

Mr. Speaker, let me close by also pointing out that 18 State legislatures have passed medical savings accounts legislation with overwhelming bipartisan support. Mr. Speaker, 68 million Americans already have access. We need to bring the rest of them in.

□ 1045

#### DO NOT KILL THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, I am not here to speak about medical savings accounts, but I do have to respond to the gentleman from Florida.

Saying that Democrats who voted 2 or 3 years ago for medical savings accounts, in effect, support the medical savings account proposal today is like saying NEWT GINGRICH supports the Democratic agenda because he voted for one small piece of it.

I supported the Democratic health care plan 3 years ago, in which medical savings accounts were a very small piece of a very big puzzle, in which also there was guaranteed health care for all citizens as opposed to the present proposal, which is incremental, deals only with small numbers of the population, and medical savings accounts are the one piece that will sink the package that people do agree on. So there is a total difference.

Let us talk about something else that I have great concern about what the Gingrich leadership is doing because, Mr. Speaker, I ask you this: We just saw the basketball finals, the NBA finals. If you are heading into the playoffs, you have a tough schedule ahead of you, you are 2 to 2 in the series, would you pull Michael Jordan at that point? Of course, you would not.

Then why is it if we have an agency, a department, that has generated 80 billion dollars' worth of export contracts for the United States and created jobs, why would we then try to bench the Department of Commerce? And yet that is exactly what the Republican leadership intends to do in reform week that is coming up in the next few weeks.

That is right, they want to take apart the U.S. Department of Commerce, which, under Secretary Ron Brown and now Secretary Mickey Kantor, for the first time is really performing a valuable mission. What is the mission? To create jobs. To create jobs in America.

That is why I am coming to the floor today, to urge my colleagues now to rise up and to say, no we do not want to kill the Department of Commerce; we do not think we ought to, in the interest of saying we broke up an agency or a department, that we should move all these different departments around

and shift boxes on the flow chart and thus take away the central element, the ability to coordinate our economic recovery efforts.

Because I think it is important to look at what the Department of Commerce does. First of all, the Department of Commerce works in partnership with local businesses and governments to provide much-needed infrastructure. I think everyone here has seen the benefits of an economic development administration enterprise, whether a grant for water and sewer or for a feasibility study.

I know in my own State of West Virginia, for instance, we have seen millions of dollars come in from EDA grants that has generated millions and millions of dollars worth of jobs in industrial parks and businesses. Because remember what EDA does, EDA only funds, in most cases, where it is a job-creating venture, where you create jobs as a result of it. We have seen \$15 billion of EDA investment over 30 years, not only create infrastructure but to create jobs.

There is more that the Department of Commerce does. The National Weather Service. I think everybody has seen that firsthand and the need for that. That is economic development, too, because the farmer knows to protect his or her crops, the businessperson knows to get their equipment up on pallets because there is going to be flooding. The more advanced notice they get, the better they can plan their deliveries, plan their shipments. That is the National Weather Service.

There is more that the Department of Commerce does. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration, which provides grants to educational, health care, public safety, and social service agencies. All crucial activities. How about the International Trade Administration that many of our small businesses use? That is the one way that they get into the export market. Exports create jobs. The ITA in West Virginia as well as across the country is creating those jobs.

I talked to one small businessperson in my home just this last week who said that 40 percent of their business now comes through ITA-generated export opportunities. What do they want to do? They want to break this up and move it around. It makes no sense.

The Foreign Commercial Service, those are our hustlers out in every embassy. We do not have enough of them, but they want to move them someplace else. Makes no sense. The Department of Commerce has generated since 1992 more than \$80 billion in foreign contracts for American businesses. That is Secretary Ron Brown going out with CEO's of major Fortune 500 companies and others as well nailing down those contracts and Secretary Mickey Kantor now doing the same thing.

We have the Advanced Technology Program, 220 public-private partnerships, joining more than \$1.5 billion of Federal and private funds.

Mr. Speaker, I am urging businesses across the country now to let their Members of Congress know this is not a good idea. You do not pull Michael Jordan in the middle of the game, and you do not pull the Department of Commerce in a time when we are facing increased, not decreased, increased international competition.

I hope the CEO's of those Fortune 500 companies will stand up and say, yes, we do happen to think the Department of Commerce is important, and I hope all those who understand the importance of the Department of Commerce realize the next few weeks are crucial to saving this agency.

#### THE FBI FILE SCANDAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1996, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. EWING] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. EWING. Mr. Speaker, I come here today to talk about a topic which is not new in the press, but I think I would like to talk about it in a little different way. I want to talk about how we are looking at the file scandal that affects our Government.

Many in the press and in this Congress have focused their attention on the actions of the White House staff with regard to the FBI files. They are correct to ask why the White House was rooting through most of this confidential and secretive information about hundreds of private citizens and whether the President's staff was digging for dirt on political opponents.

However, I believe that the media and the Congress are failing to adequately question the role for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in this matter. The FBI has been given tremendous responsibility by this Congress to investigate criminals and guarantee the security of our country. There is no excuse for the FBI to allow the White House staff to request highly confidential files without even asking the White House why they needed them. The FBI handling of this matter appears to me to be very irresponsible and negligent. This Congress needs to seriously question the FBI's role in this whole matter and how the agency would allow this breach of confidentiality.

Mr. Speaker, it really is not any wonder that so many Americans have lost faith with their Government when the most powerful investigative agency can be used to snoop around in the private lives of American people for no apparent reason. And I refer to a recent editorial in the Wall Street Journal which talks about an FBI agent who was, until 2 months ago, the top FBI agent working in the White House, and when he raised questions about the White House personnel security office and its director, Craig Livingstone, this FBI agent was transferred out by his superiors. I think that is a question that needs to be answered by this Congress.