Taiwan's membership in the World Trade Organization.

There has been much talk in recent weeks about the conclusion of a WTO accession agreement with China. I think we would all welcome a solid commitment by China to open its economy to fair trade and investment, but if such an agreement is not forthcoming, I think we should no longer hesitate to conclude an agreement with Taiwan. From all reports, Taiwan is just sentences away from completing the requirements for a WTO accession agreement with the United States. We should move rapidly to dot the ''I's'' and cross the ''t's'' for concluding the agreement and then press the other states to admit Taiwan even if China is not yet ready. If China does not want to be part of the international trading community, that is China's problem. It is not Taiwan's! And China should not be allowed to prevent Taiwan's entry into the WTO.

Just as it made no sense for the United States to pretend that China did not exist during the Cold War, it is equal nonsense to pretend that Taiwan does not exist in the post Cold War period.

As a senior member of the House International Relations Committee and as a Member on the Asia and Pacific Subcommittee, I promise to do everything I can to see that Taiwan and the Taiwanese people are not forgotten by the international community.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the legislation before the House, which commemorates the 20th anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) while reaffirming the strong commitment of the United States to provide for the legitimate defense needs of Taiwan under the TRA.

I commend the author of the resolution, the gentleman from New York, Mr. GILMAN, Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, and the Democratic Ranking Member, Mr. GEJDENSON, for moving this important resolution to the floor. I also recognize the Chairman and Democratic Ranking Member of the House International Relations Subcommittee on Asia-Pacific Affairs, Mr. BEREUTER and Mr. LANTOS, as well as Mr. ROHRABACHER, for their substantial contributions to formulation of the resolution. I am honored to join my colleagues on the House International Relations Committee as a co-sponsor in support of House Concurrent Resolution 56.

Mr. Speaker, the United States has had a long, close and enduring relationship with Taiwan dating back to the end of World War II. With our support, Taiwan has risen from the region's ruins of war to become one of the world's strongest economies and most vibrant democracies in Asia.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the people of Taiwan must be congratulated for the outstanding accomplishments of their thriving and prosperous democracy of 22 million people. All Americans should take pride in and share the achievements of our close friends.

At the heart of the relationship between Taiwan and the United States is the Taiwan Relations Act, which for two decades has laid the foundation for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

When the security of our friends in Taiwan was threatened by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Spring of 1996, I supported the Clinton Administration in sending the Nimitz and Independence carrier groups to the Taiwan Strait to maintain peace. China's missile tests and threatened use of force contravened the PRC's commitments under the 1979 and 1982 Joint Communiques to resolve Taiwan's status by peaceful means. The Joint Communiques, in concert with the Taiwan Relations Act, lay the framework for our ''One China'' policy, which fundamentally stresses that force shall not be used in resolution of the Taiwan question. It is clearly in the interests of the United States and all parties that the obligation continues to be honored.

Today, reports indicate that China has between 150 to 200 M–9 and M–11 ballistic missiles in its southern regions facing Taiwan, and has protested U.S. efforts assisting Taiwan's defense as a violation of China's sovereignty. To pre-empt any Theater Missile Defense (TMD) that might be deployed in the future, China is expected to increase these missile batteries to over 650.

Mr. Speaker, I find this situation unfortunate and ironic, as China has legitimate sovereignty interests to preserve with Taiwan, yet is providing the very justification for U.S. defensive intervention under the Taiwan Relations Act. If China truly desires to stop Taiwan from being included in plans for a U.S. Theater Missile Defense system for the Asia-Pacific region, then it should take immediate steps to defuse the crisis by scaling back its present deployment of ballistic missiles facing Taiwan, resuming the Cross-Strait Dialogue between Beijing and Taipei, and exerting influence with North Korea to curb development and proliferation of long-range missile technology.

Mr. Speaker, in citing in part to the Taiwan issue, there is growing sentiment in Washington bent on portraying China as the major enemy of and security threat to the United States. I do not support this view, as it is unnecessarily alarmist and runs the risk of poisoning our longterm relationship with the PRC while undercutting our mission to integrate China as a responsible member of the international community.

