

For 100 years, we have stood shoulder to shoulder as we have defended freedom and democratic values wherever and whenever it has been needed in the world. As we enter the millennium, we should not be pushed behind our fellow citizens in the 50 States. It is a national shame that in our country American citizens must time and time again beg to be given equal access to the programs that will promote economic prosperity, health and well-being.

#### REGARDING A 2-YEAR FEDERAL BUDGET PROCESS

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

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, on the first day of the 106th Congress I introduced H.R. 232, the Biennial Budget Act of 1999. This is an issue that I have been working on for the past 10 years, and I think it is time that we enact this important reform.

My legislation, and I might add that the Speaker pro tempore this morning has also introduced a similar bill, along with others, establishes a 2-year budget and appropriations cycle intended to reduce the repetitive annual budget votes. It would also improve the entire process by allowing more time for long-term planning and careful oversight of government spending.

The bill converts the annual budget, appropriations and authorization process into a 2-year cycle. The first session of Congress would be devoted to decisions on budget and appropriations issues. The President would start the process by submitting a 2-year budget, which would cover the 2 years of the biennium, and planning levels for 2 additional years.

Then Congress would adopt a 2-year budget resolution, a 2-year reconciliation bill, if necessary, and 2-year appropriations bills during the first session of a Congress. The second year could be used to consider multiyear authorization bills and to oversight of Federal programs. We do not do enough oversight now. We do not have time with an annual budget to really look into programs to see if they are working well.

The current budget process consumes more and more of Congress' time. In 1996, budget votes totaled about 70 percent of all votes. It does not leave time for many of the other responsibilities of the Congress; and, obviously, it leaves less time for systematic oversight.

Another problem is that we do not get the appropriations bills done on time. Only twice since 1974 have we completed action on all of the 13 appropriations bills on time. Whereas, with a 2-year cycle, we would have the oppor-

tunity to get this legislation completed and then go into the oversight program.

Now, another benefit would be that federal managers, who are managing the taxpayers' funds, would know for 2 years how much they have to operate a park or other federal programs, and they could plan more wisely and could spend the money more efficiently.

I believe that the benefits of moving to the 2-year budget cycle would be many, including reducing repetitive budget votes, allowing Congress to engage in long-term planning and management reforms for Federal programs, improving the systematic oversight of current government programs, and providing greater stability and predictability in Federal spending.

I would just urge all my colleagues to take a look at H.R. 232 and sponsor this bill or some of the others, such as that introduced by our Speaker pro tempore today. It is an idea whose time has come, I think, as we try to manage the resources of our people and of our Nation more efficiently.

#### IT IS NOT ABOUT SPRAWL BUT ABOUT HOW WE BUILD

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, yesterday there appeared an article in *The New York Times* entitled, "There's Plenty of Space for Suburbs to Keep Sprawling". This article, I feel, represents a wrong turn in the discussion about our communities and how to make them more livable. The facts are true but beside the point.

It is true that we have only increased the amount of developed land in this condition by two-tenths of a percent in recent years. It is true that we have a great deal of farmland. It is true that we are protecting more open space around the country. But I think it is important for us to take a deep breath, step back, and look at what those facts represent.

To suggest somehow that we do not have a problem in terms of development in this country because we have a large inventory of land is a lot like suggesting that just because the earth is 78 percent water we do not have problems of water supply and quality. The fact is for much of the world, and many places in the United States, we often have too much water or we do not have enough or it is too polluted or sometimes we have a combination of all three of those problems.

As it relates to the quantity of farmland, the fact is that we have generated this farmland in the past in ways that we are probably not likely to do in the future: filling in wetlands, irrigating

the desert, destroying forest lands. Many of these practices today we now recognize are harmful. We no longer do it and, in fact, there is a very real question whether or not that is sustainable in the future, particularly given the lack of water supply in many parts of the country.

It is also true that while we have added to the inventory of publicly protected forests and park lands, that is simply a reaction to the fact that we have more and more of this space imperiled. The good Lord is not making more forests and open space. We are having increasing pressure on those areas that we have now, and so we have taken this extraordinary step of trying to buy and protect more and more of it. That is not adding to the inventory. That is trying to just simply hold on to what we have.

We need to look no further than the jewels of our national park system, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and Yellowstone, to see that we are severely under assault. Even in the Pacific Northwest, in my home area, the Mt. Hood National Forest and the Columbia River Gorge are subjected to problems of pollution, overcrowding, traffic congestion and development encroachment. It is an indication of the problems that we need to face in the future.

It is also suggested that government intervention has been part of the problem in the past, to which I say: Amen. But the question is, how are we going to proceed from this point? Even if sprawl were possible to sustain into the future, is this the pattern of development that we want for our country? Do we want to live this way?

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Increasingly, Americans from coast to coast, border to border are speaking out and suggesting that is not their desired approach. Citizens are taking matters into their own hands on State and local levels with initiatives to try and improve the quality of life. They know that there are better ways of spending our tax dollars, that just because we have failed in the past in comprehensive planning is no suggestion that we should not try and do a better job of planning in the future, and just because the government has not always been constructive in efforts that it has undertaken does not mean that there is not a role for the government to be a constructive partner in the future.

It does us no good to pretend that we do not have problems of growth and quality of life in our communities. The citizens know that that is the case. The evidence is overwhelming. Now is the opportunity for us, under the banner of making our communities more livable, to engage the government as a constructive partner, to plan thoughtfully for the future involving our communities, spending our infrastructure