

If and when Pakistan changes its course, and I hope it will soon, they will find a willing negotiating party in India and a supportive friend in the United States. I just hope that we can resume the India-Pakistan dialogue in the "spirit of Lahore" as soon as possible.

COMMEMORATING MEN AND
WOMEN WHO FOUGHT IN VIET-
NAM WAR

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

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, May 7, a celebration of sort, a commemoration of sort, took place in all 50 States in this country as we commemorated the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

Between 1958 and 1975, over 8 million Americans, 228,000 of whom were Georgians, fought in Southeast Asia on behalf of freedom against communism and totalitarianism. That was the war of my generation. It was the legacy that I remember.

America was divided throughout that war and remains, in some cases, divided today over whether we should have been there and our resolve was never what it should have been. But tonight, I rise not to debate that, but to commemorate the men and women who fought and died on behalf of the United States of America, 58,000 of them, 2,042 who remaining missing in action today.

While we debate the positive nature of issues we believe in and condemn others today in contemporary times, we must continue to pause and reflect on the sacrifice made on behalf of all of us.

To that end, I want to commend five individuals from Georgia, Susie Ragan, who founded the MIA/POW force in Georgia and now has moved to Maryland and is doing the same thing so we do not forget those 2,042; Tommy Clack, a triple amputee who returned to a divided America and has committed the rest of his life to see to it that Vietnam veterans get the attention and services that they deserve and their Government promised; Ron Miller, who served as the former executive director of the Georgian Veterans Leadership Program; and Colonel Ben Purcell of Georgia, a member of the Georgia legislature, but 25 years ago a man who ended more than 8 years as a prisoner of war, over 5 in solitary confinement.

We must never forget the sacrifice made by those men and women for our Nation and for our country and the duty and honor and commitment they made to this country and to their God.

And that fifth person to me is a person by the name of Jack Elliott Cox.

Jack died in Vietnam in 1968. But Jack was a volunteer. He volunteered when we graduated from college to go to OSC. And like 70 percent of those who died in Vietnam, he was not drafted, he was a volunteer.

In fact, what is so often not talked about is that 25 percent of those who fought were drafted, 75 percent were people who volunteered for the service in a divided war and a divided time. But they were committed to their country.

Let us not forget the Jack Coxes, the Susie Ragans, the Tommy Clacks, the Ron Millers, and the Ben Purcells, those who fought and live today to fight on for the veterans of that war, and those who died for you and I.

As Members of this Congress, when we go to the 26th anniversary next year, may it be a time that we continue our commitment to the veterans of the United States of America and the men and women who, regardless of conflicts at home, fought and served and, in some cases, died for their country, for our Nation, and for those of us here tonight.

STATES SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO
PROTECT THEIR OWN WATERS

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

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, on March 6, the United States Supreme Court invalidated Washington State's standards for oil tankers entering their waters. That is, it invalidated Washington State's effort to control the tankers in their waters and, in doing so, potentially invalidated laws in 11 other States.

Even while admitting that Federal and international laws may be insufficient protection, the court refused to allow States to protect their own waters. That is hard to believe, but that is what the United States Supreme Court did.

We all remember the *Exxon Valdez* disaster in Alaska in 1989. The huge oil tanker ran aground in Prince William Sound, Alaska, dumping 11 million gallons of crude oil into the Pacific Ocean and damaging more than 1,000 miles of coastline in south-central Alaska.

The massive spill resulted in billions of dollars in damage claims by over 40,000 people, including some 6,500 Washington State fishermen who have yet to be compensated for their loss.

In response to the Valdez spill, my home State of Washington and many other coastline States issued tougher laws to prevent another catastrophe. Washington's laws created the Office of Marine Safety and added a number of requirements to Federal law. I was in the legislature when we did that.

For example, the State regulation re-

quired English in order to prevent miscommunication between American navigators and foreign crews. Does it not seem logical that the people who are running the tankers in American waters should be proficient in English?

Among other rules adopted by Washington are prescriptions regarding training, location plotting, pre-arrival tests, and drug testing for tanker crews.

