

on the line to insist that his government try to make more cooperative pragmatic relations with the United States.

At the time, I wondered why somebody would spend so much political capital to be pro-American, until I also realized that the references he always gave when he was speaking about America were to his experiences in the 1950s as a foreign exchange student in Clinton, Iowa. I also realized his experiences with real American families gave him an insight and friendship that no one can ever gain by watching America as purported by television and the movies.

As I traveled that year as well as last year to Germany, I realized that those places in Germany that are extremely pro-American are those where they have the greatest contact with Americans. And in like manner, where anti-American attitude develops and proliferates is in those areas that have the least amount of contact, which may be one of the reasons why the Ambassador from the United States at that particular time was undertaking a prolonged and expensive initiative to try to increase the contact between Americans and Germans, especially Germans of school age. Such contacts, he thought, were the only way to improve Americans' image abroad and mitigate anti-American attitudes where they may be growing in the future.

In fact, I found one constituent, who did not know my interest in this area, who wrote me. Martha, from Park City said, "At a time when youth in strategic parts of the world such as the Middle East are confronted with dangerous cultural misunderstandings about the United States, youth exchange programs are uniquely suited to allow young people to experience an America unfiltered by Hollywood. These exchange participants frequently take home an understanding and often appreciation for America's people, society, and values."

She is right on. Every year we have the opportunity of sending 30,000 ambassadors out into the world. And for 19 years, the host families of those 30,000 potential ambassadors have been receiving a tax deduction of \$50, which is nice. But that is why I am happy to have joined with the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) and nine others to sponsor H.R. 1504, which will change that \$50 to \$200. That is not enough to cover the expense of host families, but it is enough to encourage families to open their doors so that more kids can have the opportunity to experience an American way of life, which may indeed be the smartest foreign policy decision we could possibly make.

With America and America's way of life under constant attack, both literally and rhetorically, it would be wise to do everything we could to encourage students of the world to experience what this country has to offer, return home, and then watch that influence tend to grow.

If our image abroad is important to the spreading of democracy and to the defeat of terrorism, and I think it is, it is good to get the good kids of the world with those good families in America. And the payoff will be improved foreign policy options and relations 10 and 20 years from now. Such an investment would be wise.

I would urge my colleagues to look at the details of H.R. 1504 and join us in planting seeds that can be reaped to the benefit of American foreign policy in the future.

#### TRIBUTE TO ROGER A. NICKERSON

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

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pay tribute and honor a great American patriot, Roger Nickerson, my uncle, who passed away last Monday. Roger Nickerson embodied all that is good and decent about America. He loved our country, and he served it with honor and distinction for 30 years in the United States Navy, both in Active and Reserve status. He retired as a Master Chief, with many medals and accomplishments.

The Chief, as many of us liked to call him, then worked for the INS for 7 years before retiring with his wife Rosemary to Stoddard, Wisconsin, where he converted an old one-room schoolhouse into their beautiful home.

He was truly a Renaissance man, capable of doing anything with his hands, and with a high standard for perfection. If anyone can be described as the strong silent type, it was the Chief. He had the looks of Robert Redford and the coolness of Clint Eastwood. In short, he was a great role model for those of us who knew him.

But as much as he loved his country and was proud of his service, he loved his family even more. He was a terrific husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, and friend. There was nothing he would not do for family and friends. And if there is such a thing, as I believe there is, as a lifelong soul mate, the Chief found her in his wife Rosemary. They met at an early age and their commitment blossomed into a lifelong adventure, taking them and their kids to new destinations every few years due to his military service.

His greatest source of pride was his children, Randy, Robin, Rhonda, Robbie, and his many grandchildren. I know the good Lord does not produce too many Roger Nickersons in this world. All of us who knew him feel blessed and fortunate to have had him in our lives. Now he has found his peace and comfort by rejoining his youngest son, Robert, in the presence of our Lord, where they will wait for the rest of us to join them. May God bless them and keep them in his care.

Roger Nickerson, the Chief, was loved by many and will be missed. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted the rest of our

Nation to know a little bit about this great American patriot here tonight.

#### FREE ACT TO RESPOND TO PRICE GOUGING

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

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Americans are pulling together, donating to relief organizations and giving their time to help the people of the gulf coast recover. That is how American people react when they see their fellow citizens in need. Unfortunately, some people have looked at Hurricane Katrina not as a chance to give but as an opportunity to profit. Some have decided to take advantage of this terrible tragedy and line their own pockets by price gouging the American people at the gas pump and in the energy needs they will experience this winter in order to heat their home and their place of employment.

At a time when Americans are choosing between filling their gas tanks or filling their prescriptions or providing for their families, oil companies are reaping record profits. People are rightly angry and frustrated with these high gas prices, and they deserve to have someone on their side fighting to ensure that they do not get mugged at the gas pump. Sadly, the administration's answer has been to sit on their hands while consumers get the shake-down from the oil companies.

