

has not happened. There are still enormous costs associated with production agriculture.

And, again, as the gentleman, my friend from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER), also noted, there is the tax burden. Today, when someone dies, we basically have to deal not only with the undertaker but with the IRS. And that is a real liability in terms of trying to provide a framework for passing on the family farm, the family ranch, the family business to the next generation of Americans. The tax burden continues to strangle folks who are in the business of production agriculture.

So I think this is something that needs to be addressed. I hope we will do it in this Congress as part of our agenda, as we address the needs that are out there and talking about, for the first time in a generation, the politics of surplus, a surplus that has come about as a result of decisions that we made a couple of years ago in the balanced budget agreement. We were able at that time to bring some tax relief, but we need to bring additional tax relief after we have addressed Social Security and coupled that with paying down the national debt, which is an important priority for myself and a lot of Members I think on our side of the aisle, and hopefully a lot of Members in the whole Congress, but also to look at ways that we can continually streamline regulations and lessen the tax burden on America's working families.

I cannot think of any working family today that is having a tougher time making a living and making ends meet than people who are in the day-to-day business of agriculture.

Mr. SCHAFFER. The farm economy is really going to be strained this year. The administration's failure to aggressively and assertively open up foreign export markets is really leaving American producers high and dry in many cases.

Also, the debacle in Brazil, for example, with the devaluing of the currency and the role indirectly that our government played, is going to result in cheap soybeans swamping the U.S. market. Now, we have some soybean growers out in our parts of the country, it is going to be a bigger issue perhaps in the Midwest, but for agriculture in general these kinds of realities over the next months are going to, unfortunately, result in a very troubled agricultural economy in America. And I think we are going to feel the brunt of it around August, September, and October, in those months, and on into the year 2000.

But at a time when we know that competitiveness issues, that regulatory issues are going continue to be hitting hard on American farmers and ranchers we need to seize on that opportunity to focus on the other government-imposed fixed costs of doing business, the inheritance tax certainly

being one of them. Capital gains tax relief is something else that could make the difference between farmers declaring bankruptcy and selling out versus remaining in production agriculture and hopefully passing these productive agricultural assets on to their children.

The important thing to remember when we talk about eliminating the inheritance tax, or the death tax, we hear many of our critics on the Democratic side of the aisle who will claim this is a tax cut for the rich. We have all heard that. And many farmers and ranchers, when calculating the present value of their land and equipment and so on, it sounds like an awful lot of money. But that wealth is all tied up in the land. It cannot be extracted easily at all.

And what we are talking about is the children, the heirs of the present farm land owners, having to fork over upwards of 50 percent of the value of that asset over to the Federal Government when it changes hands between the parents to the children. Fifty percent of the value of an asset value of a farm means that that farm goes on the auction block, that it is sold. It is over. It is out of business. And that is why the inheritance tax relief that we are trying to push forward is so critical for agriculture today.

Mr. THUNE. It is. And what people do not realize is that agriculture is a very capital-intensive business. It is not uncommon for a small independent producer to have a lot of investment in equipment in order to try and do all the things they have to do to raise a crop and then be able to market it.

So the gentleman is exactly right in that people, when they talk about this being something that favors people in the higher income categories, I can tell my colleague one thing, the farmers and ranchers I know and visit with in South Dakota are not people I consider to be cutting the fat hog. In fact, right now, they are having a very, very difficult time.

And if we want to keep them on the land, if we want to keep that small family farm, independent producer, the thing that I think has helped establish and build the values in this country that we cherish, if we want to keep them on the land, we have to make it easier to transfer that farm or that ranch to the next generation of Americans. And that is why I think, again, as we look at what we can do in terms of trying to assist the agricultural economy today, rolling back the estate tax, the death tax, dealing with capital gains, as the gentleman noted, is important as well, and also trying to figure out a way to make it less costly to be in production agriculture.

Because, again, there are enormous costs to these regulations. I hear ludicrous examples of this all the time. And probably the most recent one I heard was a small business in South

Dakota that wanted to sell, and they were trying to get a buyer. And the buyer, before they could consummate the sale, had to go through an environmental analysis. Well, they discovered in one of the buildings there was an air conditioner hanging out in the back, as there often is in our State of South Dakota, because the summers get to be a little hot, but that air conditioner, as air conditioners are prone to do, was dripping a little bit of water. And the EPA said, well, I am sorry, we cannot have that. That is disrupting the vegetation. Ironically, their solution to that was to come up with a one foot by one foot square slab of concrete to place down there. Not that that would disrupt the vegetation.

There are ludicrous, frivolous examples of these regulations all the time. And I will not say for a minute that there are not needs in terms of safety and health reasons why we have regulations, but there are certainly a lot of frivolous ones. And as they apply to agriculture, we should look at what we can do to make it less costly.

Mr. SCHAFFER. The American public is looking to Congress for somebody here to listen and to resolve many of these issues, and I am proud to be part of the Republican conference that will continue to push forward for a strong economy, for maintaining and protecting Social Security, providing a strong national defense, providing for a world-class education system and, ultimately, trying to provide for some tax relief for the American people.

THE STATE OF THE MILITARY

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

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I just a left a meeting with Secretary Cohen, Chief of Naval Operations, and General Shelton. I know people are talking about Social Security, they are talking about education, they are talking about Medicare, but I want to read something to my colleagues, and I want to quote.

Quite often our military leaders have been remiss in stating what the actual needs are so that they do not get in trouble, and I would like to read this to my colleagues. This was taken from a hearing in Las Vegas, Nevada. It said, "Displaying unusual candor, the commanders of combat training centers for the Army, the Air Force, the Marines, the Navy and Coast Guard described poor training conditions, outdated equipment held together 'by junkyard parts', and an underpaid, overworked cadre of service workers who cannot wait to get out and find a better job."

