As young women have explored different careers, very few young men have entered the nursing work force to replace them. So right now less than 6 percent of the nursing work force is comprised of men.

Likewise, even though the percentage of minorities in our national work force has arisen close to 25 percent, minorities still only represent 10 percent of RNs.

In order to deal with this looming shortage, we are going to need to address a number of issues and to be very creative in our solutions. We need to draw more people into the profession, particularly the young men and women at the high school level who are just choosing their career paths. We need to reach out to minorities and disadvantaged youth. We need to retain those nurses who are already in the work force. We need to make sure we have enough nursing school faculty, mentors and preceptors to properly educate and train our work force.

□ 1245

I have been working with various working groups, with Senator JOHN KERRY, and other Members of Congress to develop a set of measures that can help deal with both the immediate and the long-term problems that we face. Soon I will be introducing comprehensive legislation to address these shortages.

This legislation will include proposals to improve access to nursing education, to create partnerships between health care providers and educational institutions, to support nurses as they seek more training, and to improve the collection and analysis of data about the nursing workforce.

But we will also need to look at creative new ideas to truly address this problem. In my home town, Santa Barbara, Cottage Hospital and Santa Barbara City College have joined with San Marcos High School to create a health academy. This is a perfect example of the kind of creative solution we need.

In their sophomore year, 60 students will start taking health-care courses taught by professionals from the hospital and college. When they graduate, they can be certified nursing assistants or continue their nursing education in SBCC's 2-year nursing education RN program. For its first class in this high school, there are already 128 applicants for those 60 spaces.

This program can serve to recruit young men and women into the nursing profession as well as change misperceptions among other students and teachers about the value of a nursing career. With support, this program could be replicated in other high-need areas, or other types of public-private partnerships could be developed.

The challenges we face in the nursing and public health communities are becoming more and more evident and the need for national action on them is equally evident.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in this effort so we can achieve a bipartisan solution to these problems.

FOOD SAFETY IN THE UNITED STATES AS IT RELATES TO THE MEAT INDUSTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, just as a courtesy to whoever may follow, I will probably take about 20 minutes on this special order.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot help but notice a myriad of headlines touting gloom and doom on the horizon for our Nation's future. Whether it is foot-and-mouth disease threatening the world's livestock, the downturn in the world's economy, or the energy crisis that is jacking up home heating costs to really high levels, many of my constituents wonder where to turn for answers. Well today, Mr. Speaker, I would propose that America take a second look at its backbone, agriculture, as agriculture relates to some of these issues.

So the first topic I would like to discuss is food safety. The United States has one of the safest food supplies in the world. Prior to coming to Congress I was a physician and I am a father and I have a very keen interest in the issue of food safety. A few years ago, I was on an overseas surgical mission; and instead of just bringing back good memories, I brought back a case of encephalitis which I may have picked up from food overseas.

When I came to Congress, I cosponsored and helped pass the Food Quality Protection Act. It established new safety standards for the use of pesticides and required the EPA to use sound science in making its decisions. We all have a great stake in helping to ensure that our food supply is safe.

There have been concerns about the safety of food with the spread of two diseases in Europe related to the livestock and meat industry: Foot-and-mouth disease and mad cow disease. Both of these diseases, believe me, are being taken very seriously by the United States Department of Agriculture, the USDA, and the livestock industry. A little bit of background is in order.

Foot-and-mouth disease does not pose a threat to humans, but it is devastating to livestock herds. The disease attacks cattle, swine, sheep, deer, goats and other cloven-hoofed animals. The disease is caused by a virus that is very contagious and can be spread by physical contact between infected animals and people, animals and other material. The virus can persist in contaminated fodder in the environment for up to 1 month depending on the temperature and various other conditions.

The disease causes blisters in the mouth and on the feet of the animals. It causes them to drool. It causes them to be lame. Let me repeat, the disease does not affect humans. This disease causes debilitation if the animal lives, and it frequently results in death to the animal. The disease is not new, and it has been fairly widespread around the world. It was not, however, prominent in areas with extensive agricultural trade with the United States until the recent outbreak in Great Britain and Northern Europe.