Ultimately, the Supreme Court invalidated these common-sense regulations. And, again, I cannot imagine how the Supreme Court could come to that decision.

Of course, Federal law must supersede State law in Coast Guard and national security matters, but States should have the right to enact safety standards within their own State waters.

Last week I introduced H.R. 4385, which reinstates the rights of States to adopt additional standards regarding maintenance, operation, equipping, personnel qualifications, or manning of oil tankers. I hope that all of my colleagues who care about States' rights and environmental protection will join me to support this important legislation. We must allow our districts and our home States to protect themselves from another Valdez disaster.

NEW ECONOMY OF THE 21ST
CENTURY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address this House today on issues I believe are extremely important to our economy and to working families not only from my State in Illinois, but across this country.

Mr. Speaker, I represent a very diverse district. I represent the south suburbs of Chicago, as well as the southern part of the city of Chicago. I represent bedroom communities and farm communities, a very, very diverse district of city and suburbs and communities.

I often find as I travel throughout the district that I have the privilege of representing, whether I am at the Steelworkers Hall in Hegewisch, a neighborhood in Chicago, or at the Legion Post in Joliet, or a grain elevator in Tonica, Illinois, or a coffee shop in my hometown of Morris, I find that there is a pretty common message whether I am in the city, the suburbs, or country; and that is that the folks back home in Illinois and the land of Lincoln, they tell me that they want us to work to find solutions to the challenges that we face.

Those solutions sometimes require a bipartisan effort. In many cases they

do. I am proud that our efforts over the last few years of working together to come up with solutions produced the first balanced budget in 28 years, the first middle class tax cut in 16 years, the first real welfare reform in a generation. We stopped the raid on Social Security, and we began paying down the national debt.

Those are real accomplishments, and they are producing results. We have seen unprecedented economic growth for 9 years, economic growth that started in 1991 and continues to this day; and clearly, the balanced budget contributes to its continued growth.

I am proud to say the balanced budget now is producing almost \$3 trillion of extra money. And rather than arguing over how to eliminate the deficit, today we are arguing over what to do with that extra money.

Our welfare reform has resulted in an almost 50 percent reduction in our Nation welfare roles. Seven million former welfare recipients are now working and have joined employment roles, having economic opportunity and a chance to move up the economic ladder.

I am also proud to say that when we stopped the raid on Social Security and began the process of paying down the national debt that, in the last 3 years, we paid down \$350 billion of the national debt. And we are on track with the budget we are going to pass this year to eliminate the national debt by the year 2013. That is progress. That is real results.

Tonight I wanted to take the opportunity to talk about an area of our economy, an area of American society and, frankly, a part of our global economy, an area that there is greater interest in, for a lot of reasons. And tonight I wanted to talk about the new economy and some of the challenges, as well as some of the solutions, to the new economy of the 21st century.

Let me start, in talking about the new economy, to talk about some facts, some statistics about the Internet and the new economy.

Over 100 million United States adults today are using the Internet, and seven new people are on the Internet for the first time every second. Seventy-eight percent of Internet users almost always vote in national, State and local elections, compared with only 64 percent of non-Internet users.

From a historical standpoint, the Internet began as the Advanced Research Project's Agency Network during the Cold War back in 1969 as a way of trying to determine how our military could communicate in time of nuclear war. Clearly, here is a peacetime conversion of military technology.

What is hard to believe is that it only took 5 years for the Internet to reach 50 million users, a much faster one compared to the traditional electronic media. It took television 13 years and

it took radio 38 years to reach that same audience. In just 5 years, 50 million users were on the Internet.

The Internet economy today generates an estimated 301 billion U.S. dollars in revenue, and it is responsible for over 1.2 million jobs. And preliminary employment data shows that the technology industry in America employed 4.8 million workers in 1998, making it one of our Nation's largest industries.

The average high-tech average wage was 77 percent higher than the average U.S. private sector wage. It is also interesting to note that 63 percent of Americans believe that the Internet will be equally or more important than traditional sources of information in the future.

