drug use and availability in America in half over the next 10 years—a historic new low. This plan has been developed under the leadership of General Barry McCaffrey, Director of National Drug Control Policy, in close consultation with the Congress, the more than 50 Federal agencies and departments involved in the fight against drugs, the dedicated men and women of law enforcement, and with stakeholders—mayors, doctors, clergy, civic leaders, parents, and young people—drawn from all segments of our society.

I am also proud to report that we have made real and substantial progress in carrying out the goals of the 1997 *Strategy*. Working with the Congress, we have begun the National Anti-Drug Youth Media Campaign. Now when our children turn on the television, surf the ''net,'' or listen to the radio, they can learn the plain truth about drugs: they are wrong, they put your future at risk, and they can kill you. I thank you for your vital support in bringing this important message to America's young people.

Together, we enacted into law the Drug-Free Communities Act of 1997, which will help build and strengthen 14,000 community anti-drug coalitions and brought together civic groups—ranging from the Elks to the Girl Scouts and representing over 55 million Americans—to form a Civic Alliance, targeting youth drug use. By mobilizing people and empowering communities, we are defeating drugs through a child-by-child, street-by-street, and neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach.

We have also helped make our streets and communities safer by strengthening law enforcement. Through my Administration's Community Oriented Police (COPs) program, we are helping put 100,000 more police officers in towns and cities across the Nation. We are taking deadly assault weapons out of the hands of drug dealers and gangs, making our streets safer for our families. We have taken steps to rid our prisons of drugs, as well as to break the vicious cycle of drugs and crime. These efforts are making a difference: violent crime in America has dropped dramatically for 5 years in a row.

Over the last year, the United States and Mexico reached agreement on a mutual *Threat Assessment* that defines the scope of the common threat we face; and, an *Alliance* that commits our great nations to defeating that threat. Soon, we will sign a bilateral *Strategy* that commits both nations to specific actions and performance benchmarks. Our work to enhance cooperation within the hemisphere and worldwide is already showing results. For example, Peruvian coca production has declined by roughly 40 percent over the last 2 years. In 1997, Mexican drug eradication rates reached record levels, and seizures increased nearly 50 percent over 1996.

We are making a difference. Drug use in America has declined by 50 percent over the last decade. For the first time in 6 years, studies show that youth drug use is beginning to stabilize, and in some respects in even declining. And indications are that the methamphetamine and crack cocaine epidemics, which in recent years were sweeping the Nation, have begun to recede.

However, we must not confuse progress with ultimate success. Although youth drug use has started to decline, it remains unacceptably high.

More than ever, we must recommit ourselves to give parents the tools and support they need to teach children that drugs are dangerous and wrong. That is why we must improve the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, and other after school initiatives that help keep our kids in school, off drugs, and out of trouble. We must hire 1,000 new border patrol agents and close the door on drugs at our borders. We must redouble our efforts with other nations to take the profits out of drug dealing and trafficking and break the sources of supply. And we must enact comprehensive bipartisan tobacco legislation that reduces youth smoking. These and other efforts are central elements of the *1998 National Drug Control Strategy*.

With the help of the American public, and the ongoing support of the Congress, we can achieve these goals. In submitting this plan to you, I ask for your continued partnership in defeating drugs in America. Our children and this Nation deserve no less.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *March 3, 1998.*

□ 1730

SPECIAL ORDERS

WETLANDS RESTORATION AND IMPROVEMENT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATHAM). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about our Nation's wetlands and a bill I have introduced to protect and expand these national treasures. I represent a district in eastern North Carolina which includes a majority of the State's coast and 4 major river basins. According to the Federal Government, 65 percent of the area can be classified as wetlands. Clearly wetlands are very important to me and to the citizens of my district.

Eastern North Carolina appreciates the beauty and value of wetlands as much if not more than anybody else. They understand the importance of wetlands to the environment, to water quality and to the life they support. Eastern North Carolinians also want to respect the rights of property owners, and therefore have reached for a balanced approach to protecting our wetlands while allowing landowners to have reasonable use of their properties.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe that the common sense solution we have sought is wetlands mitigation banking. Mitigation banking allows private property owners to pay wetlands experts to mitigate the impact their development will have on wetlands. Those experts, working with regulators, do the mitigation in banks of land which are set aside, restored to wetland status and, most importantly, enhanced.

