

produce a national program which addresses the fundamental issues of civics education. The excitement generated by this program should be emphasized, especially in the face of recent attacks by some groups on the Department of Education and on any national educational coordination or standards in the name of local control.

The program also builds links between public officials, businesses, parents, educators, and students. Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the late Warren Burger, called it "one of the most extensive and effective programs for the education of young Americans about our constitutional system of government and the principles and values it represents." I and members of my staff have visited schools to support the program's goal of directly involving legislators.

Once again, I congratulate the organizers, teachers and students of the We the People program.

RETURN TO STRONGER 5 MPH BUMPER STANDARD

HON. ANTHONY C. BEILENSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 27, 1995

Mr. BEILENSON. Mr. Speaker, today I am reintroducing legislation I have proposed before to restore automobile bumper protection standards to the 5-mile-per-hour requirement that was in force when the Reagan administration took office in 1981.

Beginning in 1978, new cars were equipped with bumpers capable of withstanding any damage in accidents occurring at 5 miles per hour or less. That action was taken in accordance with the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act of 1972, which requires the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [NHTSA] to set a bumper standard that "seek(s) to obtain the maximum feasible reduction of cost to the public and to the consumer."

As part of the Reagan administration's effort to ease what it called the regulatory burden on the automobile industry, NHTSA reduced the standard to 2.5 miles per hour in 1982, claiming that weaker bumpers would be lighter, and would therefore cost less to install and replace, and would provide better fuel economy. This supposedly meant a consumer would save money over the life of a car, since the lower purchase and fuel costs should outweigh the occasionally higher cost of any accident. The administration promised at the time to provide bumper data to consumers, so that car buyers could make informed choices about the amount they wished to spend for extra bumper protection.

This experiment has been a total failure. None of the anticipated benefits of a weaker bumper standard has materialized. Crash tests conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety [IIHS] have shown year after year that bumper performance has little or nothing to do with bumper weight or car price. Lighter bumpers seem to perform just as well as heavier ones in accidents, and bumpers on inexpensive autos perform just as well as or better than the bumpers on expensive autos. In fact, some of the heaviest and most expensive bumpers serve no energy-absorbing pur-

pose at all. Adding insult to injury, NHTSA has virtually ignored its promise to make adequate crash safety and damage information available to consumers.

What has happened is that consumers are spending hundreds of millions of dollars in extra repair costs and higher insurance premiums because of the extra damage incurred in low-speed accidents. In IIHS's latest series of 5-mile-per-hour crash tests, all but 1 of the 14 1995 midsize four-door models tested sustained damage that ranged up to \$1,056 in the two crash tests this legislation would restore as a standard. That is a Federal standard that cars were required to withstand without any damage at all. Worse yet, the lowest total damage repair cost for IIHS's four crash tests—all at 5 miles per hour was \$1,433; and 3 of the 14 cars ended up with more than \$3,000 damage in those 4 tests at 5 miles per hour. That a consumer would be faced with this amount of damage after an accident occurring at 5 miles per hour is both offensive and totally unnecessary.

There is no doubt that consumers overwhelmingly favor a stricter bumper standard, a survey conducted in 1992 by the Insurance Research Council found that almost 70 percent of respondents said cars should have bumpers that provide protection in low speed collisions, and over 80 percent said they would choose protective bumpers over stylish bumpers. Surely no one buying a new car would prefer the extra inconvenience and cost associated with damage sustained in low-speed accidents with weaker bumpers to the virtually negligible additional cost, if any, of stronger bumpers.

Both Consumers Union, which has petitioned NHTSA unsuccessfully to rescind the change, and the Center for Auto Safety strongly support Federal legislation requiring a return to the 5-miles-per-hour bumper standard. The insurance industry also strongly believes rolling back the bumper standard was an irresponsible move, and supports a stronger standard as a way of controlling auto insurance costs.

Mr. Speaker, the Reagan administration made a serious, costly mistake when it rolled back the bumper standard. It has cost consumers many hundreds of millions of dollars, with no offsetting benefit at all. Some manufacturers have continued voluntarily to supply the stronger bumpers. But car buyers, who cannot look at a bumper system and judge how it would perform, have no easy way of knowing whether cars have the stronger or weaker bumpers.

Restablishing the 5-miles-per-hour bumper standard would be the most effective and easiest measure Congress could approve this year to reduce excessive automobile insurance costs. We can save consumers hundreds of millions of dollars by a re-instating a proven regulation that worked well in actual practice. We cannot allow rhetoric about the burden of Government regulation and the advantages of free market economics to blind us to the reality of the unnecessary costs of minor automobile accidents. It is long past time to restore rationality to automobile bumper protection standards.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this proposal to restore the 5-mile-per-hour bumper standard.

A RUMMAGE SALE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 27, 1995

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, each day we seem to have a clearer view of ways in which the Republican Congress intends to attempt to balance our Nation's budget—and this week's action by the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee is an alarming indication that it will be our Nation's most valuable natural resources that will play a major role in this balancing act.

As a recent San Francisco Chronicle editorial laments the subcommittee's actions appears to be "a national rummage sale, the effect of which will be to privatize, commercialize, pollute, and consume America's natural heritage."

I believe that those of us who have worked for years to protect our natural resources would agree with the Chronicle's view that such actions are "a sell-out, pure and simple."

I commend the following editorial to my colleagues' attention:

[From the San Francisco Chronicle, June 22, 1995]

A RUMMAGE SALE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Now we know how the Republican Congress is going to balance the budget: auction off the nation's most valuable natural resources, along with its own votes, to the highest bidder.

Make no mistake, the legislation on offshore oil and gas leasing and the East Mojave National Preserve that passed the House Appropriations Subcommittee Tuesday is part and parcel of a giant national rummage sale, the effect of which will be to privatize, commercialize, pollute and consume America's natural heritage.

It is a sell-out, pure and simple.

The congressional assault on natural resources is far from being limited to the coasts and the desert. The House budget plan calls for selling—or even giving away—vast tracts of national forests, and other House legislation would set up a commission to study the closure of national parks.

Still other proposals call for turning national wildlife areas over to the states to do with as they please. And an amendment to the vetoed budget rescission act, that would have doubled the cutting of timber in national forests while suspending all environmental protections, has risen from its well deserved grave and is heading back to the president's desk.

In April, President Clinton promised to veto any bill that compromises America's clean water, clean air and toxic waste laws. If he is as good as his word, every single one of these ecological nightmares must be vetoed if and when they reach his desk.

Let's look at just three of them.

The so-called "logging without laws" amendment to the rescission bill would virtually hand national forest management over to timber barons with chain saws.

Ostensibly intended to expedite salvage logging of dead and dying trees, it would direct the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to cut more than 6.2 million board-feet over the next 18 months with no regard to the protections stipulated in the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Forest Management Act, the Clean Water Act or the Endangered Species Act.