When it comes to all of our pocket-books, the Federal Reserve Chairman, Alan Greenspan, points out and says that in the last few years, one third of all the economic growth, one third of all the new jobs that have been created in our economy, result from technology, much of it generated from the Internet.

I am proud to come from a great State, the great State of Illinois. Illinois, of course, is nicknamed in many cases, we think of it as an industrial State, we think of Illinois as an agricultural State. But Illinois is also a technology State. People often think of Silicon Valley, they think of the Silicon Corridor in Boston, they think of Seattle and Redmond, home to Microsoft and some of our bigger technology corporations; and they often overlook the fact that the Chicago land region ranks fourth today in technology employment, with well over 210,000 technology workers currently working in technology in Illinois.

I pointed out that the wages of technology jobs are 77 percent more than other jobs in today's economy. I would also point out that technology trade is extremely important to Illinois, my home State. Illinois exported over \$16 billion just a couple years ago, making Illinois the third highest ranking State in our Union when it comes to technology exports. I am pretty proud of that.

And we think of the map here, which shows the top cyber States, the States which generate the most jobs from technology. As I pointed out earlier, Illinois ranks fourth today in technology employment.

Of course, Texas and California have grown the most in technology employment. In fact, just in the last few years, technology employment in Texas, home to Governor Bush, has seen the greatest growth in technology.

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As I mentioned earlier, technology employment not only in my State of Illinois but throughout this country is a major contributor to our economy, in

jobs in millions, in technology. According to these statistics here, there were 4.8 million jobs in technology in 1998. That is more than the combined jobs in steel, chemicals, auto manufacturing and services.

Think about that. The traditional industries of steel and chemicals, which of course that is petroleum and, of course, auto, traditional basic jobs of our old economy of the 20th century, those jobs today are outnumbered by the jobs in technology. Clearly our economy is changing.

We often have to ask, how can we harness that change to benefit the average working American? How can we harness that growth in the new economy so that every American has the opportunity to participate in that economic growth as well as to contribute with their ideas and entrepreneurship? I have listened to many of those who work in technology, many of those who have created; that is, the companies that have done so well, those who have created that new technology, created those jobs and opportunity. It is all about creativity. That is something I have learned when it comes to technology. But the message is clear. If we want to harness the new economy to continue to provide growth and opportunity for the American people, if we want to ensure that, there are some three basic rules that we want to, I think, adopt.

Some say, what can Congress, what can government do to get involved in the new economy? Of course the government likes to regulate and tax as well as to stick its nose into a lot of things. But clearly this success of the new economy, the fact that high tech job wages are 77 percent higher than other sectors of the economy, the fact that one-third of all these new jobs have been created by the technology economy, the fact that our economy is growing so rapidly because of technology resulted basically because government was not in the way.

Clearly as we work to build our new economy, the best approach for government basically is to stay out of the way and let the private sector innovate and create with a goal of a tax-free, trade-barrier-free and regulation-free new economy. I am proud to say that House Republicans continue to lead in the effort to build and promote opportunity in the new economy.

We of course are working to honor what we call the e-contract 2000, a contract that we are committed to, to grow the new economy and to provide digital opportunity for all Americans. Of course, the central tenets, the central goals of our e-contract are to grow the new economy by reducing taxes, limiting regulation, reducing unnecessary lawsuits, promoting free trade and e-commerce and building a high tech future. Those are lofty goals. But if we all work together in Congress and we

all work together in the same way that we succeeded in balancing the budget for the first time in 28 years, the way that we cut taxes for the middle class for the first time in 16 years, take the same approach that we succeeded in cutting our welfare rolls in half with the implementation of welfare reform and it all resulted in a growing economy that has seen unprecedented economic growth and the lowest unemployment in 30 years.

I am proud to say our approach to lowering taxation, minimizing regulation and promoting trade-barrier-free commerce has produced some real accomplishments in this Congress. I am proud that thanks to Republican leadership, we put in place a moratorium on new taxes on Internet sales so that we do not double-tax and increase taxation of the new economy. My hope is that will be extended and we can have a vote on that fairly soon.

