

strategic plan, and has not established values, goals, expectations, and performance measurements."

We must continue to bring attention to the documented environmental health disparities suffered by low-income and minority communities throughout the country, raising awareness so that together we might seek solutions. I call upon the Office of Environmental Justice Strategy to make this issue a priority as it was designed to do more than 10 years ago.

This is a very real threat for my constituents. The EPA has announced that the entire State of New Jersey is officially designated as out of compliance with the agency's health-based standard for ozone. The entire State is out of attainment for smog, and all counties that are monitored for soot levels are also out of attainment.

Studies have shown that New Jersey's air pollution levels cause 2,000 premature deaths every year. At this rate, pollution ranks as the 3rd most serious public health threat in my State. Only smoking and obesity kill more New Jerseyans each year.

In addition, child asthma rates are on the rise—especially in our cities—and the threat of mercury pollution puts all of us at risk, but most especially infants, children, and pregnant women.

The Bush Administration's efforts to weaken protections established under the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts have compromised the long fought-for protections we have won since the Inaugural Earth Day back in 1970. We must stand firm in our objections to environmental policy that favors industry at the expense of nature and public health, and we must oppose irresponsible legislation, such as Clear Skies, that claim to protect the environment even while it is attempting to degrade it.

As we celebrate Earth Day, I hope that all of us can pledge to do more than just talk about these issues and to commit to act in support of those things which we speak about so passionately today. We must dedicate ourselves to full enforcement of the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. We must rid our lakes, rivers, and streams of dangerous mercury pollution to ensure the safety of all Americans. We must oppose any more delays and restore full funding to the clean-up of toxic waste sites that threaten the health and safety of our Nations children. We must take seriously the threat of pollution to public health and act to alleviate the suffering of the urban minority and low-income populations, as well as the 5 million American children who now suffer from asthma.

These are big goals, but the stakes could not be higher. We must protect our precious natural resources and the health and safety of all Americans, especially urban, minority, and low-income populations who bear the brunt of our failure to do so.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here this evening to continue the discussion of Social Security, what it is, where it is, what we think the problems with it might be, and what some of the solutions might be. I know some of my colleagues have been in a discussion on this important program for the last hour or so, and they plan to join me shortly.

I would like to start by laying out for my colleagues the history of Social Security, what it was, what it has done for Americans, and where it is today.

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Social Security, as most Americans know, has been a terrific institution that generations of Americans have relied on. It is a system that I think most of us would agree has to be preserved and protected for our children and our grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, my 84-year-old mother has been drawing Social Security, and she is at that point where it is her sole source of income. She relies on it very heavily as do millions of senior citizens, and we certainly want to make sure that all of those senior citizens get every dime that they are expecting to come their way. But we also need to make sure that our children, and my children are in their thirties, it seems every day they age another year, an indication of how old I am getting and how rapidly, my children are in their thirties and their children, my four wonderful grandchildren, are 6, 5, 3 and 3. We need to make sure that as we look forward to the future of Social Security that it is there for our grandchildren as well.

I think most Americans, but not all, and most of my colleagues know that Social Security does much more than provide for a retirement, for assistance in retirement. It provides spousal benefits, survivor benefits, dependent benefits, and disability benefits. I believe that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle would like to make sure that those benefits, that that security, that that safety net continues into the future for our children and our grandchildren.

Social Security has traditionally functioned as a pay-as-you-go system. When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt brought us Social Security back in 1935, it was a contributory social insurance program. What does that mean? That means that workers put in and workers receive benefits. All workers pay in; all workers receive benefits. It really was not designed as an investment program. It was not designed to do anything other than provide some

insurance for you when you reached your retirement years. We have paid for it by taking taxes from the wage earner. When President Roosevelt started the program, we took 1 percent from the employee and 1 percent from the employer. Two percent of the first \$3,000 earned was taken up in Social Security taxes to pay for the benefits of current and future retirees. Today's workers support today's retirees through a 12.4 percent tax, one dollar in every eight, half of it paid by the employer, half of it paid by the employee, on the first \$90,000 they earn each year. What a difference, 2 percent to 12.4 percent. Two dollars in 100 to one dollar in eight. The program has changed.

It has changed in another fundamental way that I think that all of us, Mr. Speaker, need to be aware of. As late as 1950, and I will refer to the chart here beside me, there were 16 American workers paying for every one beneficiary. Today, we are down to 3.3 Americans working and paying taxes for every beneficiary. Again, what a demographic change in America, a demographic change in the United States, for many reasons, life expectancies are longer, and that is a good thing, we are living longer, healthier lives, families are smaller, and that trend continues. So by 2035, 2040, when younger workers retire, we will have only two Americans working for every retiree. That is a pretty tough load for younger workers to shoulder.

What does that mean in terms of money in the program? As I think most Americans know, we have been taking in those taxes, we have been paying out benefits and taking the excess money and putting it into a trust fund. I am going to get to that trust fund and talk about it in just a minute. But we need to also be aware, I think it is important for us to understand in the current system how benefits are calculated, because as we look to ways that we might need to strengthen Social Security, we need to understand the current system; and I would like to take just a minute to talk about how that works.

The Social Security Administration looks at every working American's working life, all the years that they have worked. So if you, like me and many Americans, you started off working with a paying job in the grocery store or maybe the newspaper or something when you were 16 or 15 and you work until your full retirement age, which by the time younger workers retire under the current system is not 65 anymore, it is 67, you could have been working and paying Social Security taxes for 50 years. The Social Security Administration takes those 50 years and they take your most productive, your highest paid 35 years, and they put it into a formula and, like everything these days, they do not sit down with a hand calculator, there is a computer that has a formula that actually weights the system so that you get a