EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HON. NANCY PELOSI
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, July 27, 2001

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to two fallen heroes. Anthony Murdick and Scott Wilson were volunteer firefighters in Unionville, Pennsylvania, who drowned while trying to recover the body of a kayaker in Slippery Rock Creek in Slippery Rock Township, on August 8 of this year. Their deaths were the first in the line of duty in the 64-year history of the Unionville Volunteer Fire Company. Their lives and act of bravery are being honored at a memorial service this Saturday, July 26, in Slippery Rock Township.

Firefighters Murdick and Wilson, both from Butler, Pennsylvania, traveled similar paths in life. Both were 25 years old; both graduated from Butler High School; and both joined the Unionville Volunteer Fire Company as junior firefighters. Murdick and Wilson were also experienced divers. However, the creek's swift current prevented the firefighters from resurfacing after their dive to retrieve the body of the drowned Ambridge man.

In other ways, Murdick and Wilson's lives were very different. Murdick worked as a landscaper, and as a structural firefighter for the VA Medical Center in Butler. He was also taking classes to become a code-enforcement officer. Murdick is survived by his fiancée, Beth McCurdy, and their son, Talan.

Wilson graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania's criminal justice training program. He worked with the Butler Ambulance Service, served as a 911-operator, and also served as the director of the ambulance authority in Wetzel County. At the time of his death, Wilson was an instructor at the Butler County Area Vocational Technical School. Wilson is survived by his wife, Tracy, and son, Cole.

The act of courage and commitment that these men showed is extraordinary. Without fear or hesitation, Murdick and Wilson dove into the swift waters of Slippery Rock Creek, as their job called upon them to do. On Saturday, these two men will be honored for their valiant act by family, friends, fellow firefighters, and members of the community of Slippery Rock Township. I join them in their tribute and hope that others find inspiration in their sense of duty and selfless service just as I have.

CONCERN FOR THE AMERICAN WORKER

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, July 27, 2001

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my deep concern for the health and safety of the American Worker. Ergonomic hazards contribute to hundreds of thousands of injuries each year, we must do more to address the problem. Unfortunately, instead of dealing with this serious problem, the President with help from the majority party in the House of Representatives, took the drastic step of overturning workplace safety regulations that had been carefully studied for the past 10 years.

The ergonomic rule that was overturned earlier this year protected over 100 million working women and men in this nation and covered over 6 million work sites around the country. These critically important ergonomic regulations would have prevented 4.6 million musculoskeletal disorders, including carpal tunnel syndrome and other ailments related to repetitive motion, force, awkward postures, contact stress and vibration.

Now the Bush Administration, in conjunction with its Labor Department, is going through the motions, dare I say "repetitive motions" of having "field hearings" to review the effects of ergonomic related injuries. These problems have been studied for the past 10 years, how much more information does this administration need to be convinced that this is a pressing matter?
I have seen recent testimony by Amy Dean, Executive Officer of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council, given at one of the Department's ergonomic standard hearings. I believe this testimony illustrates the real life consequences of not protecting workers in this nation from ergonomic hazards and so I include it in the Congressional Record for the information of my colleagues.

Testimony of Amy B. Dean, Executive Officer of South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council, July 24, 2001

My name is Amy Beth Dean and I am the Executive Officer of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council. More than 100,000 working families throughout Silicon Valley. In this community, there are union members in every occupation. We work in manufacturing. We work in construction. We work in health care. We look after young children. We're even the people who keep this building clean.

But far more important than any of those differences in the work we do, are the values we all share—values that begin with the belief that every worker has the right to work in a safe and healthy workplace. That's why I'm here today.

A number of years ago a British journalist once wrote that, “in politics, being ridiculous is more damaging than being extreme.” By destroying OSHA's ergonomics standard—and then standing these forums in favor of big business—the Bush Administration has demonstrated itself to be both. And American workers are paying for George Bush's extremism every single day.

Since George Bush and the Republicans in Congress killed this safety standard, more than 500,000 workers have suffered carpal tunnel syndrome and other injuries. That's one more worker every 18 seconds.

What kinds of workers are we talking about? Some of them are people who work in poultry processing plants. Some work with heavy equipment. Others work in places like nursing homes and warehouses. But many of these women and men work in high technology. They're clerical and technical workers. And many are professionals.