I am proud to say as a Republican Congress that rewarded investment and the creation of new technology and research with what is the longest ever extension of the research and development tax credit, to make it easier to attract new investment in research and development technology, the R&D tax credit, that was one of those that every year was extended maybe for 9 months or 12 months. When you are a private employer considering investing your resources, your dollars in R&D, you always think about the tax consequences. By extending it for 5 years, we made sure that when they invest, they can be confident that that investment will be recognized and treated fairly under our tax code.

I am also proud to say that this Republican Congress recognizes the importance of protecting intellectual property rights, ensuring those who innovate and create and come up with new ideas get the credit as well as benefit from their hard work and their labors when we passed the Intellectual Property Rights Protection Act in 1998. Soon we are going to be passing the e-sign legislation, legislation that establishes a uniform and legally binding standard for electronic signatures in e-commerce. You often think of legal documents being a piece of paper. Today, so much of the business, so many transactions today are done over the Internet. We have to ensure that we can come up with a way to ensure that those business transactions are legally binding even though it is a virtual transaction and that e-sign legislation which has passed the House and Senate, we are now in conference working out differences in our legislation between the House and Senate, moves quickly so that we can continue to grow the new economy.

I am proud of those accomplishments. We have also passed out of the House more legislation protecting intellectual property rights; the Amer-

ican Inventors Protection Act addressed the issue of cyber-squatting, those folks who would steal names. I am also proud to say that under the leadership of those who want to promote research, which is the Republican majority, that we passed out of the House the Network and Information Technology Research and Development Act, legislation that boosts Federal investment in new technology, in new ideas helping grow the new economy. Those are accomplishments. We have moved that out of the House.

I have said that one of our other goals of the Republican majority is also to promote barrier-free trade. Coming up in less than 2 weeks is probably going to be the most important technology vote of the year, a vote that will determine what kind of access Americans would like to give themselves into what is the world's largest market. It will be a decision over whether Americans want to sell products to over 1.3 billion customers. That is the issue of whether or not we grant permanent normal trade relations with China.

China, of course, is the world's most populous nation. China has made a commitment to join the World Trade Organization and live by the rules, to honor intellectual property agreements, to honor trade agreements. As we know right now, they have access to our markets. All we have to do is go to the discount store and shop for some T-shirts to see that China has access to our markets. The question really is, do we want access to China's market? That is why the vote on permanent normal trade relations, the same trade status we give to almost everyone else, if we are going to give ourselves access to that market. To me it is the normal thing to do, to want to be able to sell our products that we make in Illinois in China.

Now, China is pretty important in technology. I would point out of the top five U.S. exports to China, the top five are electrical machinery as well as office machines, particularly computers. Of course it is expected that by the end of this year, within the next couple of years, by the end of 2001, that China will become the world's second largest personal computer market. I would note that over the last 10 years, U.S. technology exports to China have increased by 500 percent. Think about that. If technology is the fastest growing sector of our economy, if technology is the part of our economy that is creating the biggest chunk of new jobs, one-third of all new jobs being created by technology, would we not want to sell those products in the world's largest market? And, of course, that is China.

Illinois, of course, is a major exporting State. As I pointed out earlier, Illinois ranks fourth in technology jobs. But Illinois ranks third in export and

trade of our technology. It is important to us. We exported over a billion dollars from Illinois to China last year. I think we need more opportunity in that market. That is why I support normal trade relations with China, because it is good for American workers and it is going to create more jobs for American workers. Clearly if we want to grow our technology economy, which I certainly want to do for the State I am proud to represent, Illinois, we need to increase our market.

I also wanted to talk a little bit as we talk about technology not only about trade but about another challenge that we face. That is something that some people call the digital divide, what I call the challenge to provide digital opportunity. What really hit home about the issue of the need to provide digital opportunity is when I talk to educators, teachers, school board members, school administrators, and they tell me that they are beginning to notice a difference in the classroom between the children who have a computer at home and those who do not. That the school kids who have a computer at home to work on their schoolwork, their homework seem to be doing a little better in school than those who do not. That is an issue of concern to our educators.

