

steel industry is going belly up? I urge Congress to cosponsor House Resolution 16, that caused a 50 percent reduction of imports in 1998.

I yield back the fact that Congress cannot defend America with Styrofoam.

WE HAVE A MANDATE

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, some of our friends in the media have suggested that because the President won a narrow election victory he does not have a mandate for his agenda. Well, that is wrong. Every American wants the best schools we can provide for our children. Every American deserves a tax cut. Every American wants us to pay off the debt; and, yes, we can afford to do both. Every American wants to help our seniors get prescription drugs and make sure Social Security will be there for the next generation. In fact, a recent Zogby poll showed that up to 40 percent of the people who voted for Al Gore support the Bush agenda. Education, tax cuts, debt pay-down, strong national defense, strengthening Social Security and Medicare, these are the issues the American people have assigned to us. These are the issues our President has campaigned on. These are the issues the country wants addressed. We have a mandate. The President has a plan. Let us roll up our sleeves, go to work, enact the President's agenda. It is really the people's agenda.

RURAL POVERTY, AN UNNOTICED PROBLEM IN OUR NATION

(Mr. OSBORNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OSBORNE. Madam Speaker, rural poverty is a huge, largely unnoticed problem in our Nation. Currently, the three lowest-income counties in the United States are in my district. The poorest county averages less than \$4,000 annual income per person.

Paradoxically, in these counties, the unemployment rate is extremely low, the character level is excellent, and the work ethic is exceptional. The problem is that these rural counties are totally dependent upon production agriculture. For this reason today, along with several colleagues, I am introducing a bill that will provide a one-time, \$500,000 capital gains tax exemption for farmers and ranchers who sell their land. This exemption would equal the capital gains exemption already granted to homeowners. Many producers feel they cannot retire because of their tax situation. This bill will help. I encourage support.

□ 1415

ARMED SERVICES APPRECIATION PAY RAISE ACT

(Mr. REHBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. REHBERG. Madam Speaker, today I introduce the Armed Services Appreciation Pay Raise Act, the ASAP Act, to increase the salaries of our dedicated service personnel by 3.5 percent this year. When combined with next year's scheduled pay increase, this act will put an additional \$150 per month in their pockets.

The issue should transcend politics. As long as there are military personnel collecting food stamps, as long as there are Americans who choose not to serve because they cannot afford to, we obviously have a problem that needs to be solved.

More and more is being asked of the men and women in our Armed Forces, especially our active Reservists and National Guard members who have shouldered an increasing burden through our military draw-down. But we have not appropriately rewarded them for their increasingly important role in our national defense.

Madam Speaker, I promised the people of Montana that recognizing the contribution of our young men and women in uniform would be the first legislation I introduced as a United States Congressman. Today, I am proud to honor that commitment by introducing the ASAP Act.

THE RACE AGAINST DRUGS

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss an issue that is very important to America. That is, how do we reduce drug use among our young people. I will be joined tomorrow at a press conference by NASCAR race driver Ricky Craven and representatives from other government agencies to talk about a new program to reduce drug use among young people, with a \$2.5 million grant from the Department of Justice for the Race Against Drugs.

The Race Against Drugs is a nationwide drug prevention education program aimed at educating today's youth about the dangers of substance abuse. The program was developed in May of 1990, in partnership with the National Child Safety Council, the Department of Justice, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, and the Department of Health and Human Services, and 23 motor sport sanctioning organizations.

As one of several who has been fighting for increasing funding for effective drug prevention programs targeted to-

wards America's youth, we know that this year's grant represents by far the largest level of support the Race Against Drugs has received from the Federal Government. We will have a race car, race drivers and a new innovative means to reduce drug use among youths. Join us at this press conference tomorrow, January 31 at the Triangle at 12:30 p.m.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 5:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 17 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 5:30 p.m.

□ 1730

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT) at 5 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Edwin Thomas, one of his secretaries.

FEDERAL FIREFIGHTERS RETIREMENT AGE FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. LATOURETTE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 93) to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide that the mandatory separation age for Federal firefighters be made the same as the age that applies with respect to Federal law enforcement officers, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 93

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Federal Firefighters Retirement Age Fairness Act".

SEC. 2. MANDATORY SEPARATION AGE FOR FIREFIGHTERS.

(a) CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT SYSTEM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The second sentence of section 8335(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by inserting ", firefighter," after "law enforcement officer"; and

(B) by inserting ", firefighter," after "that officer".

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 8335(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking the first sentence.

(b) FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The second sentence of section 8425(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by inserting ", firefighter," after "law enforcement officer" each place it appears; and