They're people like Patricia Clay. She works at the Referral Center at the Valley Medical Center. She worked for five years at a desk that was too high. She raised the issue with her supervisor, but her employer was indifferent. Eventually, she began noticing that something was wrong with her right hand. She found out it was carpal tunnel syndrome. Eventually, she lost so much strength in that hand, she couldn't hold anything over two pounds. That meant she couldn't even pick up the baby grandson she was helping her daughter to look after. A week ago, Patricia Clark had surgery, but her doctor tells her she'll never be the same she was before.

We know from experience that, with the right equipment and practices, injuries like those suffered by Patricia can be avoided. Those workers at the Mercury News were lucky. At that time, thanks to the effort of the San Jose Newspaper Guild—and the cooperation of the Mercury News—changes were made. The paper began investing in the kind of equipment computer users need. And guess what? By 1998 repetitive strain injuries declined by 49%.

But, the fact is, not every worker has an employer who wants to do the right thing. The fact is that far too many employers still believe they don't have an obligation to provide safe and healthy working conditions. Employers who would rather see workers wear wrist splints or undergo physical therapy, or even suffer through surgery than invest in computer keyboards that are safe to use.

It's the women and men working for those kinds of employers who need this ergonomic standard most of all. And those are the very people George Bush chose to betray.

I know that three questions are being asked of those participating in these forums. You've asked what is an ergonomics injury. You've asked how OSHA can determine whether an ergonomics injury was caused by work.

And you've asked what the most useful and cost effective government measures are to address ergonomic injuries. It seems to me that if the Department of Labor reviewed the 10 years of research and expert testimony it compiled to draft the ergonomics standard it could find the answer to those and many other questions.

Instead, I have a fourth question I would like to ask this Administration. When a young newspaper reporter's hands are numb after hours of typing at an obsolete keyboard, who is going to help her to drive her car?

When a baby cries out in the middle of the night and the pain in her mother's arms and hands is so severe from working at an obsolete keyboard that she can't reach down to lift that child from her crib and that young mother is left standing there with her heart breaking, who will be there to comfort her baby?

Will it be the company she works for? Will it be Secretary Chao? Or will it be George W. Bush?

I have no further comments.

Personal Explanation

Hon. Thomas G. Tancredo
Of Colorado

In the House of Representatives

Friday, July 27, 2001

Mr. Tancredo. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall vote 227 which occurred yesterday, July 26, I was present at that hour and I voted "aye" in support of H. Res. 209.

Unfortunately, the House voting machine did not record my vote.

Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 2002

Speech of

Hon. Maxine Waters
Of California

In the House of Representatives

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2350) making appropriations for the Treasury Department, the United States Postal Service, the Executive Office of the President, and certain Independent Agencies, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2002, and for other purposes:

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to support the amendment sponsored by Representative Kucinich which would create a commission to oppose the privatization of Social Security.

Individuals may question why we would create a commission whose outcome is already known. Well, I would pose that question to the President.

On May second, when the White House Commission on Social Security was announced, the President said that when reforms are made, benefits must be maintained at their current level, payroll taxes cannot be raised, and workers must be allowed to invest part of their earnings in private accounts. So we knew what the Commission was going to recommend privatization.

But if we do privatize there is no way that we can satisfy the other requirements of President Bush. Privatizing will result in reduction of benefits and it will surely wreck the financial stability of the program.

First, advocates of privatization suggest diverting part of the payroll tax, which funds Social Security, into the private accounts. However, by doing this we actually put the program in greater jeopardy. Studies have shown that by diverting just 2 percent of the payroll tax to private accounts, we bring the solvency rate closer. The President's very plan to restore stability to the program actually bankrupts Social Security sooner than if we do nothing at all.

In addition, privatization does not guarantee financial security. As an Economic Policy Institute study shows, “The bursting of the stock market bubble has meant the largest absolute decline in household wealth since World War II, even after adjusting for inflation. In relative terms, the market's drop represents the sharpest decline in household wealth in 25 years.” So workers who made possible the collapse of the stock market volatility could happen throughout a worker's lifetime, jeopardizing his or her retirement savings.

From the end of 1999 to the end of 2000, the total financial assets of American households declined 5% or $1.7 trillion. Therefore, the money some were planning on retiring with is not there anymore. Those who wanted to retire have to stretch their savings even further or continue working. That is a scary and unfair proposition for our seniors.

But what really concerns me is the idea of individuals putting their money in the stock market without sound financial advice. Many working families do not have the time or the extra money to hire financial advisors to make recommendations on where to put their money. The President's plan, indirectly, favors wealthy individuals and families because they are the only ones who have disposable income to invest, hire professionals and the time to invest with them.

Social Security is the most successful social policy to keep individuals out of poverty in the history of the United States. To privatize Social Security, especially without any type of