Clearly education has been a priority in this Congress. In fact in our budget this year, we increased funding for elementary and secondary education by 10 percent while balancing the budget. So at the same time we are making education a priority, maybe we need to think about what we can do to help those kids who do not have a computer at home so that they can compete in the classroom. That is a big issue here, creating digital opportunity for our kids and for the future. Because those young people, those children that do not have a computer at home, if they are behind in school because they do not have a computer and trying to compete with their classmates, think about what that means for them long-term in competing for jobs and, of course, competing in the new economy of the 21st century.

There are some interesting statistics out there. People say the digital divide. What really is the digital divide? We hear about it. If the digital divide is out there, is there something that we can do to make that digital divide really something called digital opportunity? If we think about it here, it is interesting that when we look at the digital divide, it is interesting that many cases it is the income level of the family that creates the digital divide. It says here, some statistics I have with me today, that urban households earning more than \$75,000 annually are more than 20 times likely to have home Internet access compared to urban families at the lowest income levels. Think about that. In many communities in this State of Illinois as well as

in this country, \$75,000 is middle class or upper middle class. But they are 20 times as likely to have computers and Internet access as low-income families. I would also point out that those families with persons making less than \$25,000 annually generally cite cost as the primary reason for not using the Internet at home, while those making more cite do not want it as the reason.

Let me repeat that again. Low-income families say the reason they do not have computer at home, the reason they do not have access to the Internet is because of the cost, whereas higher income families just because they do not want to have it. So clearly there is a recognition by those families in many cases who do not have computers and Internet access that if they had a little more money or somehow Internet access could be more affordable that they would want their children to have computers at home, too.

How can we create digital opportunity recognizing that income disparity on the so-called digital divide? I have also learned that if you look at statistics, that education level creates a digital divide. Those with the higher level of education, higher level of education degrees tend to have computers and Internet access. In fact, those with college degrees are 10 times more likely to have Internet access at work than persons with only some high school education. And that 62 percent of those with college degrees now use the Internet, while those with only a grade school education, only about 7 percent of them use the Internet. And also in rural areas it is interesting that those with college degrees are more likely to have access to the Internet than those without. So how can we ensure that those who are from families where there is not a college degree have computers and Internet access?

Some say we should be just talking about that digital divide. I believe that we should be looking for ways to create digital opportunity, because if we create digital opportunity, we can harness the new economy to ensure that every child has access to computers and the Internet, not only at school but at home. We are of course working in the Republican majority to find ways to provide digital opportunity, to eliminate the so-called digital divide. We want to pass tax incentives to encourage computers at home as well as in the school.

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We want to encourage donation of computers to schools by the private sector. We want to bring down the costs of Internet access, and we pointed out earlier lower-income families identify the costs of Internet access and the costs of having that computer as their chief barrier to having a home computer for their child to be able to do their school work on.

Clearly, we have to work on an agenda, which will provide digital opportunity, digital opportunity for families, digital opportunities for e-commerce, both at home as well as at work. There are several ways we can do that.

Clearly, the ways we can do that is to give educational priority so that as we raise the education level, people tend to have a computer and Internet access, but also when it comes to education, should we not also ensure that families know how to use a computer; that teachers understand how to train students on how to use that computer for homework and classes, as well as research on school papers and preparing for a test?

I am proud to say that this House continues to lead the way in boosting education. As I mentioned earlier, we increased funding in this year's balanced budget by 10 percent for public education, a 10 percent increase while even balancing the budget, but we also worked to make sure those dollars reach the classroom, and that those dollars have distributed back to our local schools in a way that those schools can take advantage of those programs to train teachers, as well as to ensure that there is technology in the wire, in the fiber and the hardwares installed in the classroom.

We are ready soon to vote on here in the House the Education Options Act, legislation which will provide training for teachers, to integrate technology into the classroom, that has passed committee, and it is waiting for a vote here in the House.

