

state now in Congress, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), in hosting the voting technology demonstration on Thursday, March 22. There we will address our own work at the State level to improve voting accountability and accuracy and demonstrate the various forms of election equipment, including punchcard ballot, optical scan and direct recording electronic systems.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to attend this educational event, as it will help prepare us for a nationwide discussion on election reform. Additionally, I ask that my colleagues join me in supporting this VOTE Act to make voting one of the greatest expressions of civic participation available on an equal basis to all Americans.

REINTRODUCTION OF CHILD HANDGUN INJURY PREVENTION ACT, H.R. 1014

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, we continue to observe school shootings, and I am concerned that we have yet to pass strong gun safety legislation.

Despite recent polls by CBS and the New York Times which suggest that 70 percent of American people favor stricter handgun laws, Congress continues to ignore the public's concerns.

January 10, in Ventura County, California, a 17-year-old student held a classmate at gunpoint during the school's lunch break. The gunman was fatally wounded by police.

January 12, 2001, in my district, Indianapolis, Indiana, a 4-year-old boy shot himself with a pistol he found in his mother's pocketbook.

February 7, 2001 in Dallas, Texas, a 14-year-old boy fired a gun in the direction of classmates while on school grounds.

March 6, in Santee, California, a 15-year-old boy took a .22-caliber long-barrel revolver from his father's locked collection of weapons and killed two schoolmates, while injuring 13 others.

March 7, this year, Williamsburg, Pennsylvania, a 14-year-old girl shot a female classmate in the shoulder in the cafeteria of a parochial school.

March 7, Prince Georges County, Maryland, a 14-year-old boy shot and wounded another teenager outside Largo Senior High School.

From 1987 to 1996, nearly 2,200 American children, 14 years of age and younger, died from unintentional shootings. What are we waiting for? We must not allow these tragedies to become an everyday part of American life. We must not be apathetic.

While firearm fatalities cost America more money than any of the other four

leading causes of death, guns are the only consumer product in America, except tobacco, which are exempt from health care and safety regulations. Sadly, guns continue to be exempt from Federal oversight, and consumer protection laws continue to be tougher on toy guns than on real guns.

The history of consumer product regulation teaches us that significant numbers of death and illnesses can be preserved when health and safety regulations exist. The Poison Prevention Packaging Act requires child-resistant packaging. The Consumer Federation of America estimates that more than 700 children have avoided accidental poisonings. Also, the introduction of sleep wear and toy standards have saved children's lives.

I ask my colleagues to join me in the bill that I introduced last week, the Child Handgun Injury Prevention Act, H.R. 1014. It requires manufacturers' safety devices.

We introduced it in another bill that requires training to entitle you to have licenses. H.R. 1014 requires the Secretary of the Treasury to mandate all newly manufactured handguns come equipped with child safety devices, and it would establish a Federal standard for the devices.

We can do nothing less than to ensure the future safety of our children and prevent them from unintentional handgun injury. We need to require safety devices that meet the rigid tests by the Department of the Treasury.

I encourage each Member of the House of Representatives to join me in this effort.

□ 1230

TRIBUTE TO BRET TARVER

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

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, Phoenix, Arizona, has now grown to be the sixth largest city in our country. Yet over the course of the last 7 days, the entire city and surrounding areas have seen the frenetic pace of life come virtually to a standstill as the community has paused to honor one of our fallen fire fighters.

A week ago today, in responding to a blaze at a supermarket, Phoenix fire fighter Bret Tarver gave his life. For his wife, Robin, for their three young daughters, for the Phoenix Fire Department, for brother and sister fire fighters across the country and for all Arizonans, this is an exceptional loss.

Bret Tarver was born 40 years ago in what is now the 6th Congressional District of Arizona in Cave Creek. He and his wife, Robin, and their daughters recently made their home in another area of the district, Queen Creek, Ari-

zona. That is because Bret was a lifelong outdoors enthusiast. He loved hunting and fishing. He loved nature. But most of all, he loved his family, and he loved being a public servant.

