

the public, particularly the news media that questions the need for me to call attention to this deficit and the debt, the fact that we would be far healthier fiscally if we had dealt with this problem before today.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, I have to comment on this afternoon's veto by the President of the budget. I can respect the fact that the President may disagree very strongly, very deeply with our priorities versus what his priorities would be for spending. But I would submit that it is a disservice to the electorate and to the Congress and to the Government of the United States for the President not to tell us how he would balance the budget. We have given him a budget. We have tried to tell him how we would do it. Frankly, as a Member of Congress, I would welcome the opportunity to see his version of how he would balance the budget in 7 years.

I think that if he would present us his alternatives, if he would stand on principle and tell us what does he really believe in the terms of his spending priorities over the next 7 years, then I think, for starters, we could start to have a healthy debate in this body over exactly what we need to do to balance the budget in the next 7 years.

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OUR ENVIRONMENTAL BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ENSIGN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. HINCHEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people here this evening who are concerned about the environment, and I will speak out in a special order concerning environmental issues. I want to address my remarks to the Clean Water Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Clean Water Act was one of the great victories of the past 25 years—a bipartisan success. It is often said it was enacted after the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland caught fire and the country saw how far the quality of our waterways had fallen. But smell also played a part. Waterfront property was no longer considered a plus in many cities: Rivers were open sewers. Parks were abandoned and beaches were closed. Lakes and rivers—like Lake Erie—were declared dead: pollution killed nearly all the fish.

The Safe Drinking Water Act was another bipartisan victory. The idea was simple: that everyone would be able to trust the quality of municipal water, and would not have to fear that their health would be threatened if they moved to a different community. No public health law was more important than protecting water safety. People recognized that Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act were also some of the best property rights protection laws around. No one wants the value of their property to decline be-

cause of someone else's unhealthy or unattractive pollution.

This year, both laws are under attack. We're told the Clean Water Act is too strict, that it makes our lakes and rivers too clean. We are told that the Safe Drinking Water Act makes our water too healthy. Can we not all live with weaker standards, dirtier water?

The advocates of weaker laws are confident their rights will still be protected. They can afford better quality waterfront property. They can afford to vacation in the best places. They can afford bottled water for their children. And they do not want to pay to protect the common good, to protect the drinking water and the waterways that ordinary people, ordinary families will use.

We saw the Clean Water Act under attack in the amendments that the House approved in May that would weaken the law. Of course, the Senate has not acted on that bill, and we know that if it ever reached the President, it would face a veto. We saw the Safe Drinking Water Act under attack in the riders on the VA-HUD appropriations bill. The rider that would have prohibited EPA from tightening standards in lead in drinking water—so important to children's health—was the most egregious example. But that attempt was thwarted too.

Does that mean everything will be fine? No. Money is at the heart of this debate, and the strategy now to attack clean water and safe drinking water is to cut off their money supply. If the EPA does not have the money to enforce the Clean Water Act, it will start to die a slow death. It will bring back the open sewers and flammable streams of long ago.

Let us get down to specifics. The VA-HUD appropriations bill makes sharp cuts in funding for the EPA. It would cut funding for enforcement of public health standards—including clean water and safe drinking water—by 17 percent.

We hear these days about the importance of letting States do the job. Fine—but this bill would cut funding for State loans to improve drinking water quality by 45 percent.

Do you like to see sludge in your rivers and on your beaches? Then you will love to see these cuts. The bill would cut 30 percent from the request for funding for waste treatment plants. Once again, this is money that would go to the States. The bill will make it more difficult for them to help themselves and to help their people.

We have still got some of those notorious riders in here too. It is nice to know the bill no longer prohibits EPA from reducing lead levels in water. But it does prohibit EPA from setting a standard for radon in water—even though radon is linked to lung cancer. It does prohibit EPA from vetoing use of fill containing toxic waste in rivers and lakes.

The VA-HUD appropriations bill covers only 1 year. So it is easy to say

these cuts merely delay action a little bit. But put these cuts in the context of the 7-year budget plans that are dominating the news these days. Would enforcement funding increase during the course of those 7 years? Would States get more money to address their water problems later in the course of those 7 years? No. The budget envisions 7 lean years for environmental cleanup and enforcement.

They say Marie Antoinette said of the ordinary people of her time: "Let them eat cake" if they cannot buy bread. The cuts in the EPA budget effectively say if they want clean water, let them drink Perrier.

Should we be willing to pay the relatively small amount extra to buy our constituents—all of our constituents, not just the Perrier drinkers—the safest water available? We should. Should we be willing to spend the small amount extra to keep making progress on cleaner rivers, lakes, and beaches? We should. I think the average family wants to know that the children will have safe, healthy water to drink, and clean beaches to play on. I think they expect their government to give them that assurance. I do not think they want to see these laws allowed to wither away for lack of funding. I do not think they want to make that sacrifice so that some people will have a little more money to spend on designer water or on airfare to a clean beach.

SENIOR CITIZENS RIGHT TO WORK ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. Fox] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, a very historic act was passed this week with the bipartisan assistance of Members of both sides of the aisle, the Senior Citizens Right To Work Act, H.R. 2684. This legislation will address the problem that current tax laws impose harsh penalties on senior citizens, especially those who continue to work beyond the age of 65. After years of hard work and valuable contributions to our Nation, Mr. Speaker, working senior citizens should not be penalized. We should be encouraging, not discouraging, seniors to make a better life for themselves. That is what our great country is founded upon, pursuing the American dream. As Federal legislators we must be committed to helping seniors maintain their independence and quality of life. That is why I was proud to speak to help support with my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats alike, H.R. 2684.

What this will allow, Mr. Speaker, is current law says that those seniors under 70 that are currently making funds up to \$11,280, there are no deductions from their Social Security, but if they make a dollar over, there is going to be a deduction. Under this new legislation a modern approach was taken. What will happen is seniors, over the