Let me make a point. There are currently no cases of foot-and-mouth disease in the United States. But historically there have been nine outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease in our country. The last outbreak in the United States occurred in 1929. According to the Animal, Plant and Health Inspection Service, livestock animals in the United States are highly susceptible to the foot-and-mouth disease virus. If an outbreak were to occur in our country, it would be essential to detect and eradicate it immediately. If it were to spread across the country, our livestock industry could suffer enormous economic losses. The disease could spread to deer and other wildlife making it even more difficult to eradicate, so it is crucial that we keep the virus from entering the United States.

We have always prohibited infected animals and infected animal by-products from entering the country, but in response to the recent serious outbreak in Europe, the USDA has taken the following actions: Number one, USDA has temporarily prohibited the importation of swine and other ruminants, and any fresh swine or ruminant meat and other products of swine and ruminants from the European Union.

Number two, USDA is preventing travelers entering the United States from carrying any agricultural products, particularly animal products, that could spread the disease. The USDA has mandated that travelers report any farm contact to Customs and USDA officials. All baggage is subject to inspection with penalties for violations of up to $1,000.

Number three, the USDA has established a team of 40 academic and government experts to evaluate, monitor and assist in containment efforts.

Number four, the USDA has placed additional inspectors and dog teams at airports and other ports of entry to check incoming passengers, luggage and cargo. They have stationed USDA officials worldwide to monitor reports of the disease.

Number five, the USDA has conducted a widespread public education campaign to make the public more

aware of this disease and the steps that we can all take to help keep our country free of this animal disease.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter and I hope that my remarks today are helpful in that public education effort.

Now, in addition to foot-and-mouth disease, there have also been concerns about the cattle disease bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or what is called mad cow disease. It has been featured in many news stories. It is usually portrayed in a very ominous and foreboding manner.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear, there has never been a case of mad cow disease in the United States. Not only has no human being ever been affected by it in the United States, but no cow has ever been infected by it in the United States, and that is not a coincidence. The USDA and the cattle industry have taken extensive measures to keep our beef supply safe. Mad cow disease was first discovered in England in 1985. Scientists believe that the disease began when remains of sheep that had suffered from a neurologic disease called scrapie were used as cattle feed. Cows developed a neurologic disease called bovine spongiform encephalopathy after eating the contaminated feed. It is not otherwise contagious between animals. Scrapie is found in some sheep in the United States, but it has never caused any health problems in humans.

Mad cow disease in cattle causes a certain type of protein called prions, a normal part of human and animal brain, to become deformed. This leads to a degeneration of brain tissue and to eventual death. In Europe when they have seen these cases, it has occurred primarily in younger people. Although deformed prions are located in brain tissue, eye tissue and spinal cords of infected cattle, if humans eat beef products containing those tissues, it is possible for them to contract a form of the disease.

About 90 people in Europe have died from the human form of the disease which is called Creutzfeldt-Jacob variant disease. All of those fatalities occurred in Europe, mostly in Great Britain. I wanted to again point out, there have never been any cases in the United States of either humans or animals catching this disease. Why is that? Well, it is because we have been watching for it. The USDA has been doing its job.

The USDA began taking steps in 1988 to prevent the disease from reaching the United States beef industry. In 1989, they banned the importation of live ruminants such as cattle, sheep, goats and most ruminant products from countries where mad cow disease has been identified. In 1990, they began educational outreach efforts to veterinarians, cattle producers and laboratory diagnosticians about the clinical signs and diagnosis of the disease. They also began an active surveillance effort to examine the brains of U.S. cattle for possible signs of disease.

In 1993, they expanded their surveillance to include what are called ''downer'' cows. These are cows that fall down from a disease, frequently on the slaughterhouse floor, not just cows that were acting unusual.

In 1997, the USDA moved to prohibit the importation of live ruminants, i.e. cattle, and most ruminant products from all of Europe. The Environmental Protection Agency also passed regulations to prevent the feeding of most mammalian proteins to ruminants.

In 1998, the USDA entered into an agreement with Harvard University to analyze and evaluate the department's prevention measures.

In 1999 and again in 2000, the USDA expanded their surveillance procedures. In December of last year, the USDA prohibited all imports of rendered animal products regardless of species from Europe. The restriction applied to products originating, rendered, processed or otherwise associated with European products.

