pick our foods, those individuals that have the least power as we foresee, here is a person who gave a great deal and gave his life to that struggle, a person who saw a problem and worked at it and was persistent about it. So I want to encourage each one of us to look at his life and see in what ways we can participate in our community and in what ways we can come forward and help.

One of the big things about Cesar Chavez is that he never spoke negatively against anyone. He always was an extremely polite individual, was always positive. One of the things that I noticed about him was that he always took personal responsibility for what he did. That personal responsibility is one thing of saying, we all have an obligation to making sure that everyone and every American has an opportunity for an education. We might say, well, they do, but in some cases the reality is that we still do not have that access for everyone. We still do not have that opportunity for where every American is able to go into the universities of this country. That is why we have programs such as the affirmative action or programs such as that that allows an opportunity for minorities to enter universities throughout this country.

Today, the Supreme Court began to hear the cases on affirmative action; and I know that as we look at those cases, as they look at those cases, it is going to be important, the results of what comes about. I know that President Bush basically, by deciding to go against the affirmative action and fighting those opportunities, is basically closing the doors on minority access to higher education. While saying that he supports diversity, his lawyers are working to outlaw affirmative action at the University of Michigan.

The President says that considering race and ethnic background is unfair. Let us look at a system that most of Americans in history silently penalized minority applicants and led the alarming disparity that we have now. Today, less than 10 percent of college-age Hispanics go to higher education. Only 16 percent of Hispanics between the age of 25 to 29 have a bachelor's degree. We have a serious education gap in this country, and we should not tolerate this disparity. We cannot accept excuses. We cannot justify smoke and mirrors. Affirmative action or taking affirmative steps to try to correct this situation in universities' admissions will not solve all the problems, but it is an important tool that is available to schools seeking that diversity, and we should not throw out a system until we have a fix.

The attempt now is to try to throw out a system without providing alternatives. Achieving racial diversity, at least until the vestiges of past racial discrimination are erased, is a legitimate and compelling goal. We know and everyone out there knows that we still do not have the appropriate numbers throughout our universities. In fact, things are getting worse. In

Texas, since the Hopwood case, and I will talk to my colleagues briefly about that, but President Bush said that we should not be satisfied with our current numbers of minorities on American college campuses. He is right. But other than nice words, what does he offer? Allowing a set percentage of top high school graduates is better than nothing, but it is not certainly better than affirmative action. Percentage programs will not even begin to work unless we have States with large, highly segregated minority populations. And even then, it is still second best.

Hispanics will increase by 18 million in the next 25 years. We must ensure that the increase adds up to success, with an educated workforce and a growing economy that provides better lives for all our children and all our populations.

When we look at the issue of affirmative action, the purpose of affirmative action, and it was established during the Nixon years, was an attempt to basically come up with steps that allowed an opportunity to seek out qualified African Americans, qualified Hispanics, and, yes, qualified women. And because of the fact that we knew that there was disparities, and just like coaches went out and got qualified football players, that same effort could be done to get people to go into law school, those same efforts could be done to get people into medical school, and into other professions. So affirmative action, all it means is that we are going to make a sincere effort to taking steps to bringing up the numbers and to make sure that we have that variety of individuals that will be able to be representative of our Nation and have the African American and the Hispanic numbers that are key.

□ 2015

I know that since I have worked, when it came to the issues of injustice, when it came to the issues of equality, those are the issues that I know he fought for extremely strongly. He felt that everyone needed to be given an opportunity, that everyone had a responsibility to work on making sure that everyone was treated appropriately.

If we look at taking affirmative steps to get representation, I want to share a little bit about what the administration is talking about, a 10 percent bill. The only reason I mention that is because the administration mentioned that as an alternative to affirmative action.

I am here to tell the Members that I am the author of the 10 percent bill, although it was 15 percent when I was in the Texas House, before I came to the Congress. The reason why we came up then with 15 and 20 percent, and it became 10 percent, was because we knew we needed an alternative. They just wiped out under Hopwood the affirmative action efforts in the State of Texas. We needed to come up with something that would help out in assuring that Hispanics and minorities had an opportunity to further their education in Texas.

During a conference that I had, we came up with what we called the 20 percent piece of legislation. I filed it during that time I ran for Congress, and then turned over the piece of legislation to a State representative who just passed away. We were able to pass it under the 10 percent rule.

Let me give a little background what it does. It basically says if you graduate in the top 10 percent of your class, that the State of Texas has to bring you in and allow you to start school.

It is also based on the premise that it is also discriminatory. I will tell the Members right out, that is why we passed it, because if we have segregated schools with a concentration of Hispanic Americans, then we have an opportunity to get the top 10 percent to be able to go to those schools.

