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Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 105th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Monday, May 24, 1999

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. PETRI).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

May 24, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable THOMAS E. PETRI to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT AND BETTER COMMUNITIES

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, since I was elected to Congress, I have been focusing on the issue of livable communities and how we can create better partnerships between the Federal Government and our citizens. Unfortunately, one of the obstacles we face is the efforts by some people to create false choices. Last week, we saw two examples here in Congress, one dealing with efforts to reduce gun violence, and the other an important environmental announcement by one of our leading auto companies.

Repeated throughout the discussion regarding guns in our communities

have been people who have tried to paint very stark pictures that suggest that really there is nothing that we can do to take simple common sense steps. Hopefully, the action in the Senate indicated that there are things that we can do that bring people together that will make a difference. I am optimistic that we may be able to yet have that discussion on the floor of this House.

At the same time, we find people trying to paint these same sorts of false choices as it relates to the environmental community. Some argue that we have to work against business or manufacturing when the government seeks to improve the environment. This simply does not have to be the case. Last week we had an excellent example of what happens when companies recognize that they are partners in our efforts to protect the environment and improve air quality.

For the last 25 years, trucks and the SUVs have been allowed to produce 2.5 times as much smog-causing gas as cars, and next year, when stricter rules take place, these full-sized vehicles will be producing five times as much as cars under the new rules. Regulations for pickups and the sport utility vehicles were originally more lenient because they were used theoretically primarily by small business, yet today they comprise half of all family vehicles.

Last Monday, Ford Motor Company announced that starting with its model 2000 year, its full-sized pickup trucks will meet current pollution standards for cars. All but the largest will meet the stricter new car requirements as well as the proposed truck requirements that go into effect between the years 2002 and 2007. Ford made their announcement a week after a Federal appeals panel, in a radical departure from established judicial precedent, invalidated air quality regulations set by EPA which were designed, in part, to decrease ground level ozone, a major contributor to smog. If that ruling is upheld, efforts like Ford's will take on much more significance.

Ford is taking this initiative because they recognize that consumers want cars and trucks that are environmentally sound, and that by producing them, Ford will have a competitive advantage. Jacques Nasser, Ford's chief executive and president, said that Ford is doing this because it will benefit the company financially and because "it is the right thing to do."

As the use of pickup trucks and SUVs has increased, so has the amount of smog-producing gas they produce. Manufacturers cleaning up their trucks will allow for cleaner air and easier breathing. Ford's action on the national level will allow each individual driver to contribute less pollution to their community every day, and this new equipment will not adversely affect performance and will come to Ford customers at no extra cost, since Ford has agreed to absorb the \$100 per truck cost.

Clean air and a healthy environment benefit each of us and all of our communities. Ford has acknowledged that their industry must be a partner in our efforts to protect and preserve our environment. They are to be commended for this action, and I challenge other car and truck manufacturers to do the same.

This example of the private sector stepping forward and acting on behalf of the environment should be a wake-up call to this Congress as well. We need to do our part by considering rewarding those companies rather than potentially even penalizing them. We must also work together to avoid the debacle that occurred last week with unrelated environmental riders that were added to the supplemental appropriations bill.

Ford's action demonstrated that preserving the environment is a priority for the American people, and that we must do all we can to create an environmental record we can be proud of. I would hope that as we approach further efforts dealing with the environmental protection and, for that matter, the reduction of gun violence, we can avoid the false choices offered by the extreme.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.