

our Nation's military retirees have chosen to retire near a military installation. They do so so that in their golden years they can use those base hospitals and they can use the base commissary.

We, in effect, when we took them away from their families and sent them all around the world to defend us, we took one family away from them but gave them another. The new family is called the Air Force, the Coast Guard, the Marine Corps, or the Army. When we close the base, we have taken the family away from them.

They have purchased a house that is automatically reduced in value by the closure of that base. They are up in age, they do not want to up and move again, so in effect we have taken away their family doctor, the family grocery store, and once again, added to the list of things where they say we have broken promises to them.

I think it is bad for the present. Right now, all across America there are people working today, tonight, early into the morning, working overtime to take care to do those things that need to be done so our troops in the field in Afghanistan and all around the world are taken care of.

With the passage of this bill, they will immediately begin to wonder whether or not on November 7 of 2005 if that base will be open and if they are going to have a job. So instead of being rewarded for doing a good job for our Nation, they will immediately begin to worry about their future, and in all probability start looking for another job.

I think it is bad because when I asked my Senate colleagues, the other body, if they could name one single weapons system that has been purchased with savings from the previous three rounds of base closure, they cannot name one, because there is no savings. See, the myth of base closure is that we somehow save money because we close the base, we save a little bit on salaries. However, we are going to turn around and sell the property.

The part that was never explained to this Congress, but I will explain, is that the Nation has to live by the same laws as any other individual. Therefore, those laws that require properties to be cleaned up before they can be sold or given away apply to this Nation. Today, our Nation has spent over \$13 billion cleaning up bases that were in turn given to local governing authorities because they could not find anything to do with them. They had suffered devastating effects to their local economy.

I think it is bad for the future, because once again we are breaking bonds between local communities and military installations. As we see a shrinking force, we also see a shrinking number of bases and a shrinking number of citizens who appreciate on a day-to-day basis what those bases do for us.

The young soldiers, young airmen, young Marines, young Coast Guardsmen, the young folks who participate in the Special Olympics, in the Toys for Tots, who get involved in the Boys and Girls Clubs, they are gone. They are no longer part of the community. They are shipped off, and once again the military becomes somebody else's constituent, somebody else's neighbor.

It is bad, because when we lose that property, we never get it back, particularly our bases that are in waterside communities, once that property is disposed of, should there be another national crisis. And let me tell the Members, there will be another national crisis.

I have been in Congress for 12 years. I no sooner got here than the Berlin Wall came down and 3 months later American forces were in Panama. Less than a year later they were in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Since then they have gone to Bosnia, Kosovo. Right now, they are in Afghanistan. Who knows, given the open-ended use of force resolution that this Congress has passed, what happens next.

I think it is a horrible message that we are going to tell those people who defend us that their military housing is at risk because we could very well close down the base that houses them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES), for helping me to introduce this resolution. I would hope my colleagues would give serious thought to this. Not one Member of the House has voted to close bases. The other body only passed it by three votes.

I think it would be insane of the House of Representatives to allow this bad policy to become law tomorrow.

#### AMERICA CANNOT AFFORD TO IGNORE THE PLIGHT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FARMERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, as I have often spoken to this body about the plight of black farmers, again I rise today to speak about the same subject. Their problems and their possibilities transcend region and reach beyond where each of us lives and encompass a wide array of economic opportunities, and include not just black Americans but Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Indian Americans, and women.

This issue also affects the disabled. A wheelchair-bound white male in Michigan has felt the sting of unfair, discriminatory practices at the hands of those charged with serving, through the Agriculture Department, all citizens who make farming a way of life.

The plight of black farmers also affects those who reside in urban Amer-

ica as certainly as it affects those in rural America. What if the cost of milk was prohibitive for the average person? It is in many parts of the world. What if eggs and bread was not readily available, even for those who could afford them? That is the situation for some on other continents. What if fresh fruit, vegetables, or poultry could not be found on our supermarket shelves? There are supermarket shelves devoid of these products.

Just a short time ago, many Americans were touched by the kind of discomfort that citizens around the world experience on a daily basis when the meat crisis ground some hamburger sales to a screeching halt. The fate of farmers and the fate of urban dwellers are inextricably tied together. Discriminatory practices in extending loans, technical assistance, and resources of whatever kind will cost those in New York as surely as they will cost those in my district in Halifax County, North Carolina. Fading numbers of small farmers, black farmers, necessarily impact the quality of life and the cost of food and fiber.

Mr. Speaker, the motivation for me to seek an assignment with the Committee on Agriculture was that it provided me an excellent opportunity for me to improve the quality of life for the residents of my area, the First Congressional District of North Carolina, a primarily rural and economically disadvantaged area with large and small farmers, both commercial and non-commercial.

Farms have been important to this Nation's past; and farmers are vital to this Nation's future, especially small family farmers and ranchers. American producers, who represent less than 3 percent of the population, provide more than enough to meet the needs of our Nation, as well as many nations of the world.

There has been a great decline, however, in our Nation's farms since the late fifties. In 1959, there were over 2.4 million small farms in the United States. Over 170,000 farms were in North Carolina, representing some 6.9 percent. But by 1978, the national number of small farms had declined to a little over 1.3 million, a loss of 1.1 million small farms. In the same period, North Carolina lost 106,262 small farms, bringing our total to 69,091 small farms, but still holding at 5 percent of the national total.

It is also important to understand that by 1990, almost a quarter of all farm households had incomes below the poverty line, more than twice the national average. Life has become very tough for our American farmers.