We were successful in doing that, and the program has been somewhat successful; but it is not as good as affirmative action. The data can show that. But it is a program that works in segregated areas. It is not a program that is going to be successful throughout this country; but it is also, once again, based on the negativism of segregation, and the fact that we have segregated schools in Texas, where there are a large concentration, 80 or 90 percent Hispanics in some of our schools.

The 10 percent has not been that good for African Americans in Texas. In fact, the numbers are a little lower. Yet, despite the gains, it also shows that, and I want to share that one of the other things that the 10 percent rule shows, and this is important to note, that the youngsters who do graduate at the top 10 percent, some of them come up with scores that are much lower, and they show about 1000 or 1100 on the SAT. They were able to get in, and are 200 to 300 points below some of the others, and do just as well as the other students.

If nothing else, the 10 percent has disapproved the test scores that show that even up to 300 points, that those youngsters can outperform those other youngsters that do better in those major tests when it comes to performing in those universities. If nothing else, this particular bill has helped to do away with that.

If Members really want to come up with a good affirmative action effort, we would do away with those test scores and do what we have always said: use a combination of things to really look at the youngster's performance. You look at the youngster's grades, you look at the youngster's tests, you look at his standing in the schools, and look, if you can, at the background of the individual. Because no one can really judge the motivation and the drive that someone has to be able to move forward. That will never show up on an instrument, on an exam or a test. It becomes important that we use multiple criteria for admission.

We have always argued that we should not use one test or another, that it should be multiple criteria that should be utilized for admissions, and that every effort ought to be made.

I have worked since I was in the seventh grade all through high school, and there is no way that we can compare someone who, in all honesty, did not work and had an opportunity to do their homework. Yet I can tell the Members, I sit here, and when I went to college I was able to eat their lunch when I started there. I mean that. Because other people have to do a variety of other things as they move forward, whether because of economics or whatever.

The reality is that we do have youngsters out there that do extremely well; yet they might be youngsters that have dropped out of school for one reason or another. If we look at the dropout rates, we see a lot of youngsters that drop out. It is not, a lot of times, for academic reasons. I can tell the Members that because I have also been responsible for some of the assessments on dropout rates, the reasons why youngsters drop out, especially Mexican Americans. We know that they do well.

My predecessor, Mr. Tejeda, had dropped out of school. Yet he later got a bachelor's and a master's and a law degree, and became the U.S. Congressman for this same district, and was in the military. Now, under these conditions, if he had dropped out now, he could not be even eligible to get into the military because the military does not accept individuals unless they have a high school diploma. They only accept GEDs up to 1 percent in the Air Force and 10 percent in the Army, so those are issues that need to be dealt with.

Education is key. We need to continue to emphasize the Federal role in education, the fact that we have a responsibility to make sure that our constituency throughout this country is well educated.

There is a direct correlation between education and our economy; and I would attest to the Members, there is a direct correlation between our economy and the fact that we are a superpower. If we want to continue to be a superpower, we have to continue to invest in our kids. We need to continue to invest in our people, in getting them opportunities to be able to advance themselves and be able to fulfill their American dream, whether it be getting a better job or being able to buy a home.

I think as we look at those issues, and as we pay tribute to Cesar Chavez, I know that he would be continuing the struggle for the workers in this country. That struggle is a continuation of making sure that everyone is treated in an equitable manner, that everyone will have opportunities to be able to advance themselves, either educationally or in terms of job training that might be offered. That becomes real important.

Let me take this opportunity also to indicate that Cesar Chavez was a humble individual who, as he worked in the fields, was able to organize, was able to educate not only the farm workers but our entire community. I would ask Americans to look at Cesar Chavez and the work that he did, because it is an inspiring work. It is an inspiring thing that we need to continue to come to and educate ourselves about.

Also, Members should ask ourselves in terms of our role as individuals, in terms of our role in the community, our role in the Nation as we continue our struggle on the war on terrorism and the war on Iraq, we need to make sure that we do not lose sight of the fact that we also have a struggle in this country. That is to make sure we turn the economy around. Part of that is a continuous effort in those areas of both education and health.

In the area of health, as I have indicated earlier, health is one of the areas where we continue to make inroads. Yet, it does not make any sense if our constituencies do not have access.

Right now, our seniors are having a great deal of difficulty being able to get access to prescription drug coverage. I have had seniors come to me and talk about the fact that we had a struggle in that area in that they have to sometimes not buy the food that they need in order to buy their prescriptions. That should not be happening in this country.