Today, we learn that eight Governors, including Michigan's Governor Granholm, sent a letter to the President and the Senate and the House leadership urging Congress to act immediately by putting forth legislation that would return excessive, unconscionably collected profits to the consumers. The letter, which was signed by Governor James Doyle of Wisconsin, states: "When the wholesale price of gas went up by 60 cents almost overnight, oil companies were obviously using the most devastating natural disaster in our Nation's history to reap a windfall at the expense of the American consumers. To price gouge consumers under normal circumstances is dishonest enough," the letter stated, "but to make money off the severe misfortune of others is downright immoral."

It is obvious to me that Congress needs to protect Americans from price gouging and market manipulations. As the lead sponsor of the FREE Act, Federal Response to Energy Emergencies, that I will soon introduce, is the Democrats' answer to the Nation's record high gas and oil prices. I have been joined in drafting this legislation by the Democratic Rural Caucus, especially the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) and the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH).

Currently, only 28 States have laws on the books that define price gouging

and have enforcement mechanisms to go after those who are ripping off consumers. At the Federal level, there is no oversight to protect consumers from this predatory pricing. That is why we need this Federal legislation now. No American should have to pay too much for gas for their automobile or to heat their home this winter because the oil companies are rigging the prices.

Our bill will give the President authority to take immediate action in the face of an energy crisis by declaring a national energy emergency. Our legislation mandates that the FTC, the Federal Trade Commission, for the first time ever will have to define price gouging and the criteria that makes up price gouging. It will also provide the FTC and the Department of Justice with the authority to investigate and prosecute those who engage in predatory pricing, from oil companies all the way down to the local gas stations, with an emphasis on those who profit most. This includes the gouging of gasoline prices, home heating oil, or natural gas.

Our legislation expands the Federal Trade Commission's authority to more aggressively pursue instances of market manipulation, such as geographic price setting or territorial restrictions imposed by refineries and those who are what they call "gaming the system." Our legislation empowers the Federal Government to impose tough civil penalties of up to triple damages of all excess profits on companies that have cheated consumers. It also imposes tough criminal penalties of up to \$100 million on corporations, and fines for up to \$1 million plus jail sentences for up to 10 years on individuals.

This bill will provide relief to farmers and small businesses paying skyrocketing energy and transportation costs, and expand the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, LIHEAP, through fines paid by price gouging companies.

My bill will protect consumers from unfair gas prices and punish those who think that at a time of national tragedy it is the right time to rob Americans of their hard-earned money. It is the right thing to do for consumers and for our Nation's economy.

Look at what has been going on in the last few months, even before Hurricane Katrina. This is an article out of the Soo Evening News, a newspaper in my district. It is July 20, 2005. It is before the hurricane season. That day, in my home State of Michigan, gas prices went up 80 cents; eighty cents in one day, based upon rumor, fear, and speculation. You cannot tell me that no one is profiting excessively from America's fear.

Also, I found an article in the Washington Post with the headline, "Oil Prices Spike as Storm Nears. Jump of \$4.39 is Largest One-day Surge on Record." These are the reasons we must have this legislation. Let us pass the FREE Act.

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

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. BURTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. STEARNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINCHEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again it is an honor to come before the House, and I want to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing us, the 30-Something Working Group, to come to the floor to talk about issues that are facing not only young Americans but Americans in general.

The 30-Something Working Group, as I have stated before, time after time, is a group of 30-something Members on the Democratic side of the aisle who meet every week. We come together on the issues that are facing Americans and discuss things that, A, are working or, B, things that are not working on behalf of the American people, and we try to bring that to the attention of our colleagues here in this House.

□ 1800

I think it is important for us to not only be very aware of what is happening now in the action or inaction here in the Congress or here in this House. I think it is also important for us to realize that Hurricane Katrina survivors and those that are still in recovery are in need of a government that is willing to respond not only as it relates to saying, well, we passed the \$62.2 billion emergency appropriation, but to make sure that we never have to be placed in a position that we are in now, not this House, but the people affected by the storm, and not as it relates to the natural disaster.

We know that is an act of God and that will happen; but as it relates to governance, who dropped the ball or who did not respond in time, who did not get a letter because too many people lost their lives because the response was not what it should have been.

Mr. Speaker, it was not the hurricane that killed a number of people, people who have children lost at this point, that homes are devastated in New Orleans because of the flooding. It was not just the storm that made that happen. Governance broke down somewhere. Our reason for coming to the floor today is to not only share with our colleagues but to make sure that we are abundantly clear with the American people about the importance of having an independent commission out of the control of this House and out of the control of this Congress to allow appointments to take place, bipartisan, and independent.

Right now we have a partisan select committee that will be meeting sometime in the very near future, maybe tomorrow, organizing and trying to bring