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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC, *October 23, 2007.*

I hereby appoint the Honorable LINCOLN DAVIS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 25 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

CLEAN WATER ACT

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, last week we observed the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, and it was an important observation here on the floor as we dealt with the impact that that new law had, the heightened awareness and the progress that resulted. Back in 1972 when the law was enacted, only one-third of our waterways met water quality standards. Two-thirds did not. In the course of that 35 years, we have reversed that: Now there are only one-third that don't meet the goal. But the fact is that there still is one-third that are not in compliance with our basic water quality standards.

When we look under the ground, the situation is even worse. There are over 72,000 miles of sewer pipe and water main that are over 80 years old. It is one of the reason large sink holes open up and swallow trucks in American streets, why the American Society of Civil Engineers has given our water infrastructure a D-minus grade.

All of this is compounded by the stress from global warming, as we see not just the ice caps shrink but the snow pack being reduced, we watch evaporation being accelerated as a result of the elevated temperatures, and we see that thirsty crops need more water because of the global warming. Agriculture of course is 90 percent of our water commitment.

Now, there is going to be more friction, more problems over time with Water and Agriculture. We have some of our programs that have been enacted that are just plain silly. We continue to grow heavily subsidized cotton with subsidized water in the desert, something that long since should have been phased out. The New York Times Magazine this weekend featured the Southwest United States water problems, especially centered on the Colorado River and the demands that are rising there. But this tremendous problem is not limited to the southwest. On the front page of this morning's paper we see the Georgia delegation in Congress is suggesting that they deal with their severe drought and water supply problems by ignoring the environmental regulations of the Endangered Species Act, upsetting not just environmentalists but their friends downstream. It is a problem we are familiar with in the Pacific Northwest, where we have a severely water stressed Klamath River Basin, where the Federal Government as in most all instances has been part of the problem as we promise more water to more diverse users than nature can deliver.

It is time for us to revisit, not just the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, but revisit our commitment that is embodied in that Act and where we are going over the next 35 years.

It is important that we deal with very real problems of environmental quality requirements to save fish and wildlife and protect eco systems and, indeed, human life. We are watching the problems of diminishing supplies as we mine fossilized water in ancient underground aquifers. Global warming of course is going to make all of these problems more complex, more severe, and harder to solve.

Every Member of Congress needs to do more than just celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. I would hope that, in the months ahead, every one of us does an assessment at home to find out how bad the situation is with our local water supply, storm water, sewage, and drainage. Are we one of the over 1,000 communities with combined sewer overflow problems? How is it going to be paid for? What is the planning that needs to take place? Every one of us should be insisting that we shift to basinwide framework for analyzing and solving water problems, not just looking at isolated instances.

It is time for us to be serious about a funding solution. In 1978, the Federal Government provided 78 percent of the funding for our water quality problems. Today, that is just 3 percent. Even that 3 percent is as uncertain, as it is inadequate. It is time to establish a water trust fund, like the Highway Trust Fund, to help be a partner with State and local communities in meeting water quality needs. Finally, we need to begin addressing the ultimate question of who is going to get the water

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