OCALA, FLORIDA POLICE DEPARTMENT — CRIME PREVENTION: "WEED AND SEED"

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues a report that was issued this spring of this year from the Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs called “Weed and Seed Best Practices.” I thought this was a very interesting report and in this report is featured an officer from my hometown of Ocala, Florida.

For many of my colleagues, the “Weed and Seed” program, as they know, is a community-based crime prevention program. Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies, community support services, local businesses, and ordinary citizens get together to weed out violent crime and drug use and plant the seeds to foster new community growth and, of course, stability in that community.

The “Weed and Seed” program began with three pilot sites in 1991. As of today there are over 200 pilot sites and one of those, of course, Mr. Speaker, is in my hometown of Ocala, Florida which is in my congressional district. The article, as I mentioned earlier, is written by Ken DeVilling, a lieutenant with the Ocala Police Department, the Crime Prevention section. I would like to share what Lieutenant DeVilling’s observations were and actually the eminent success of the Ocala Police Department and the surrounding community in their fight against crime.

As Lieutenant DeVilling mentioned in his article, the City of Ocala was, of course, not immune to the effects of crack cocaine and the subsequent serge of crime. Additional resources were needed and the Ocala Police Department had the foresight to recognize the newly developed “Weed and Seed” program as a viable solution to rising crime in my hometown. So myself, and with the help of my other colleagues in Florida, they assisted me in getting Ocala as a site designated as a “Weed and Seed” program.

A number of initiatives were created by the Ocala Police Department using the funds that were provided by this “Weed and Seed” program. One initiative was the creation of a youth education program called the Community Against Substance Abuse which was comprised of members of the local Community Commission, the city council, school board, State attorney’s office and of course other community organizations.

As a result of these organizations getting together, Ocala recorded its lowest possible precursor in 1999. Furthermore, in 1997, the city’s homicide rate was only one, and in the previous decades it went as high as 20 per year.

Another program that is cited in this article is called “Problem-Oriented Policing.” Under this program, officers identify possible areas which, quote, detract from good living conditions in the neighborhoods they patrol, end quote. These areas may be abandoned lots or houses that are abandoned or they might be areas that provide haven for drug trafficking and criminal activities.

Once they identify these areas, a form is completed by the officer and is sent through the chain of command. The identified site is then referred to the city department best able to handle the situation. Let me quote from Lieu- tenant DeVilling in the article when he says, “It is not uncommon for a police officer to identify a dilapidated building which is used as a crack house. Within a short time, the building is burned to the ground by firemen to practice and improve their skills. The property is then cleared and recycled. These recycled properties are frequently used for purposes such as building a brand-new home by Habitat for Humanity.”

Other programs operated by the Ocala Police Department include drug education for young people, drug abuse resistance education, and of course dealing with the gangs through education and training.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I am pleased to be here. I commend the Ocala Police Department, the local and State officials, and all the organizations involved in this dramatic, drac- matic success achieved in crime prevention. As we here in Congress attempt to find solutions to the violence that is sweeping this country and this Nation, it is comforting to know that our local law enforcement and community organizations working hard to combat this problem at its source and it is happening in my hometown of Ocala. They are succeeding.

Mr. Speaker, I will submit to enter into the RECORD Lieutenant DeVilling’s article as it appears in the Department of Justice’s spring 1999 report, “Weed and Seed and Best Practices Report.” For brevity, Mr. Speaker, I will submit only that section dealing with “Taking it to the Streets,” which is a small part of this article explaining how the Ocala Police Department actually reduced crime in my hometown using the “Weed and Seed” program.

My efforts this morning are also to recognize the fine things being done by the Ocala Police Department to reduce and eliminate crime in my hometown of Ocala, Florida.
TWO FLOODS AND YOU ARE OUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there is a theme this morning on the floor of the House dealing with how we can promote livable communities. Whether it is dealing with community-oriented policing, “Weed and Seed,” or associating the comments of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT) about Better America Bonds, there is a lot that the Federal Government can do to make a difference for things that people really care about, making their families safe, economically secure and healthy.

Mr. Speaker, a critical part of making the Federal Government a better partner in promoting livable communities is the work we do with basic infrastructure. Rather than spending a lot of new money, making new rules and regulations and starting new programs, one of the most important contributions the Federal Government can make is using our existing resources more wisely.