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the United States has demonstrated in recent years that the use of force by China against Taiwan will not be tolerated. The legislation before us reaffirms that fact, and the central role that the Taiwan Relations Act has played and will continue to play in ensuring U.S. commitment that Taiwan's status will be resolved peacefully by the governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge our colleagues to support the resolution before us.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 56, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 56.

The question was taken.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

CONCERNING ANTI-SEMITIC STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE DUMA OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 37) concerning anti-Semitic statements made by members of the Duma of the Russian Federation, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 37

Whereas the world has seen in the 20th century the disastrous results of ethnic, religious, and racial intolerance;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation is on record, through obligations freely accepted as a participating state of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as pledging to ''clearly and equivocally condemn totalitarianism, racial and ethnic hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone . . .'';

Whereas at two public rallies in October 1998, Communist Party member of the Duma, Albert Makashov, blamed ''the Yids'' for Russia's current problems;

Whereas in November 1998, attempts by members of the Russian Duma to formally censure Albert Makashov were blocked by members of the Communist Party;

Whereas in December 1998, the chairman of the Duma Security Committee and Communist Party member, Viktor Ilyukhin, blamed President Yeltsin's ''Jewish entourage'' for alleged ''genocide against the Russian people'';

Whereas in response to the public outcry over the above-noted anti-Semitic statements, Communist Party chairman Gennadi Zyuganov claimed in December 1998 that such statements were a result of ''confusion'' between Zionism and ''the Jewish question''; and

Whereas during the Soviet era, the Communist Party leadership regularly used ''anti-Zionist campaigns'' as an excuse to persecute and discriminate against Jews in the Soviet Union: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) condemns anti-Semitic statements made by members of the Russian Duma;

(2) commends actions taken by members of the Russian Duma to condemn anti-Semitic statements made by Duma members;

(3) commends President Yeltsin and other members of the Russian Government for condemning anti-Semitic statements made by Duma members; and

(4) reiterates its firm belief that peace and justice cannot be achieved as long as governments and legislatures promote policies based upon anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

(Mr. SMITH of New Jersey asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 37.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H. Con. Res. 37 condemns anti-Semitic statements made by members of the Russian Duma and commends actions taken by fair-minded members of the Duma to censure the purveyors of anti-Semitism within their ranks. H. Con. Res. 37 further commends President Yeltsin and other members of the Russian Government for their rejection of such statements.

Finally, this resolution reiterates the firm belief of the Congress that peace and justice cannot be achieved as long as governments and legislatures promote policies or let stand destructive remarks based on anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia.

Mr. Speaker, with the fall of the ruble last August and the associated economic problems in Russia, there has been a disturbing rise in anti-Semitic statements by high Russian political figures. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism has always had a certain following in Russia; and it would be disingenuous of us to suggest that there is no anti-Semitism in the United States or other parts of the world. But I believe we cannot remain silent when members of the national legislature of Russia, a participating state of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, should state at a Duma hearing, as did the chairman of the Duma Security Committee, Mr. Ilyukhin, that Russian President Yeltsin's ''Jewish entourage'' is responsible for alleged genocide against the Russian people.

It is an affront to human decency that Duma member and retired General Albert Makashov, speaking twice in November 1998 at public rallies, should refer to ''the Yids'' and other ''reformers and democrats'' as responsible for Russia's problems and threaten to make a list and ''send them to the other world.''

Mr. Speaker, this man, and I have seen a tape recording of him, as a matter of fact I played it at a Helsinki Commission hearing that I chaired last January, has said, ''We will remain anti-Semites and we must triumph.'' These are dangerous, hate-filled sentiments.

Mr. Speaker, it should be noted and clearly stated that President Yeltsin and his government have condemned anti-Semitism and other expressions of ethnic and religious hatred.

□ 1445

There have been attempts in the Duma to censure anti-Semitic statements and those who utter them. However, the Duma is controlled, as we all know, by the Communist Party, where anti-Semitic statements are either supported, or at least tolerated, and these attempts to censure have failed. So we must go on the record and censure.