Last month, the USDA suspended importation of processed beef and associated products from Brazil, not because there was evidence of disease in Brazil, but because they could not document that they were taking all steps to prevent the disease in Brazil.

The USDA has trained more than 250 State and Federal field veterinarians throughout the United States to recognize and diagnose animal diseases, including mad cow disease.

In all of that time with the thousands of cattle that have been tested, there has never been a single cow found to have the disease in the United States.

There has also been pathology work done on a systematic basis in the United States to investigate human deaths caused by neurological diseases. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention does this for a variety of public health reasons in the study of neurologic diseases. There have been no cases in the United States where the patient has died from a variant associated with mad cow disease. George Gray, a researcher at Harvard School of Public Health stated, ''The chance of this becoming a serious health risk in the United States is very low.''

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He also said, ''We won't have a United States' style epidemic here. It just won't happen.'' An official of the World Health Organization agreed. He said that American officials are ''taking the right measures to prevent the occurrence of the disease in their country.'' He added that ''the risk in the United States is low.''

This is not to say that we should stop taking steps to further decrease the disease from reaching our country. I plan to ask for increased funding for the Centers for Disease Control for surveillance of prion diseases to bring us up to the level being spent for research in other countries. I have also met with officials from the USDA and representatives of the cattle industry regarding this problem. I am also willing to support additional measures if the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service feels that that would be helpful in adding another layer of protection for our beef supply and for the public's health. This is a very serious issue, and it should be dealt with responsibly and rationally and calmly.

Working to maintain and protect our food supplies goes hand in hand with building the United States' reputation as a reliable supplier of food products to the rest of the world. This, Mr. Speaker, will help strengthen our Nation's agricultural economy and our Nation's agricultural exports because we have a safe product and other countries are going to want that safe product.

In light of the hoof and mouth disease in other parts of the world, it is even more important, in my opinion, to grant President Bush what is called ''fast track'' trade authority. Every President should be granted the opportunity to negotiate a treaty in good faith with a foreign government. Congress should have renewed that authority when it expired in 1994. In trade meetings, it is very important for all the negotiators to know that Congress will choose either to accept or reject the treaty without removing or inserting provisions.

Mr. Speaker, this is very important for international trade as it relates to these animal diseases which I have talked about. Other nations are going to be very leery of entering into agreements of international agricultural trade. We must be able to craft a treaty exactly and to have that treaty voted on without change or I am afraid those foreign governments will not want to enter into international treaties. Foreign countries are wisely hesitant to agree to contentious issues during negotiations if they know that later on when they have put their neck on the line with their own citizens that the treaty could be undercut by changes or congressional amendments.

Mr. Speaker, my home State of Iowa is always one of the leading States in the production of agricultural products. In a recent year it exported more than $3.5 billion in farm commodities alone. It is probable that we will export even more meat if our meat remains safe. But this may be short-lived once other countries reestablish their livestock and then say from their experience with hoof and mouth disease, ''We're going to cut off those borders.''

The ramifications of a trade slowdown based on caution due to animal health concerns is not just a problem

for agricultural products, either. If trade agreements are not reached, other sectors of the economy are going to be impacted.

Iowa firms are very active, for instance, in the area of international financial services. Failure to bring trade agreements to conclusion can impact their ability to market their products around the world. Right now, the two most contentious issues in our international trade agreements are agriculture and financial services. And so we have a balance going on.

It is amazing, Mr. Speaker, how an issue like hoof and mouth disease can impact another area before us, such as international trade on financial services. History proves that the free flow of goods around the world is beneficial to our economy. Now is not the time for protectionism. We must have adequate safeguards at our borders, but we must also ensure that we are able to export our agricultural commodities.

And it is not just for our own financial benefit. The Midwest, where I come from, is the world's breadbasket. We supply meat and grains to the world. When we are looking at burgeoning populations around the world, it is very important to prevent famine that we be able to export our goods. All one has to do is look back in history. High tariffs and retaliatory trade practices turned an economic downturn in the 1930s into the Great Depression, pushing unemployment to over 30 percent. We must make sure that our animals stay healthy and that we continue to promote international trade. It is important for the economy.