Mr. Speaker, all too often, during the course of political discourse, we describe elective office as public service. Mr. Speaker, how incomplete a definition that is. Public service can take many forms. The citizen can volunteer. He can be involved in civic clubs or spiritual organizations. Yet the ultimate public service all too often comes from our public safety officers who here at home are called upon to put their lives on the line.

So it was one week ago on a Wednesday with the sun shining and the flowers blooming and spring training and all the frenetic activity so common to the desert southwest that an event sadly too common, a fire in uncommon and tragic fashion, ended the life of an uncommon man.

Colleagues describe Bret Tarver as a gentle giant, a man who stood over 6 feet 3 inches, who tipped the scales at well over 200 pounds, who had tremendously big hands, but often would envelope the tiny hands of his daughters and other kids on their soccer team in his own, one who inspired trust, one who worked tirelessly in his chosen profession as a fire fighter.

Mr. Speaker, when so many of that calling have come to Washington this week, perhaps the greatest tribute we can pay to the memory of Bret Tarver is to pause and appreciate the service and the sacrifice of every one of those fire fighters who put their lives on the line who in so many ways, in so many manifestations, work for the public good and the public safety, and who sadly, in the case of Bret Tarver, pay the ultimate sacrifice as a part of public service.

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues join me in expressing sympathies and encouraging prayer for Bret's widow, Robin, for his three daughters, for the strapping brothers that made up an active household years ago who mourn his loss, for his parents, for his fellow fire fighters, and for the people of Phoenix and the surrounding area.

Mr. Speaker, we pause to remember Bret Tarver, his sacrifice, his legacy, and the shining example of true public service that he represented so well and so faithfully.

TIME TO MOVE TOWARDS ENERGY INDEPENDENCE IN OUR COUNTRY

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH) because, last year, the city of Houston lost two fire fighters. It is appropriate that we remember the Tarver family and their

sacrifice, because having experienced two fire fighters' loss of life last year and again having fire fighters up here this week with us, we join in that.

I rise today, though, to talk about the energy crisis affecting our country and steps that need to be taken to increase our exploration, production, and delivery of energy. I want to try and cool some of the rhetoric that I believe is slowing down the process of trying to find a comprehensive energy solution.

First, at this moment, insufficient supplies of natural gas are threatening to produce widespread shortages, not only in California and the West, but throughout our country this summer.

This shortage can be traced to the oversupply of natural gas 2 years ago. Everyone likes to point the finger at energy producers when prices are high; but no one seems to care when, a year or two ago, we could not even give natural gas away. Those extremely low prices 2 years ago stopped exploration activities and forced many natural gas producers to cap marginally-producing wells.

The laws of supply and demand work, and it did not stay out of balance for too long. We thought that cheap natural gas would last forever in the building spree; and with our encouragement, because it is safer and cleaner, new natural gas generators highlighted this belief that natural gas would be cheap.

So today around our country, the demand for natural gas has far outstripped the supply, and we need to respond to this shortfall.

Staying in front of our energy needs is the key to avoiding high cost. Exploration and production of domestic energy sources are the keys to staying in front along with more efficient use of our domestic energy.

While we are behind on natural gas production, I need to remind everyone we will soon also be behind on oil production as well. Last summer's high gasoline prices are only a taste of what is to come. Already we have heard that OPEC plans to cut production in an attempt to maintain a stable world oil price. Demand in this country easily outstrips the supply, and we have no cushion to fall back on during times of a tight supply.

It is for these reasons that we must take steps to stay ahead of our oil curve and tap more domestic sources of production. Specifically, I have agreed to cosponsor H.R. 39, the Arctic Coastal Plain Domestic Energy Security Act of 2001. The coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, known as ANWR, is said to contain between 5.7 and 16 billion barrels of recoverable oil. If the upper 16 billion barrels of recoverable reserve can be extracted, it represents 20 years of oil which we will not have to import from other parts of the world. I want to emphasize that these reserve numbers are also considered very conservative.