In fact, Communist Party Chairman Zyuganov has tried to rationalize anti-Semitic statements by fellow party members. He explains that the party has nothing against Jews, just Zionism. He has also stated that there will be no more anti-Semitic statements by General Makashov. But this is the same Mr. Zyuganov who has asserted that, and I quote, ''too many people with strange-sounding family names mingle in the internal affairs of Russia.'' And this is the party that claims to inherit that internationalist mantle of the old Communist Party.

Mr. Speaker, on January 15 of this year, I chaired a Helsinki Commission hearing regarding human rights in Russia, at which time we heard testimony by Lyuda Alexeeva, a former Soviet dissident and chairperson of the Moscow Helsinki Group. She testified that the Russian people themselves are not anti-Semitic but that the Communist Party is tolerating this crude attitude among its ranks. She called upon parliamentarians throughout the world to protest in no uncertain terms the position of the Communist Party and its anti-Semitic leaders. Let us make that a priority for us today, to censure, to speak out so that the democratic forces in Russia, the decent people who are trying to create a civil society in Russia, are not silenced by these demagogues of hate.

I urge strong support for this resolution. We must go on record.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 37.

First, Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate my good friend from New Jersey who has taken the initiative in submitting this most important resolution, and let me identify myself with every single one of his comments.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, the United States is considering the possibility of taking military action in Kosovo which ultimately would be the result of racial, ethnic and religious hatreds. In this century, we have seen too many expressions of extreme racial, religious and ethnic statements leading to actions of persecution and discrimination and ultimately to genocide not to be painfully aware of the significance of statements of hate and violence being uttered in halls of parliament. We clearly cannot ignore the anti-Semitic statements emanating from some quarters of the Russian Duma.

Words are powerful, Mr. Speaker, and they have consequences. They can incite action. Words are usually the first step in a chain of events leading ultimately to genocide. The words that we have heard from some Duma members should outrage every civilized person in this country and elsewhere.

Our action must be to condemn such outrageous statements as our resolution does. But our resolution should also commend those in Russia, including President Yeltsin and some members of the Duma, who have spoken out against statements of hate.

I might mention parenthetically, Mr. Speaker, that one of the most courageous human rights advocates of the Duma, a courageous woman parliamentarian, was killed in cold blood in her apartment house just because she has spoken out against incitement to hatred and murder.

As Russia struggles through a very difficult economic period, Russian leaders must be particularly cautious and careful not to promote scapegoating in their society. It is, therefore, very heartening that some Russian leaders, particularly President Yeltsin, have spoken out against incitement to hatred, persecution and ultimately murder. It shows that there are some Russian leaders who clearly recognize that racism and anti-Semitism have no place in the modern Russian society.

This issue, Mr. Speaker, is very high on the agenda of our administration. Secretary Albright raised the matter during her recent trip to Moscow, and in a few hours when Vice President Gore will be meeting with Prime Minister Primakov, who is about to land, he will raise this issue as one of the most important issues of their upcoming discussions.

I strongly urge all of my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 37.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I want to thank my good friend for his kind comments. This is another one of those vitally important human rights issues where we—Democrat, Republican, conservative, moderate and liberal—are speaking with one voice. Our friends in the Duma and other freedom-loving people need to know that, that we speak out boldly and forcefully against anti-Semitism.

The gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) remembers in the last Congress I chaired a hearing in our subcommittee on the alarming rising tide of anti-Semitism in Russia. Even then we saw the disturbing signs that anti-Semitism was bad and getting worse. It has become even worse than that in the last few months. We need to speak out very, very forcefully. I want to thank him for his great comments.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER).

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to strongly support this resolution and to send a message that public officials making anti-Semitic statements, whether it is in Russia or anywhere else, is unacceptable and it is something that we are noting here in the United States and we will take action on these types of violations.