This concept has been embraced by regulators, developers and the conservation community. It is an improvement upon traditional mitigation, which simply is not working because it is too expensive, time consuming and ineffective. Approximately 90 percent of on-site mitigation is unsuccessful. Mitigation banking, on the other hand, creates complete ecosystems.

Regulators usually require that more wetlands be restored in a bank than are destroyed in a development project. For example, in some parts of the South that ratio is 4 to 1, meaning that 4 acres of land must be restored for each acre that was destroyed. So instead of only trying to protect the remaining wetlands with mitigation banking, we are actually increasing wetlands acreage. What is more, because mitigation banks give economic value to wetlands, potentially billions of private sector dollars could flow into restoring wetlands in sensitive watersheds.

Mitigation banking is already being implemented in several areas throughout our Nation. The problem is there is no statutory authority to guide mitigation bankers. Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker: The problem is there is no statutory authority to guide mitigation bankers. Thus investors are hesitant to supply the money needed without legal certainty.

For this reason, I have introduced the Wetlands Restoration and Improvement Act, H.R. 1290. The legislation, one, requires the bank to meet rigorous financial and legal standards to ensure that wetlands are restored and preserved over the long term; secondly, provides for ample opportunity for meaningful public participation; and, third, ensures that the bank itself has a credible, long-term operation and maintenance plan.

This legislation is the common-sense, balanced approach America needs to protect both our valuable wetlands and the rights of property owners. I hope my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, in the House will look seriously at cosponsoring this legislation.

TOWARD A FAIRER, FLATTER AND SIMPLER TAX SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TIAHRT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, the President is defending the indefensible. President Clinton yesterday described congressional Republican efforts to overhaul the Tax Code and to change

our tax system into one that is more pro-family, one that encourages investment and savings, and one that moves the country in the direction of a fairer, flatter, simpler Tax Code, a fairer, flatter, simpler alternative to the system we have today, he described those plans now pending in Congress as reckless in remarks that the President made yesterday here in Washington to the National Mortgage Bankers Association. In fact, the President went on to say that our approach of phasing out the current income tax system and replacing the current 9,000 page, 5.5 million word Tax Code with a fairer, flatter, simpler alternative, he described that approach yesterday as ''misguided, reckless and irresponsible.''

I read this entire article, and I have searched his remarks trying to find out what the President would propose. If he does not like our alternative, then what would the President counter with? What would he propose as a better alternative to our plans? Or is the President, as it would appear from his remarks, defending the current Tax Code and the current tax system?

It would appear that the President does favor the status quo, that he is, as I said in my opening comments, defending the indefensible. He cannot possibly think that a system that has created, and this has now been well documented in hearings that we have had back here in Washington, a culture of abuse that has led to many collection abuses around the country, he cannot possibly be defending that system, could he? It is a system that has resulted in one newspaper headline after another.

I cited these earlier this morning on the floor under morning business, but since more of our colleagues are present now, I want to share these headlines again. Here is one: The IRS Unveils New Taxpayer Protections to Limit Agents' Ability to Seize Assets. It actually quotes in this article the new Commissioner of the IRS as saying, quote, I am especially troubled about the emphasis placed on collection statistics, otherwise known as quotas, without an equal emphasis on customer service and safeguarding taxpayer rights.

Look at some of these other newspaper headlines: New Audit at IRS Finds Some Agents Focused on Quotas. We are talking about many, many agents in IRS offices around the country. Treasury Chief Vows Action against IRS Quotas. Top Official Offers a Mea Culpa. That is an apology, I guess, for the IRS, for the collection abuses and for a system again that targets individual American taxpayers and sets out quotas, if one can imagine, for IRS collection agents.

We are trying desperately to reform the IRS, as I said earlier today, into an agency that treats taxpayers with the respect and provides them with the service that they deserve. But, instead, the President is throwing up roadblocks in our way, defending the indefensible, standing up for the current system, and using scare tactics to frighten the American people about what would happen if we move the country in the direction of a fairer, flatter, and simpler tax system.