As a Member of Congress from Houston, Texas, I know firsthand that the drilling technologies have continued to improve. In fact, we have been and continue drilling and production in the Gulf of Mexico. Technology has allowed us to go deeper and also do it more efficiently and safely.

As equipment and techniques advance, the percentage of recoverable oil will also increase. Industry now has the technology to reduce the amount of land impacted by new oil development.

North Slope drillers routinely drill directional wells that reach out 4 miles from the surface of the rig. That means that one production pad on the surface can produce from 64 square miles of subsurface oil fields. So you do not have the imprint of that facility.

The decision to support drilling in ANWR was not made just on the need to utilize energy resources alone. I have been to ANWR. I have seen the environment and have witnessed firsthand the diversity of life that lives there, even during August, Mr. Speaker, and met with the Alaskans that live the closest to the ANWR refuge.

I would not support this legislation if I did not feel that we could confidently with our ability safely extract oil in an environmentally sound manner.

Careful development of ANWR under strict regulatory guidelines can provide our Nation with a vital resource while minimizing the environmental impact on the coastal plain and its wildlife.

Our experiences on Alaska's North Slope provide strong evidence that oil and gas development in nearby ANWR would pose little threat to the ecology of the coastal plain. The record is clear. Air quality is good. The drilling wastes have been well managed, and wildlife and their habitat have been minimally impacted.

The debate on this issue has been heated and will get even more heated. But many of the arguments being made in opposition to opening ANWR were raised at the time Prudhoe Bay and the North Slope development was being considered. Today we are much better than we were those many years ago. Most experts have acknowledged that Prudhoe Bay has been, and continues to be, a success story.

I keep going back to the same point, we can extract this vital resource while at the same time safeguarding the environment and other resources in that region. After careful consideration, the answer should be yes. Extracting oil from ANWR will have positive benefits for American consumers.

I do not dismiss the concerns in the environmental community, but many of the arguments again were made at the same time when we were doing it for North Slope. The environment has been safeguarded on North Slope. I believe with advances in drilling technology, we will be safer with ANWR.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in cosponsoring H.R. 39. It is time to move towards energy independence in our country.

NURSING SHORTAGE

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

Mrs. CAPPs. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to the attention of the House the impending shortage of nurses. I am one of three nurses currently serving in Congress. Before I was elected, I served the people of Santa Barbara as a public health nurse over 20 years.

My experience gives me a distinct perspective on nursing issues. I know firsthand the challenges facing the nursing profession and the consequences if we fail to meet them. Nurses are the first line of defense in our health care system, and the importance of this role cannot be overstated.

Today the nursing community is facing a dire situation. There is currently an ongoing shortage of nurses in the work force. In the past, this type of shortage has been resolved when pay and benefits have risen enough to attract new nurses into the field. But that is not the case this time. While some compensation levels have been rising, these improvements have not attracted enough nurses back into practice.

We are also facing a looming crisis in a profession that will strain the health care system and threaten the quality of care. We have an aging nursing work force and a dwindling supply of new nurses. Right now, the average age of employed registered nurses is 43 years. By 2010, 40 percent of the RN work force will be over 50.

Unfortunately, and in contrast, the number of young nurses is decreasing. Under 30 years of age, it has now declined by 41 percent. With this combination, we are facing an incredible shortfall of well-trained, experienced nurses in all fields.

To make matters worse, this will happen just as the 78 million members of the baby boom generation begin to retire and need an even greater amount of health care.

In my home State of California, the problem is even worse. Less than 10 percent of the RN work force back home is under the age of 30, and nearly a third are over the age of 50. California already ranks 50th among the States in RNs per capita.

Part of the problem is that the nursing work force is so homogeneous. The vast majority of nurses are white women. Fifty years ago, a smart young woman had only a handful of career options available to her, including nursing. But as our society's views on women's equality have progressed, we have not escaped the perception that nursing is women's work.