I am also proud to say that the House Committee on Ways and Means which I serve on has improved the Education Savings in School Excellence Act, a program that would increase the amount of money you can set aside in Education Savings Account from \$500 to \$2,000 allowing families to save more for their child's education, but I would also point out that those dollars we would allow families to use to buy computer equipment and also the software they need to run those computers, and they would also be able to use those dollars to hire a tutor, if necessary, to help their child catch up in the classroom.

That legislation has passed committee. It is waiting a vote here in the full House of Representatives. The House of Representatives just this past year passed the Teacher Empowerment Act which allows local schools to spend Federal dollars to teach educators how to integrate technology into the classroom, to ensure that technology is in the classroom, but also to ensure that teachers understand how to use that technology and better educate the children.

Mr. Speaker, I would also point out that there is a number of initiatives in the Committee on Ways and Means

that I serve on which would also help provide computers in the school. I am proud to say that the House Committee on Ways and Means is now considering the New Millennium Classrooms Act, legislation that would increase the amount of the charitable deduction that a business would receive if they donate their surplus computers to schools.

Those are good ideas, good ideas to help in the classroom, good ideas to ensure that our children have an opportunity at school in how to use a computer, that teachers know how to use those computers, that teachers also know how to train them, but the other solution I believe to helping eliminate so-called digital divide, providing greater digital opportunity, is to find ways so that families could have computers and Internet access at home, so that when school children bring their homework home, they have got a computer at home to work on it, a computer they can use to solve their problems and to access the Internet for research, so that they can contact the Library of Congress, the greatest library in the world, via the Internet, and, of course, have that literally at home as a research tool to prepare their schools paper. And that is a challenge.

As I mentioned earlier in the statistics, many of these low-income families that do not have computers identify the costs of Internet access as being the barrier that prevents them from having computer and Internet access. So how can we solve that challenge?

I am proud to say a major employer in our country, but also a major in the District that I represent, and I have two Ford auto plants in Hegewisch and Chicago Heights, that I represent would point out that companies have stepped forward, major corporations have stepped forward in our country, Ford Motor Company, Intel, American Airlines, Delta Airlines and have stepped forward in that effort to help ensure that their workers have computers at home so their workers children have those computers for their school work. Think about that.

American Airlines has 100,000 employees, between Ford Motor Company, American Airlines, Intel and Delta Airlines, 600,000 workers, every one from the guy who sweeps the assembly line floor, to the CEO, every one of those families, universal access to Ford Motor Company's families, to the Internet in computers, as a result of a program they are now offering, which will provide as an employee benefit computers and Internet access.

It would be an employee benefit the same as a pension or as your health care coverage, having a computer at home and subsidize reduced rate Internet access. Think about that. American Airlines, 100,000 employees, Intel,

American Ford Motor Company and Delta Airlines, a total of 600,000 families that will benefit from this type of program.

I believe we should find more companies willing to step forward to provide digital opportunity on a universal basis for their employees. There is a consequence. We discovered that when Ford and Intel and American and Delta stepped forward to provide this benefit for their employees, computers and Internet access to help their children learn at home that there is a tax consequence.

The consequence was that this new benefit for employees having a computer and Internet access was taxable, which meant the worker would have to pay higher taxes in order to have that computer and that Internet access, and that is a question; is that right? I don't believe so.

To me, it is just good government policy to encourage private employees to help eliminate the digital divide, to provide greater digital opportunity. That is why I am proud that just prior to the Passover on Easter break, before Congress took a 2-week break to be back home in our districts, that I was joined by my colleague the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) in introducing what we call the DDATA Act, the Digital Divide Access Technology Act, legislation that treats this computer and Internet access benefit that is provided by private employer to employees as a tax-free benefit.

It treats it the same as an employee contribution to a worker's pension, as an employer's contribution to a worker's health care benefits. It just make sense.

My hope is this legislation will receive bipartisan support and move quickly through the House. Ladies and gentlemen, we want to eliminate the digital divide. We want to eliminate the digital divide by creating digital opportunity at school, as well as in the home. I am proud of that. It is important initiative. Both initiatives deserve bipartisan support.