What is happening is our overseas deployments are 300 percent above what they were at the height of Vietnam. We

are driving our military into the ground but not using the reinvestment into the parts, the manpower, or even the creature comforts for our military folks.

This goes on to say, "We have a great military filled with terrific soldiers who are suffering from an inability to train at every level with battle focus and frequency necessary to develop and sustain its full combat potential."

Mr. Speaker, we are maintaining only 23 percent of our enlisted. If my colleagues go out in any military division today and ask our sailors or our troops of any branch how many of them have been there within the last 8 years, every hand will go up; about 90 percent of them. They have not seen anything else but a de-escalation of military spending and/or support, which is denied.

We only have, today, 14 of 23 up jets at Navy Fighter Weapons School, known as Top Gun. They do not have engines. There are 137 parts missing. The 414th for the Air Force, the same problem. They do not have engines or parts to fly their aircraft back here in CONUS. We had 4 of 45 up jets at Oceania. What does that all equate to?

Why they are down is because we are taking the parts to support Bosnia, to support our off-loads and our carriers and our air force out of Italy, to put those parts in those parts of the world. We are killing our training back home. When we only have 23 percent of our enlisted and 30 percent of our pilots in all services, that means our experience is gone. Captain O'Grady, who was shot down, was not trained in air combat maneuvering.

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That lack of training. When you only have four up jets in a training squadron back here in the United States, that means all your new pilots are getting limited training so when they go over, whether it is just handling an emergency or handling a combat situation, they are not trained for it. We lost about 50 airplanes this year, Mr. Speaker. We are going to lose a great number of aircraft and pilots over the next 5 years, even if we invest in those spare parts and so on today.

Now, the service chief will tell you, we have just put money into the spare parts and it takes delay. But that money they took and put into spare parts came out of other military programs. The chiefs have told us we need \$150 billion. That is \$22 billion a year. The President's new money is \$4 billion. Last year when they say they needed 150, the President said, "Well, I'll give you a \$1 billion offset," which means it has to come out of other military programs, which is a zero gain, zero net for the military.

We are in bad shape, we are losing our troops, the economy is high, but the number-one reason why our troops

are getting out, yes, pay raise is important. But the number-one reason is because they are away from their families. They are going overseas, they are deploying, they are coming back, then they have to deploy here and they do not have the equipment, the spare parts that they use or take a part off of your Chevy and put it on another Chevy. That part is not going to last you very long and we are going to lose those numbers of pilots.

It is said that we have more tasks for armed services than we do people. Now, we are asking our people in all services to do this 300 percent increase of deployments. But we have one-half the force to do it with. That means that the ones that are left have to go and do twice the work than we had to do it before. We cannot sustain that kind of downsizing and leave our troops unprepared.

If we look at Haiti, at Somalia and Aided, Aristide is still there, it is still a disaster and we have spent billions of dollars. The already low budget that we have, all of those excursions come out of that low budget which even drives us further.

EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank my Democratic colleagues for joining me here today to talk about one of the most vital issues that faces this Congress, I think, and certainly this country over the next several years, and that is education.

So that you and others will not think that I am just standing talking about education, because I have found in this great deliberative body called the People's House, we talk about a lot of issues, and we can talk endlessly on issues if someone will provide us data. But prior to my being elected to the People's House in 1996, I served 8 years, or two terms, as the elected State Superintendent of Schools in my home State. I have made education a top priority, public education for our children, not only at the State level but I have done that also since I have been here in Congress.

Throughout my service as Superintendent and to this day as a Member of Congress, I have spent a great deal of time in the classrooms of the schools of my State to observe firsthand the exciting educational innovations that are taking place in my home State. I would say that is true all across America. As my colleagues join me this afternoon, I trust they will talk about some of the exciting things that are

happening in their State, also. Too many times, all we do is we talk about the problems, and it is important to acknowledge we have shortcomings and that we work on those shortcomings to make them better, because young people only have one chance to get a good education in their first 12 years and so it is throughout the rest of their lives. But sometimes it is important to acknowledge our successes as well as our shortcomings.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit a school in Wake County, which happens to be the largest county in my district and that also is the capital city county. The school I went in was Conn Elementary and it is really now called Conn Global Communications Magnet Elementary School. That is a mouthful. But what it really means is that these young people are wired through the Internet and through a special innovative program that the leadership in that county has put together in a partnership with the Federal Government to do some creative and exciting things for these young people. They really are on the cutting edge of education reform in America. The buzzword in Washington these days is accountability. I would say to you, as strongly as I possibly can, that an effective accountability or assessment mechanism is absolutely essential to sustain educational achievement, and I will talk about that later on today as I talk because we have done that in North Carolina on a statewide basis.

But now let me continue to talk about Conn Elementary, because they can teach us here in Washington a great deal about this whole issue of accountability and what you do to excite and energize young people and make them really love school all over again and love this thing we call learning.

Let me share with my colleagues and read, if I may, Mr. Speaker, the mission statement of Conn Elementary School. Let me say that Conn is not an exception in my State of a school having a mission statement. Every school has one.

"Conn Global Communications Magnet Elementary School will prepare students for successful citizenship in a global society. The learning environment created at Conn will provide an educational experience that will emphasize heightened communications skills via reading, writing, mathematics, science technology, and the arts as a means of connecting and interfacing with the world."

I would read that again, but let me just paraphrase it very quickly to say they understand that education is broader than what some have said, reading, writing and arithmetic. It has gone long past the three Rs. There are a lot of other things that need to be interfaced and integrated in a good, sound public education these days.