

1993 and certainly as it was in 1970. Protecting our environment is a priority for all Americans. To give this function the attention it deserves really necessitates elevating the EPA to the Department of Environmental Protection. H.R. 2694 does precisely this. In no small part, this commitment and elevation of the EPA signals to our world partners and to our own citizens that environmental protection and restoration is at the top of our policy priorities.

Besides elevating the EPA to a full department, we should look upon this as an opportunity to fix long overdue procedural challenges. In particular, we have an opportunity to ensure that in addressing environmental regulations, the Department utilizes the best science that is currently available and that sound public health priorities will actually be addressed by the proposal. It is worth noting that in passing their version of the legislation, the Senate included this very proposal and passed it by a vote of 95-3. It is refreshing to see that sometimes policy considerations can prevail over partisanship.

We face serious challenges to prevent global warming, to reduce toxic emissions, to assure quality air and to prevent other harmful discharges to ensure that we have clean sources of drinking water. These are large challenges with which we cannot afford to play politics. Evaluating the Environmental Protection Agency allows us the opportunity to take politics out of the equation, but we need to do it correctly. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the administration to move forward on this important bill.

MINNESOTANS MOURN THE DEATH OF KOREY STRINGER

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

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, the people of Minnesota and Minnesota Vikings football fans around the world are mourning today because we have had a tragic death in the family.

Minnesotans are devastated over the loss of Corey Stringer, the gifted all-pro Minnesota Vikings football player, loving husband and father, popular hero to Minnesota kids and respected role model in our great State.

As Vikings head coach Dennis Green put it, "We have lost a brother, a teammate and a friend. Everybody loved, respected and admired Corey Stringer. He was our gift from heaven."

Mr. Speaker, Minnesota lost more than just the anchor of the Vikings offensive line when Corey Stringer died at 1:50 this morning because of heatstroke. We lost much more than a Pro Bowl football player. We lost one of the finest people in the National Football League and our Twin Cities community.

As my friend Minnesota Vikings all-pro wide receiver Cris Carter said yesterday, "There was not a more well-liked player on our football team, but it's far greater than about football."

Korey was in his seventh season as a Viking after he was drafted in the first round in 1995 as a 20-year-old from Ohio State. Even though Korey was a native of Warren, Ohio, he chose to make the Twin Cities area his permanent home. He was a huge man physically, 6 feet 4, 335 pounds, and his heart was even bigger.

Known as a gentle giant, Corey Stringer gave so much to our Twin Cities community. He established Korey's Crew community service programs at local schools and at the St. Paul public library, and he was always available to help kids when help was needed. He loved to visit kids in local hospitals and schools, and he was one of the most involved Vikings in our community.

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Brad Madson, Director of Community Relations for the Vikings said yesterday, "Korey was one of a handful of players who wanted to get involved in the community. When he wasn't performing community service as part of his own Korey's Crew program, he was there supporting his teammates' community efforts."

A fifth-grade teacher at Bancroft Elementary in South Minneapolis, where Corey Stringer visited the kids weekly to talk about the importance of reading and staying in school, paid tribute to Corey yesterday by saying, "Korey Stringer was not commanding or brash. He was genuine and honest, and kids were drawn to him like a magnet.

"When Stringer visited schools, he signed autographs, shook hands and posed for photographs. But then he sat down and listened to the students' stories. He made them smile and laugh. And he came with his oft-repeated message: Read, stay in school, be responsible, be respectful."

Another teacher said yesterday, "A lot of times celebrities come and they spend 5 to 10 minutes, give a speech and then leave. Not Corey Stringer. He arrived early, greeted each youth, took photos with them, asked them about their favorite books and talked to them about them. He stayed until the last kid left. Not only did the Vikings lose a good football player, but the community lost a good man."

USA Today had a wonderful story in today's edition about Corey's love and concern for others. Just last week, Corey visited with Steven Arnold, who had been an assistant coach when Stringer played at Harding High School in Warren, Ohio. Coach Arnold told Stringer they were having equipment problems with a local youth football team, not enough money to buy equipment. Stringer went right out to

his truck and signed over his Pro Bowl to the youth football team. That was Corey Stringer.

Mr. Speaker, Minnesota Vikings owner Red McCombs summed it up well when he said, "We have lost a truly remarkable man who was an outstanding husband, father and football player."

My good friend of many years, former Viking Joe Senser, who is now the radio voice of the Minnesota Vikings, said, "You will not find a better family man who loved his family more."

Korey's loving wife Kelci, 3 year-old son Kodie and his extended family are in the thoughts and prayers of all of us. Korey, you might be gone, but you will never be forgotten by the people of Minnesota.

AMERICA SHOULD NOT TURN ITS BACK ON WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to be associated with the remarks of the gentleman from Minnesota relative to the loss of Corey Stringer, who not only was a great football player, but indeed was a role model, not only for Minnesota, but for the entire Nation. So we share with you the comments you have just made.

Mr. Speaker, as we speak, an intensive 2 week effort is under way in Geneva to finalize plans for the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The World Conference, to be held in Durban, South Africa, on August 31, is expected to be the most important international meeting on racism ever held.

Given America's tragic history of racial oppression, racism and inequality and the bloody struggles required to end slavery, lynching, Jim Crow discrimination in employment, education, health care and public accommodations, one would assume that America would have some important lessons to share with the international community.

Given the heavy price the world has been forced to pay as a result of the slave trade, one would assume that America would be sensitive and responsive to an attempt to clarify that history and examine means of redressing the wrongs of slavery and racism.