Nowhere is that more clearly illustrated than what we do with water resources. Currently, the Federal Government makes it easier to spend money paving a creek to stop flooding than to restore wetlands to achieve the same goal. I have already introduced legislation that would make it easier for communities to invest in cheaper, greener approaches to flood protection. This approach does not need to cost the Federal Government an additional dime, and it gives the communities more choices as they solve their problems and increase livability.

The National Flood Insurance program poses another critical water resource management challenge. It is appropriate for the Federal Government to step in when there is a case of unforeseen natural disaster. However, if it is clear that some people make it hard on themselves by continuing to invest in unwise anti-environmental, unsustainable situations, then we have an obligation to draw the line. The Federal taxpayer should not be paying for people to live in places where God repeatedly has shown that he does not want them.

There is a home in Houston which has an appraised value of $114,000 which has received over $800,000 in flood insurance payments in 16 events in the last 30 years. Over 5,000 properties, nearly 1 in 10, have loss claims which exceed the value of the property. Forty percent of our flood insurance goes to 2 percent of the property that is repeatedly flooded.

Mr. Speaker, if the local government and private property owners are going to be foolish, they need to do it on their own dime. Indeed, it is not just our money they are wasting; these development patterns take on a life of their own. They pressure organizations such as FEMA and local state and local communities to further engineer the environment and protect ill-advised development from flooding, often succeeding in making matters worse.

Despite having spent over $40 billion since 1960, our losses adjusted for inflation are three times greater than when we started the building spree. Our disaster relief costs have increased 550 percent in the last 10 years. It is time for us to rethink our policies and our investments. It is time to stop the waste of money, predictable loss of property, and threat to public safety. As a basic simple common sense step, it is time to reform the National Flood Insurance program.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with the gentleman from Nebraska, (Mr. BEREUTER) who has long been a champion of reforming the Flood Insurance Program to propose a simple approach to flood protection. We retooled the Flood Insurance Program so that rather than continuing to rebuild a repeatedly flooded home, the program would provide homeowners with money to help them move away from flood waters or at least floodproof their homes. Those who refuse assistance must start paying the real actuarial insurance costs for the risks that they choose to take.

This policy is both humanitarian and fiscally responsible, allowing people to move out of harm’s way and protect the Federal taxpayer by making the National Flood Insurance program solvent. We need to enforce the existing rules and regulations to keep people out of harm’s way. We need to spend money to prevent loss rather than repeatedly cleaning up after it is too late.

This basic solution to more livable communities will not require more money or bureaucratic regulations. As usual, a livable community is possible if the Federal Government is a thoughtful partner with citizens and their local government. I would like to urge my colleagues to join with me and the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) to reform the National Flood Insurance program and to sign on as cosponsors of our “Two Floods and You’re Out” legislation.

WHO IS RECKLESS?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, from time to time the comments from this administration and the President of the United States lead me to the floor to comment. I think my colleagues and the American people saw the President of the United States calling the Republicans reckless. And I guess I am in the Republican Party, so I am a Republican. We were called reckless for proposing a significant tax cut for the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I almost had to chuckle to hear the President of the United States call me reckless and then the Republicans for offering a tax cut. It is almost hysterical when we think about it when the other side of the aisle for some 40 years had control of this body and under the Constitution of the United States we all know bills, financial bills start in the House of Representatives on the basis of a judgment made by our founding fathers. For 40 years, the recklessness of the other side nearly bankrupt this Nation.

When I came into the House of Representatives in 1992, we were facing financial disaster. This was carried through with the reckless policy of this President who instituted one of the largest tax increases in American history and the smallest return. And again when he had complete majorities in the House, the Senate, and controlled the White House.

What was reckless is 40 years of taking money out of Social Security. It is like robbing our senior citizens’ pension accounts, their funds, and using it for outlandish spending. Spending really to buy votes and win elections in a giveaway program that backfired and nearly ran us into financial oblivion. That is reckless.

Reckless was when they robbed every trust fund, including the Federal employee’s trust funds, when they robbed the highway trust funds, which this responsible new majority has restored. Is it reckless in fact when we guarantee 73 percent and we create a lock-box to secure revenues for the future stability and security of Social Security? That is irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker, some people I guess just do not know the meaning of reckless.

Then to provide health insurance, there are 43 million Americans in this Nation that do not have health insurance. What is interesting is two-thirds