By 1992, there were only 1.1 million small farms left in the United States, a 45 percent decline from 1959. North Carolina had only a little over 59,000 farms left in 1992, a 23 percent decline; better than the national percentage,

however, but certainly nothing to brag about.

Several factors have accelerated the demise of small producers: Globalization of commerce, economies of scale, limited access to capital, technological advances. The existence of worldwide markets for all commodities, not just agriculture, has created unique market forces.

Indeed, black farmers have suffered more. More than anything else, Mr. Speaker, the American people have ignored the fact that only 1 percent of the total farmers that now exist are African American; that is 18,816. This Nation cannot afford to ignore the plight of American farmers who happen to be African American.

**TAX RELIEF FOR FAMILIES OF SURVIVORS OF SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS, ECONOMIC SECURITY, AND HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR DISPLACED WORKERS**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to discuss a number of topics tonight; and I know I am going to be joined by at least one of my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN).

But I wanted to say that in the last couple of weeks before the holiday break, which I guess most of the Members of Congress are hoping that there will be some sort of holiday break, what I find, both here in Washington, in this Chamber, as well as back at home, is that while people continue to be concerned about the war on terrorism and also security here at home, they are also increasingly concerned about the economy and the recession that we now face, and the fact that so many workers have lost their jobs, the unemployment rate continues to rise, and that those displaced workers oftentimes have a problem, obviously, finding a new job, but also with their health care, their inability to keep their health insurance, as well as the fact that many Americans now face a problem that even if they have health insurance, they find that it costs them more, either because the premium goes up or because they have more copayments.

There is a tremendous amount of concern also, I think, by Americans, by the average American, about retirement security and whether Social Security, for example, or their pension, is going to be there when they retire.

So on the one hand, we continue the war on terrorism, which the President has very successfully continued in Afghanistan against the Taliban and al

Qaeda; but at the same time, there is increasing concern about the economy at home and the recession that faces us.

I wanted to start this evening very briefly by talking about an issue that kind of goes together and concerns what happened September 11, and also is an economic security issue.

About one week ago, last Wednesday, in fact, there were about a dozen women who lost their husbands during the September 11 terrorist attack who boarded a train in my home State of New Jersey, leaving their children behind, and came down to Washington. They did not want to be here. They were visiting with not only members of the New Jersey delegation, as well as our two U.S. Senators, but they also met with the Speaker and they met with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), the Democratic leader in the House.

When I say that these women did not want to come to Washington, that was obvious. They said many times that they were concerned about their children at home and about even being here. In fact, I would say that they were really angry over the fact that they had to personally come to the Nation's capital and ask in this case the House Republican leadership to bring up a bill that provides tax relief for their families.

The reason I bring it up tonight, and I have to say, I am going to bring it up every night until we adjourn for the holidays, is because when the women met with the Speaker, according to them, the Speaker promised them that the House would consider a tax relief bill for the victims' families from September 11 and that that bill would be brought up the following Tuesday, which was yesterday.

Well, it is pretty obvious, Mr. Speaker, that Tuesday has come and gone and nothing has happened in this regard, and they are still waiting.

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My question really is how much longer are they going to have to worry about receiving relief from the Federal Government?

I do not want this to be partisan, but I understand, and I think they totally understand, that it is the Republican leadership that has to bring up this bill because they control the House. And I would say tonight, and I will say every night between now and when we leave, that it is time for the Speaker and the Republican leadership to step up and provide this tax relief by accepting the language that was passed last month by the U.S. Senate. The Senate passed a bill that accomplishes the goal of giving these women, in this case, widows, not only relief from their income tax for the 2-year period, but also relief from the payroll tax, from estate taxes. And it has other provisions that would help them out in this time of need.

Mr. Speaker, and now I am talking about "the Speaker," these families have not forgotten the promise that was made to them last week, and I would urge that this bill be brought up quickly, tomorrow, the next day, or as soon as possible. And as I said, I will continue to come to the House floor every day until the Republican leadership brings this legislation to the floor, because I think it is the only right thing to do.

I would like to, before I get into the economic stimulus issue, because I really believe very strongly that we need to pass an economic stimulus package also before we go home for the holidays, but before getting into that I would like to yield to the gentlewoman from Florida who, I understand, is here because she wants to comment on this report that was recently put out by the President's Commission on Social Security.

I have to say, again going back to what I said initially, I know in New Jersey and throughout the country that people continue to be concerned about terrorism but, at the same time, I also know that I am getting a lot of concern on behalf of my constituents about the economic issues, whether it be the recession, Social Security, or Medicare, and we were hopeful that this commission was going to make some recommendations with regard to Social Security that would deal with the solvency problem.

We know in a few years that Social Security is going to start to diminish. The money will not be there, at least at the levels that are promised. And I know that the gentlewoman and I were very disappointed that their recommendations really do not deal with the solvency problem, and make recommendations with regard to privatization and other matters that I think are not really going to help.

So I yield to the gentlewoman.

Mrs. THURMAN. I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for yielding to me.

I first would say to the women who came from New Jersey here to speak to the body, we heard so eloquently today somebody talk about "we the people," and this being "the people's place of business," and so we do need to be paying attention to what is being said for those people who are having to suffer as a result of these September 11 attacks. They are the survivors, the families, their children. We need to be very cognizant of the issues and the needs that are facing them, and particularly not only at the tough time, but the holiday time, when they are already suffering from their losses, but then to be economically strapped because of the consequences.

Mr. PALLONE. If I could just reclaim my time. I did not go into the issue in a lot of detail, in part because, I have to be honest, it concerns me so much