We also want to provide greater digital opportunity in the workplace. One of the ways we need to do a better job here in the Congress, where we can stay out of the way, but also bring fairness to the Tax Code, is to recognize the need, the need to modernize and update the tax treatment of technology in the workplace. Technology changes pretty rapidly.

Mr. Speaker, today, private employers are replacing the computers in their office every 14 to 16 months, but under our current Tax Code, our employers and private businesses, whether it is the realtor or the insurance agent, as well as the big corporation, they have to carry those computers on their books for 5 years. They are depreciated over a 5-year period, even though that computer is replaced every 14 months.

Essentially, our Tax Code is discouraging private employers and business from taking advantage of the latest technology, because the Tax Code says if we are going to depreciate that you have got to keep it on the books for 5 years; that really delays the decision to upgrade the technology.

Now that we are in the global economy, do we not want the business community and our employers and those who use computers in the workplace to have the latest technology to compete? I think we do, and that is why I introduced legislation called the Computer Depreciation Reform Act of 2000, legislation which will eliminate that 5-year depreciation schedule and recognize reality here in the 21st century, and, that is, the need to reform depreciation and essentially what we call expensing in government jargon which means you can fully deduct the cost of that computer in the first year; 1 year, rather than 5, that recognizes the 14 to 16 months that you replace your computer.

Before I close, I am going to mention the last tax initiative that I believe deserves support that is now before the Committee on Ways and Means. Many poor families, as I noted earlier in the statistics that I share, have stated that the costs of Internet access in computers at home is a chief barrier to having those computers and having Internet access for children and their families in order to help them to do their schoolwork and do their research for school papers at home.

I have talked about solutions that Republicans are offering to ensure that computers are available at school and Republicans solutions to ensuring that computers are available at home, but I am also proud to say that there is legislation which I hope we bring before this House also early this summer, which will again help reduce the costs of those computers.

Frankly, what we are doing under this proposal is to eliminate what was once a temporary tax on your telephone, that was put in place during the Spanish-American war to pay off the Spanish-American war debt, probably the best example of one of those taxes that never ends, because when that tax was enacted 100 years ago, it was a luxury tax, because not many people had telephone. They figured they stick it to rich people and, of course, over time we now have telephones. And we are all paying this tax, and it was conveniently forgotten to end it. Three cents on every dollar of your telephone service is now collected and goes to Uncle Sam.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to reduce access costs to the Internet, we have to recognize that the majority of people who access the Internet obtain their access through the telephone lines. And, of course, if you charge 3 cents on the dollar in taxes for every dollar of

telephone use, that means every time you access your computer, access the Internet, it is costly.

Let us end that Spanish-American war tax. Let us repeal the telephone excise tax, and think about it if it is 3 percent, that means that your grandmother, who is on a limited income, who uses the telephone to call her grandchildren across this country is paying that 3 percent the same as the millionaire who may live across the street.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a regressive tax as well, so we can reduce the costs for lower-income families, the Internet access by repealing the telephone excise tax.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have some big challenges before us and the new economy is contributing so much to the America's future, an economy that is driven by technology and an economy that has grown because government stayed out of the way. If we continue to want to see the new economy grow and technology provide greater opportunity for the American people, then I believe we need to continue that approach of a tax-free, regulation-free, trade barrier-free new economy.

We have some solutions. Solutions that promote education. Solutions that promote education as a way of contributing to the new economy. We also have solutions to address the so-called digital divide. I believe we need to provide digital opportunity in school, at home, and in the workplace, and that means we need to pursue a tax-free, trade barrier-free and regulation-free new economy, because that is what it is all about, digital opportunity for our kids and for our future.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address this House this evening.

□ 2100

SOCIAL SECURITY

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

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I do not think I will take 60 minutes this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for a very interesting and thoughtful presentation preceding mine.

Mr. Speaker, I intend tonight to address the issue of social security. I am pleased to see that the candidates for president are each speaking to this vital issue, and I want in the next several minutes to present some background in terms of what is encompassed within the social security program, what are the strains on the program that need to be addressed in the