We do not take public expressions of anti-Semitism, of hatemongering of

this kind, lightly. Anti-Semitism, as all ethnic-based hatred, is an ugly threat that cannot be ignored, and if we ignore it, we do so to our own jeopardy. The fact is, anti-Semitism and this type of hate rhetoric has gotten out of hand in the past and it could get out of hand in the future if in any way the civilized world refuses to take the actions that are necessary to make sure that we quarantine it, that we eliminate it, and that we condemn it with all of our strength.

I commend the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for providing leadership on this issue. These type of strong messages are heard. For the record, let me say a strong message certainly is important, but for the record I believe that we should warn Russia and others that we will not deal with those racist and anti-Semitic officials in Russia or anywhere else. For the record, I would suggest that the American ambassador should warn those public officials concerned that if those anti-Semitic statements do not end, there will be some action taken by the United States, and that if they repeat these anti-Semitic statements, perhaps the American ambassador should act to ensure that these public officials not receive any visas to the United States. I will put this on the record, that if indeed we hear more anti-Semitic statements coming out of public officials in Russia, or, I might add, anywhere else in the world, I will be happy to work with the gentleman from New Jersey and the gentleman from California to put in a law that requires our ambassadors to deny visas to anyone who has made an anti-Semitic statement after being warned that it is unacceptable.

The good people of Russia will be strengthened by our message today. We need to make sure that those good people know that we are not blaming them and that we want to work with them to make sure that the evil elements in their society do not get the upper hand. There is a good way to determine who an evil element is in a society. Certainly it is easy to tell when you see those are the people who are making anti-Semitic and racist and hate-filled remarks and trying to build animosity from one group to another based on their race, their religion or their ethnic background. If Russia is to be part of the civilized world, then anti-Semitism cannot be part of the public officials' dialog in that country. If Russia wants to be part of the western democracies and wants to build their country into an economic partner with the rest of the world, wants us to cooperate with them, they have got to earn our respect. We in this country do not respect anyone that permits this type of hatred to be uttered by public officials.

With that said, I stand in strong support of this resolution and add my voice to those of the gentleman from California and the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his very eloquent statement and for reminding us that there is no welcome mat for purveyors of hate in this country. We will take him up on that. I think it is a very valid suggestion, I say to my friend.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I am proud that this Congress today has decided not to overlook the anti-Semitic statements made by members of the Russian Duma. Anti-Semitism is on the rise in Russia. The resolution we are considering today demonstrates our concern and our commitment to stop this trend.

For the people of my district, there is no option. Many are survivors or the descendants of those who survived an era filled with events that we must never allow to be repeated.

The recent surge of anti-Semitism in Russia is dangerously reminiscent of pre-Nazi Germany.

While we are condemning words spoken by Russian Duma members, we need to remember the effect just words have had in the past.

The anti-Semitic statements from the members of the Russian Duma scare me. They remind me of how easy it can be for history to repeat itself.

We need to act now to condemn these statements, to ensure that this country and the world never forget and never allow hateful words to lead to hateful deeds.

This resolution also commends President Yeltsin and other Russian Duma members, who have spoken out against these racist statements.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the gentleman from New Jersey's resolution in brining attention to anti-Semitic comments by members of the Russian Duma and condemning these comments.

A deeply disturbing situation is currently unfolding throughout Russia. Anti-Semitism is at all levels of Russian society. The rise in the neo-Nazi movement activity; anti-Semitic material readily available on the streets; the right wing party blaming the Jewish Community for the current economic crisis are all eerily reminiscent of earlier, horrific times. Such rhetoric propagating ethnic hatred must be stopped.

This anti-Semitic reign of terror is occurring in communities across Russia. Jews in towns such as Borovichi and Krasnodar have to watch television adds urging citizens to ''take up arms and kill at least one Jew a day,'' walk past posters that read ''Jews are garbage'' and receive letters threatening them with death if they do not leave Russia. All the while, the local law officials request that the matter be disregarded.

Unfortunately, these actions are not limited to small communities. In Moscow this winter, the ultra-nationalist Russia National Unity Party (RNU) held a demonstration in the streets with the group dressing in their militant-style uniforms armed with swastika bands. The RNU boasts 50,000 members located in twenty-four regions of Russia.