Given the ongoing conflicts and the heritage of conflict as a result of the exploitation of the Third World and other developed nations, largely driven by the American slave system, driven by the lingering aftereffects of the slave trade, one would assume that America would be sensitive and responsive to an attempt to clarify that history and examine means of redressing the wrongs of slavery and racism.

Given the contradictions arising from the international debt crisis, from the process of globalization and trade driven by the great inequalities between the rich nations and the poor nations, one would assume that America would be sensitive and responsive to an attempt to clarify that history and examine means of redressing the wrongs of slavery and racism.

One would assume that America would feel a powerful sense of responsibility to share those experiences, because we understand the immense human, social and economic costs associated with the evils of racism and discrimination.

Unfortunately, if one were to make those assumptions, one would be wrong. Our State Department has indicated that the United States will not attend the World Conference unless two items are struck from the proposed agenda: The characterization of Zionism as racism, and the issue of reparations for slavery and colonialism.

In international forums from Ireland to the Mideast, from Southern Africa to the Indian sub-continent, America has always insisted that problems cannot be solved, that differences cannot be narrowed, if we refuse to discuss them.

Suddenly America has become the loner in world diplomacy, insisting it is our way or no way. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Germ Warfare Treaty, the Kyoto Global Warming Treaty, and now the World Conference on Racism.

What kind of superpower are we? Are we about democracy, about democratic process, about transparency and mutual self-interest? Or are we about imposing our will on international consultations, about insisting on predetermining the outcomes of discussions between nations?

Only those who fear the outcome of fair and open discussion have reason to refuse to engage in debate and discussion. I believe that we have nothing to fear in openly and honestly exploring history and in repudiating racism.

It is time to come to grips with racism and the legacy of racism. It is in our national interests and in our international interests.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has correctly defined the problem. He stated we need to "find ways to acknowledge the past without getting lost there; and to help heal old wounds without reopening them."

If America is serious about its affirmation that racism and democracy are fundamentally incompatible, and I think that we are serious about it, then America must be at the table on August 31.

So I would hope, I would pray, and I would urge that America do in fact attend the conference, participate, and explore with the rest of the world attempts to find solutions to our past and present problems.

RESPONDING TO SECESSIONIST ARGUMENTS AGAINST INDIA

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor tonight to respond to statements made by some of my colleagues in their extensions of remarks on July 24. Their reference is to various secessionist movements in India.

My colleagues suggest that Muslims in Kashmir and Sikhs in Punjab, among other religious and ethnic groups in certain Indian states, have the right to separate their states from the Indian Nation. They seek the United States' support for secession. But their theory is not based on the American experience.

These critics deem the recent landmark summit between India and Pakistan a failure because it did not produce any substantive agreement over Kashmir. They argue that Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee's refusal to speak extensively on Kashmir was a testament to India's contempt for democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw a parallel between India, the world's largest democracy, and our own democracy in the United States. We cannot forget the principles on which this Nation was founded and the war we fought to maintain these principles, for it was in the Civil War that the Union fought to keep the South from seceding and to keep this Nation united.

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It was South Carolina's act of secession that was fiercely battled on American soil to keep the United States together at any cost. Americans refused to give in to the South's secession on ideological grounds and vehemently denied any right to secession based on the Constitution or the American historical experience. The framework of this Nation is founded on the fundamental notion that States cannot secede.

My colleagues condemned India for trying to keep the Nation together. India is a model for democracy in the South Asia region. India is supporting the same ideals that shaped the history and success of the United States. We should support India in its opposition to State secession.

Americans cherish the unity and patriotism that we fought so hard to maintain during the Civil War. India is fighting a battle that America fought in the 19th century and all for the same outcome: a united country.

My colleagues have made claims that India is not one nation, but rather a multinational state put together by the British for administrative convenience. Their claims ignore India's history, its independence movement, and the principles on which India was founded.

India was founded as a secular state based on an equality of religions. Secularism is the thread that holds together the fabric of diversity that characterizes India. Muslims and Sikhs do not need to secede from such a nation. Secession based on religion or any other ideological principle goes against the secularism that India stands for, and it is the secularism that India cannot afford to compromise in its fight for democracy.

Mr. Speaker, a divided India is a recipe for chaos. A peaceful and smooth transition to a split India is not feasible. With the diverse array of regions, 18 official languages and 17 freedom movements in India, the breakdown of India would be disruptive for its people and the international community. A divided India is more susceptible to outside influence and the possible resurgence of colonialism. For a country such as India, unity is its strength.

While a joint agreement may not have come out of the India-Pakistan summit in July, we must realize that India has a sincere desire to improve relations with its neighbors. A united and strong India is a necessary prerequisite for cultivating a positive relationship with not only Pakistan, but all of South Asia.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

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

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, we are once again approaching a national discussion with the regard to the issue of immigration, and I am glad we are doing so because it is, of course, an important one.

I am concerned because many times this particular issue is one that we are reluctant to deal with. We are reluctant on the floor of the House; we are reluctant oftentimes in the court of public opinion to discuss the issue of immigration or immigration reform for fear that somehow or other our concerns on this particular topic would be interpreted as being either anti-immigrant or racist in nature.

But it is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that it is one of the most significant and perplexing problems we face as a Nation. It is, I think, one of the most serious of the domestic policy issues that we face as a Nation, because it affects us in a variety of ways. Massive immigration into the United States, especially massive numbers of illegal immigrants into the United States, cause a number of problems. They cause problems not just for people in the United States, but they cause problems even for those coming in.

We have heard, of course, many times of the situations that have occurred as people have come across the border,