We argue about on the border we have a lot of problems, and we argue about people coming from abroad and from across the border to access the health care; but a lot of Americans also go across to get access to health care. A recent study revealed that half or 50 percent of those surveyed actually went into Mexico to get access to health care, buying prescriptions and getting medical treatment and dental treatment, because they could not afford it in this country.

So we need to make sure not only that we try to make it affordable but also accessible. That is important. So those specific issues of both education and health were two primary issues beyond the issues of worker rights that Cesar Chavez worked on.

Worker rights need to continue to be on the forefront. We need to understand, and it is unfortunate, yes, that we have to have a minimum wage; but we have a minimum wage because we also understand and recognize that there are still some people in this country that if they could get away with it, that they would pay fifty cents for someone to cut their yard instead of paying them appropriately in order to help them out, and being able to do the work that it entails.

Also, in closing, let me take this opportunity. I know we had some Democrats that were out here. One of the things they talked about was our veterans. I want to take this opportunity to shift, as we pay tribute to Cesar Chavez, to talk a little bit about our veterans.

Tonight we had an opportunity to hear some of our Members talk about the needs of our veterans. I sit on the Committee on Armed Services, and I also sit on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. We must honor our veterans. We honor them by ensuring that they have access to quality benefits and services once they come home. That is so important and so key.

With our troops in the field, and sadly, with many Americans already experiencing war's devastating effects, it is shameful that the House passed a budget resolution on the same day, Mr. Speaker, on the same day that our soldiers began Operation Iraqi Freedom, cutting $15 billion from the veterans disability compensation programs and $9.7 billion from the veterans health care.

It is clear that this proposal will have a devastating effect on the veterans, the VA health care and the benefit programs, and would serve as a further insult to the millions of veterans already facing reductions in health care, in compensation, in pensions, and in education benefits.

The administration's budget was already inadequate to meet the health care needs of our veterans. Now the Republicans have gone further and cut $844 million above the President's request for veterans health care next year. The proposal, approximately $1.3 billion above 2003 appropriations, will not even begin to cover the inflationary impact and anticipated salary increases for VA health care workers.

That budget relies on unrealistic management efficiencies, increasing copayments. It also relies on new annual enrollment of veterans using the VA health care system when they are going to be taxed, and other efficiencies such as eliminating 5,000 VA nursing home beds. At the same time, we are asking our veterans to fight in Iraq and to continue the struggle in Afghanistan, to continue the difficulties that we encounter in Colombia, and we are eliminating 5,000 veteran nursing home beds.

The budget resolution also calls for cutting $15 billion over 10 years, $463 million in 2004 alone. The VA mandatory spending under the disguise of eliminating fraud, waste and abuse, is cut. Mr. Speaker, when we look at this disguise of fraud, waste and abuse, 90 percent of the spending for VA entitlement is paid out of monthly payments to disabled veterans. I do not consider payments to our disabled veterans and pensions for the poorest disabled veterans in the GI bill, benefits for soldiers returning from Afghanistan, to be fraud, waste, or abuse.

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I recently joined my colleagues on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and I have a great deal of respect for our leader, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), a Republican, in a bipartisan recommendation to the Committee on the Budget which would have added $3 billion. And I want to personally thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for those efforts. But next year alone for veterans discretionary programs including Medicare and research construction and programs that fund the administration cost benefits such as compensation pensions and education programs, that is important. That is drastically needed.

I urge all of my colleagues to do the right thing and honor our commitment to our veterans. These cuts are shameful and unacceptable. We must do everything we can in a bipartisan way to make sure that our veterans get those services that they are entitled to.

Let me also just say that people argue, well, the budget is growing. It is growing because of the fact that our veterans are reaching, especially the World War II veterans, are reaching that age where they need us now. They are getting old. They are getting ill. They need our help. And, yes, our roles are increasing. But we have got to assume as those that fought World War II and fought in Korea and Vietnam begin to reach those levels, we have got to be there for them. This is not the time to cut. After that, the numbers are going to get smaller, but we have got to be there for them. And for us to argue, well, we are going to increase it and we have been increasing it and we ought to be comfortable that that is not sufficient, we are actually cutting priority 7 veterans. We are cutting priority 8 veterans. And we have got to be sure that we do the right thing when it comes to our veterans.

So I want to take this time to thank the veterans who have taken the time to come out here. I want to appeal to the Republicans when it goes to conference to do the right thing when this comes to our veterans. We have asked them to go to Afghanistan. We have asked them to go to the Gulf War. We have asked them to go to Vietnam and Korea; and now as they reach their twilight years, they need our help. And what are we saying? Our priority is a tax cut. That is not right. That is not right.