These actions and statements of racial hatred are even more difficult to stem when they are being encouraged by people at the highest level of the Russian government. Not only has General Albert Makashov blamed the current economic crisis on the Jews, he advocates establishing a quota for the number of Jews allowed in Russia. The Duma has failed to censure General Makashov for his comments calling for the death of Jews and the Communist party fails to condemn or discipline him in any way.

President Boris Yeltsin has condemned General Makashov and others who have made similar comments, and for that I applaud him. Peace and justice will not reign in the world until governments at all levels stand up against policies and practices promoting anti-Semitism and racism. We in Congress must not allow the current efforts attempting to weaken religious freedoms in Russia to succeed at any level.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, House Concurrent Resolution 37 is an important statement on an important issue.

On this very day, Russian Prime Minister Yevgenii Primakov is scheduled to be arriving in Washington for official meetings here.

Unfortunately, back home in his native Russia, a virulent, ugly anti-Semitism is on the rise.

Let me simply refer to the statements made by two members of the Russian parliament—both of whom are members of the Russian Communist Party.

These specific statements are the reason why this House is considering this resolution today.

First, in October, Russia parliament member Albert Makashov said that the Jews in Russia should be rounded up and: ''sent to the grave.''

Makashov then went on to say in February that Russian Jews were:

> so bold, so impudent, because we're sleeping. . . . It's because none of us has yet knocked on their doors or _____—I will omit the word here out of courtesy to all those in attendance—on their windows. That's why they're such snakes and acting so bold.

Second, in December, Viktor Ilyukhin, another Communist member of parliament and, in fact, Chairman of its Security Committee, stated that the Jews were responsible for a ''genocide'' of the Russian people and that:

> the large-scale genocide would not have been possible if Yeltsin's entourage and the country's previous governments had consisted mainly of members of the indigenous peoples rather than members of the Jewish nation alone.

The leader of the Russian Communist Party, Gennady Zyuganov, refused to stand up to this flagrant anti-Semitism in his party's ranks, and instead tried to blame ''haters of Russia'' for ''trying hard to force the so-called Jewish Question on us.''

Last week, I sent letters to Secretary of State Albright and Russian Prime Minister Primakov—and I joined with other Members of Congress in a letter to Vice President GORE—stating my strong concern over such statements and over the vandalism done earlier this month to a synagogue in Novosibirsk in Russia.

The enactment of this concurrent resolution would be an important, further step in demonstrating the Congress' concern.

I believe it would be helpful to all those put at risk in Russia by this anti-Semitism if the House today were to pass this resolution and send a clear message of our concern to Russian Prime Minister Primakov during his scheduled visit here.

I support the measure and commend our colleague, Congressman SMITH, for sponsoring it.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my friend from California.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 37, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

REPORT ON HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 68, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET—FISCAL YEAR 2000

Mr. SHAYS (during consideration of House Concurrent Resolution 37) from the Committee on the Budget, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106–73) on the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 68) establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2000 and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for each of fiscal years 2001 through 2009, which was referred to the Union Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PROTECTING PRODUCERS WHO APPLIED FOR CROP REVENUE COVERAGE PLUS SUPPLEMENTAL ENDORSEMENT FOR 1999 CROP YEAR

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1212) to protect producers of agricultural commodities who applied for a Crop Revenue Coverage PLUS supplemental endorsement for the 1999 crop year, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1212

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. CROP INSURANCE OPTIONS FOR PRODUCERS WHO APPLIED FOR CROP REVENUE COVERAGE PLUS.

(a) ELIGIBLE PRODUCERS.—This section applies with respect to a producer eligible for insurance under the Federal Crop Insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1501 et seq.) who applied for the supplemental crop insurance endorsement known as Crop Revenue Coverage PLUS (referred to in this section as ''CRCPLUS'') for the 1999 crop year for a spring-planted agricultural commodity.