Now we are attempting to initiate a national discussion about either replacing the current income tax with a national sales tax, a tax on consumption, or a flat tax. We believe that is the way to go. Both of these plans would be simpler and fairer than the current code, the system that the President is defending.

I will tell you, I personally object when the President uses language like reckless, misguided, and irrelevant. I will tell you, I will tell the President, I will tell my colleagues who support the President's position on this what Jack Farris said, the President of the National Federation of Independent Business, an organization of small businesses around the country trying to garner one million signatures on a pledge to replace the current tax system and scrap the Tax Code, which would end the IRS as we know it. It is a death sentence for the current Tax Code by the year 2001. Mr. Farris said, in response to the President, what is irrelevant is a 500-million-word Tax Code that is antiwork, antisaving, and antifamily.

One of our former colleagues, now Senator TIM HUTCHINSON from Arkansas, was quoted as saying yesterday, with less than 6 weeks left before Americans must file their tax returns, President Clinton has shown himself to be out of touch with the plight of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, we definitely need to move the country in a direction of a Tax Code and tax system that would change the current disincentive in the system that favors spending and consumption over savings and investment. This comment, this approach of the President of disparaging the free enterprise system is not going to work. We need to revive our Tax Code in order to move the country in a direction of a fairer, simpler system and to maintain our national prosperity.

ENGEL SLAMS BELGRADE'S BLOODY CRACKDOWN IN KOSOVA; CALLS FOR UNITED STATES TO STOP IGNORING THE SITUATION

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, just yesterday there was a brutal crackdown in a region called Kosova, which is home to more than 2,000 ethnic Albanians who live under the oppression of Serb tyranny. The Serbian police came in and summarily started beating and killing ethnic Albanians, more than 20 of whom were murdered in cold blood.

The region of Kosova, which is 90 percent Albanian, I have been there a number of times as chairman of the Albanian Interest Caucus of this House. The people there are truly a people living under oppression. They have no political rights. They have no human rights. They have no economic rights. Unemployment is unbelievable. Day after day after day turns into months; and year after year, there is no improvement on the ground.

The United States cannot, Mr. Speaker, stand idly by and allow Serbian President Milosevic and his henchmen to brutally kill people for no reason. This oppression must stop, and the United States is the only country that has the power to stop it.

I have been calling for a number of years for the appointment of a special envoy from the United States to the region of Kosova. Only if the United States gets involved with the appointment of a special envoy do I believe that progress will be made on the ground in Kosova. This would be very similar to what we have attempted to do in Ireland with Senator Mitchell. And we ought to forthwith appoint a special envoy.

My resolution, H.Con.Res. 205, calls for the appointment of a special envoy and calls for sanctions, strong sanctions to be continued on Serbia until there is improvement in the economic and political and human freedoms in Kosova.

Just last week, Mr. Speaker, our government loosened some of the sanctions imposed on Serbia. It sent the wrong message at the wrong time, and I am sure unwittingly contributed to Mr. Milosevic and his henchmen thinking that they can brutally crack down on the Albanians in Kosova.

It is time now to reimpose those sanctions that we removed just last week. It is time to have new sanctions. It is time to make sure that the outer wall of sanctions is in place, continues to be in place and continues to be expanded, because Serbia cannot practice this kind of oppression and think they can get away with it.

Now in 3 weeks the Albanians in Kosova are scheduled to hold elections. And, again, Mr. Speaker, there is no coincidence that these crackdowns came 3 weeks before the Albanian elections are to be held. This is clearly a blatant attempt to intimidate the Albanians, to try to prevent them from exercising the political freedoms that all of us say that we hold dear.

□ 1745

I have often said that the people of Kosova, 90 percent of whom are ethnic Albanians, have the same right to self-determination that all peoples of the world have; no more, but certainly no less. And they have a right to determine their political future, they have a right to determine their economic future, they have a right to determine all of their future, and they do not have the right to be people under occupation, oppressively, brutally occupied and beaten by the Serb authorities.