

Ohio, Mr. PORTMAN, and his desire to protect tropical rainforests worldwide, I wish to again go on record in strong opposition to H.R. 2870, the Tropical Forest Conservation Act.

As you know, I voiced my opposition to this when it passed the House International Relations Committee by voice vote, and voted "no" again when the House approved it by a vote of 356-61 on March 19, 1998.

Mr. Speaker, my concerns are simple. Foremost is the cost of this legislation. Specifically, the bill wastes more than \$300 million in existing resources over three years to facilitate "debt-for-nature" swaps with foreign countries.

This measure in effect forgives U.S. debts which are unlikely to be repaid fully by less developed countries. In exchange, these countries promise to protect their tropical forests. Common sense tells us a country that claims to lack the financial resources to repay its debts is unlikely to have the financial resources to restore and preserve their rain forests. More importantly, why should America pay another sovereign nation to do what is clearly their responsibility and in their own best interest? This "pay me or I'll shoot myself" scheme makes little sense.

As a businessman who survived the Texas recession in the 1980's and watched our local banks address the difficulty of non-performing loans, my other concern is a basic one: Is this the best and highest return for American loans financed by the hard-earned tax dollars of working families who struggle to make ends meet each month? The answer is no.

Loans made in good faith by United States taxpayers should be repaid in full, or in unique situations worked out for the highest and best return for the dollar. H.R. 2870, while well intentioned, is "feel good" legislation that leaves American taxpayers holding an empty bag and, I predict, will do little to preserve the world's rain forests.

SHARING SOLUTIONS

HON. JIM GIBBONS

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 16, 1998

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, last week, the President invited people to the White House so he could share his concerns on school violence.

Once again, however, I'm afraid the President is headed in the wrong direction.

He has called for a federal manual on school violence—to be created here in Washington, D.C.—and directed at our local teachers, parents, and communities.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Nevadans have a better idea. Recently, we held a "Town Summit on School Violence" in Reno Nevada to gather local input on possible solutions. Local solutions that we would then send back here to Washington, telling the President how we want to solve our own problems.

Like most states, Nevadans are tired of the Washington borne, "Washington knows best," "The Washington way or the highway," attitudes here.

Local problems require local solutions and I commend all Nevadans who supported and participated in this important event.

I would encourage all members to hold similar events throughout their districts and to

share their solutions with us—the safety and future of our children demand no less.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BOB CLEMENT

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 16, 1998

Mr. CLEMENT. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall vote No. 284, I was unavoidable detained on official business. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay."

RECOGNIZING VICTOR WALTERS

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 16, 1998

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements of 8-year-old Victor Walters of Limon, Colorado who was recently named National Second-Grade Handwriting Champion. This is the second consecutive year he has received this national honor. The contest was sponsored by Zaner-Bloser, a manufacturer of pens and publisher of educational handwriting texts. Victor is the son of Ronald and Roberta Walters.

Walters, who received his award and a \$500 savings bond in a surprise ceremony at Limon Elementary School, was able to dash off the winning entry with a handicap. Victor's mother reported that the morning of the contest, his finger felt sore, but he decided to carry a Band-Aid in his backpack rather than wearing it on his hand for fear that it might hinder his writing style.

The penmanship awards won by Limon Elementary School Students have prompted the University of Colorado at Denver to conduct a research project at Limon to look at the link between good penmanship and overall academic performance.

As a Member of Congress representing the Fourth District of Colorado, I am proud of the accomplishments of this young man. Victor Walters has demonstrated his commitment to excellence and I congratulate him on his success.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby submit for the RECORD a copy of an article about Victor which recently appeared in the Denver Post.

BOY HANGS TOUGH, NAILS DOWN 2ND
HANDWRITING WIN
(By Nancy Lofholm)

Not even a hangnail can stop a national handwriting champ.

Victor Walters, an 8-year-old from Limon, once again topped 125,000 other penmanship pupils across the country and was named National Second-Grade Handwriting Champion today. The contest was sponsored by Zaner-Bloser, a manufacturer of pens and publisher of educational handwriting texts.

Walters, who will receive his award and a \$500 savings bond in a surprise ceremony at Limon Elementary School this morning, was able to dash off the winning entry with a handicap.

His mother, Roberta Walters, said he had a sore finger the morning of the competition and was afraid he wouldn't be able to write

well. He opted to carry a Band-Aid in his backpack rather than putting it on his finger, where it might hinder his writing style.

"He was worried, but when he came home he was real excited. He knew he did real well that day," said Walters. "He didn't have to erase very often."

What he didn't know until this morning was that he had won the award for the second year in a row. His parents and teachers in the Eastern Plains town of 2,500 wanted to keep the award under wraps until Victor could be honored in front of his 350 fellow students.

"He's been real antsy waiting to hear," said his dad, Ronald Walters.

Ronald, a case manager at the state correctional facility in Limon, said his son's talent—one he doesn't believe was inherited—has affected his own on-the-job script.

"My writing's not too good," Ronald said. "I find myself scribbling, and I think of my son and try to bring myself back into line again."

Victor's back-to-back achievements, as well as Limon student Bethany Head's win at the state level in her first-grade class three years ago, have also affected the school.

Principal Valerie Bass said the University of Colorado at Denver will be doing a research project at Limon to look at the link between good penmanship and overall academic performance. "We're very proud. A lot of our students have good penmanship," Bass said.

Someday, Victor may be doing his bit to carry on that tradition. He wants to be a teacher. His parents said he plays school every day with his 5-year-old sister, Ashley, and penmanship is one of the favorite play-school subjects.

Zaner-Bloser gives out the penmanship awards annually to promote good penmanship and also to publicize the pitfalls of messy writing. The company has compiled statistics showing that 38 million letters go undelivered annually because of illegible addresses, 58 percent of information on hospital charts is illegible and 66 percent of teachers say schools should place a higher priority on handwriting.

PATIENT PROTECTION ACT

HON. DAVID L. HOBSON

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 16, 1998

Mr. HOBSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the House Republican Health Care Proposal, the Patient Protection Act. I believe this bill strikes a good balance between protecting patient rights without the heavy hand of big government. I am excited about many of the large protections in this bill, like giving patients a better and quicker appeal process when the HMO denies their claim, lifting any gag orders on physicians to ensure that patients are better informed, and providing greater access to specialists for women and children. I am equally excited about how this bill addresses the frustrating problems that upset so many people about their HMOs.

I am sure that many of you are like me in that every week I get a letter or call from someone upset because the HMO decides that the plan will no longer cover a specific prescription drug. Our bill will require HMOs to give at least 30 days notice before the HMO can remove a drug from the coverage list. These 30 days are essential in the care of the