(b) ADDITIONAL PERIOD FOR OBTAINING OR TRANSFERRING COVERAGE.—Notwithstanding the sales closing date for obtaining crop insurance coverage established under section 508(f)(2) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1508(f)(2)) and notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation shall provide a 14-day period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act, but not to extend beyond April 12, 1999, during which a producer described in subsection (a) may—

(1) obtain from any approved insurance provider a level of coverage for the agricultural commodity for which the producer applied for the CRCPLUS endorsement that is equivalent to or less than the level of federally reinsured coverage that the producer applied for from the insurance provider that offered the CRCPLUS endorsement; and

(2) transfer to any approved insurance provider any federally reinsured coverage provided for other agricultural commodities of the producer by the same insurance provider that offered the CRCPLUS endorsement, as determined by the Corporation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST).

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer a bill, H.R. 1212, with an amendment. This bill's timely passage is critical to thousands of American farmers who may otherwise be unable to buy appropriate levels of insurance on their 1999 crops. The amendment to the bill is noncontroversial and technical in nature.

Importantly, H.R. 1212, as amended, enjoys bipartisan support in the Congress, the administration's backing and does not cost the U.S. Treasury any money. I am pleased to be joined by the committee's ranking member, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM); chairman of the Subcommittee on Risk Management, Research, and Specialty Crops, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EWING); the gentleman from California (Mr. CONDIT); the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY); the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. COOKSEY); and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHN) in offering this legislation.

The facts surrounding the need for this bill are complicated. But, in short, unless H.R. 1212 becomes law, thousands of farmers, by no fault of their own, will be left with three undesirable choices, staying with crop insurance policies that may not be economical for their operations, accepting catastrophic crop insurance that provides very low coverage, or settling for no crop insurance at all.

Mr. Speaker, leaving farmers in this predicament is unacceptable. That is why I am offering H.R. 1212. H.R. 1212 is straightforward. It provides a brief window of time up until April 12, 1999, in which farmers who are in this predicament may buy new crop insurance. The bill also permits affected farmers to transfer certain policies during the same period of time. The bill in no way interferes with private contracts.

While this bill is limited to providing immediate relief from a current problem, I want to assure my colleagues that the committee expects to thoroughly examine the underlying issues that led to this problem as we work to improve the crop insurance program for this year.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to support H.R. 1212, as amended, and urge its timely passage.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support for House passage of H.R. 1212. I want to commend my colleague from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) for all of the work he has done on this legislation. The bill offers a no-cost solution to a problem created by the interaction between Federal crop insurance and the private insurance industry.

Mr. Speaker, crop insurance law and regulations provide definitive dates for the sale or cancellation of crop insurance policies. The deadlines help to protect the taxpayer from costs associated with adverse selection. Without firm deadlines, producers could wait until the growing season has commenced, make an assessment as to their likelihood of harvesting a good crop, and then those who had a good crop would decline crop insurance and those likely to have a loss purchase it. Sales closing dates help prevent bad insurance outcomes and excessive taxpayer cost at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, this year many producers purchased a Federal crop insurance policy known as Crop Revenue Coverage, CRC, based on the belief that a related policy known as CRCPlus would be available under certain terms. The CRCPlus enhancement policy, while it modifies a producer's insurance coverage, is not approved, not backed and not regulated by the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, after the Federal deadline for sale or cancellation for the Federal CRC policy passed in many areas, the company offering CRCPlus made an announcement that the terms of the policy would be changed from what many producers had applied for. Since some producers purchased their Federal CRC policies so that they could take advantage of CRCPlus, under the initial terms they have ended up with insurance outcomes that differ from their intentions.

Mr. Speaker, the bill before us would allow any producer who had applied for a CRCPlus policy to change their coverage under the Federal crop insurance program. In order to guard against costs associated with adverse selection, the bill provides that a producer may only change to a federally-backed policy that provides equivalent or lower coverage. In addition, the bill provides a date certain after which these changes could no longer be made. With these provisions CBO estimates that the bill will not increase program cost.

Mr. Speaker, this bill provides a fair opportunity for producers to make adjustments to changes and circumstances which were beyond their