Every single war, we have the data, has shown that we have had a tax increase to pay for the war. But now we got on a tax cut. And I can understand those conservatives that feel that sometimes in order to stimulate the economy that you would need a tax cut. But after looking at that tax cut, Mr. Speaker, I saw that it was $674 billion initially. Thank God it has been cut now. I do not know where it is going to wind up, but it was $674 billion. Of that, if you would argue from a conservative perspective that it is going to go to business, the majority of it, and that would help stimulate the economy, you would also have to take into consideration the fact that 80 percent of new jobs are created in small businesses, not major corporations. So of that $674 billion, less than $18 billion actually goes to small businesses.

So even from a conservative perspective, it does not make any sense. It really dos not if you are trying to stimulate the economy. And that is if you believe in that way, which I personally do not, and I think we could really help stimulate the economy and solve problems. I really feel that I have been elected here to solve problems, and we are not doing that here.

One of the problems that we are encountering is that the States have difficulties with their budgets. For homeland defense, we could be providing resources to them. The VA, for example, just since 9–11 it has cost them close to 50, $55 million just from going to code orange every time with more security and other things that they have to do. So it is costing them money and so we have to help our States, and we could help them by addressing the issue of health care and providing resources to health care. Not only would it help the States, but it also would solve a problem in a very critical area, which is the area of health care that would allow an opportunity for consumers to have access to health care.

It would allow an opportunity for the industry, the hospitals and the doctors who are having a rough time, in trauma centers who are thinking of closing down, it would have that opportunity for them to be able to get access to those resources and do the job they are required to do and do the job that is needed, so we would solve a problem and provide that access to those individual consumers out there that need access to health care. But we would also help in solving the issue and the problem that the States are having with the budgets, which is one of the issues of health care.

So instead of that $675 billion in the form of a tax cut, we can utilize that in a much better way in the area of health care, in the area of education, in the area of meeting the needs of our veterans.

So tonight I take pride in coming up and talking about a variety of issues, but our most important issue once again to pay tribute to the visionary Cesar Chavez who helped to inspire a great number of Americans in this country in a nonviolent way.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity in allowing me to be here tonight, and I want to take this opportunity to say thank you very much and good night.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. SIMMONS (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of attending the funeral of a constituent who was a member of the Armed Forces who was killed while serving in Iraq.

Mr. MCINNIS (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of surgery.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. HOLT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CROWLEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FILNER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MALONEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LANGEVIN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CASE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. INSLEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STRICKLAND, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mrs. BIGGERT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. PAUL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WELDON of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. TANCREDO, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 318. An act to provide emergency assistance to nonfarm-related small business concerns that have suffered substantial economic harm from drought; to the Committee on Small Business.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 36 minutes p.m.) the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, April 2, 2003, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1613. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a copy of the Presidential Determination No. 2003-10, on Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia; to the Committee on Armed Services.

1614. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulations, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department's final rule—Public Housing Homeownership Program [Docket No. FR-4504-F-02] (RIN: 2577-AC15) received March 31, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

1615. A letter from the Deputy Congressional Liaison, Federal Reserve Board, transmitting the Board's final rule—Truth in Lending [Regulation Z; Docket No. R-1136] received March 31, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

1616. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule—Enforcement of Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in Department of Homeland Security Programs or Activities (RIN: 1601-AA05) received February 28, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

1617. A letter from the Administrator, Energy Information Administration, Department of Energy, transmitting notification regarding the Energy Information Administration's report entitled, ''Performance Profiles of Major Energy Producers 2001''; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1618. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Energy, transmitting the Department's report entitled, ''Fleet Alternative Fuel Vehicle Acquisition Report For Fiscal Year 2001,'' pursuant to Public Law 105—388 section 310 112 stat. 3481; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1619. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a listing of gifts by the U.S. Government to foreign individuals for the period of January 1 through September 30, 2002, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2694(2); to the Committee on International Relations.

1620. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting the Department's final rule—Exports and Reexports of Explosives Detection Equipment and Related Software and Technology; Imposition and Expansion of Foreign Policy Controls [Docket No. 030213032-3032-01] (RIN: 0694-AB87) received April 1, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on International Relations.

1621. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Transportation, transmitting the semiannual report of the Inspector General for the period ending September 30, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. app. (Insp. Gen. Act) section 5(b); to the Committee on Government Reform.

1622. A letter from the Acting Director, Congressional Budget Office, transmitting the report to waive deduction of pay requirement for two reemployed annuitants; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1623. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive and Political Personnel, Department of the Navy, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1624. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive and Political Personnel, Department of the Navy, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1625. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive and Political Personnel, Department of Defense, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1626. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Education, transmitting the annual report concerning surplus Federal real property disposed of to educational institutions,