Mr. Speaker, on a final note, the Bush administration has faced many important decisions in its first few months in office. I think one remaining decision will have long-lasting implications. It involves the oxygenate requirements of the Clean Air Act. The EPA is being asked to waive the requirement for the State of California. I think this would be very damaging if pursued by the administration. I believe the President understands the importance of maintaining the current requirement and that he will choose not to grant a waiver.

I was able to talk to President Bush directly on Air Force One when he flew back to Iowa recently. I talked to the President about the matter of promoting ethanol and banning a chemical called MTBE. This is the oxygenate that is used in gasoline around most of the country. It is an oil-based oxygenate, an oil-based chemical. I think we have to phase that out.

The EPA has determined that this chemical, MTBE, is a ground water contaminant and it is a possible carcinogen. If you take one teaspoon of that chemical and you put it into an Olympic-size swimming pool, it renders all the water in that swimming pool undrinkable. The stench is incredible, much less what it could be doing to your body once it gets inside.

New York, California and other States have taken action to phase out and ban the chemical. The same action has been taken by major cities like Chicago. That chemical has got to go. It is even getting into Iowa's water supply as it comes out the exhaust tail pipes of cars as they drive across Iowa. The choice then becomes whether we make a sensible transition to a cleaner oxygenate, like ethanol, or just eliminate the clean air standards altogether. The reasonable answer is to turn to ethanol.

Opponents argue that the ethanol industry cannot meet the demand. That is simply not accurate. The ethanol industry's annual capacity now exceeds 2 billion gallons.

My colleague from New Jersey has arrived on the floor. They are even building ethanol plants in New Jersey these days. You do not need to use corn. You can use vegetable refuse. You can use any type of plant material. You can ferment it. You can create the ethanol. It helps that gasoline burn cleaner. It reduces carbon monoxide. We have had a great improvement in our Nation's air supply, and the EPA will tell you that a large part of it has been due to those clean air standards.

We can supply the ethanol. The ethanol industry's annual capacity now exceeds 2 billion gallons. It has added 226 million gallons of capacity in the last year. It will add another 320 million gallons of capacity this year. Over the next 2 years, construction is scheduled to begin on an additional 1.13 billion gallons of additional capacity.

Ethanol has twice the oxygen content of MTBE, and so it will only take half the volume of ethanol to replace it. The Renewable Fuels Association believes that about 580 million gallons of ethanol will be needed to fill the need in California and that we can meet California's target. Ethanol also provides a great benefit to the rural economy.

We are talking about an energy policy. We are talking about how dependent we are on foreign oil. This is a renewable fuel. The United States Department of Agriculture reported last year that replacing MTBE with ethanol would increase farm income more than $1 billion annually. It would reduce our balance of trade deficit by $12 billion over the next 10 years. It would create 13,000 new jobs in rural America. It would reduce farm program costs and loan deficiency payments by creating an important new value-added market to our grain. Moreover, the USDA concluded that ethanol can replace MTBE used in reformulated fuels nationwide without price increases or supply disruptions within the next 3 years.

And so I have a bill before Congress. It has a whole bunch of bipartisan supporters for this bill, from all parts of the country. I would encourage my colleagues to sign on to this environmentally sound bill.

Ethanol production is the third largest use of corn in the United States, utilizing about 7 percent of the corn crop. Current levels of ethanol production add 30 cents to the value of a bushel of corn and adds about $4.5 billion to the U.S. farm economy annually. That will help us, Mr. Speaker, when we are looking at this budget. By creating an additional demand for corn, we can help ensure that the market price will provide a sufficient return on the cost of production to allow the farmer to break even, hopefully even turn a profit. That will lessen the need for Federal support subsidies that are currently needed to keep farmers on the farm. That is beneficial for the producer, it is beneficial for the rural economy, and it is beneficial to the environment.

I have pursued this cause of ethanol along with the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS). We introduced the Clean Air and Water Preservation Act of 2001. We have been joined by more than 30 Members of Congress who have cosponsored this legislation. Our legislation would phase out MTBE over 3 years. It calls on the EPA to assist in dealing with groundwater pollution already caused by MTBE. It keeps the oxygenate provisions of the Clean Air Act intact. And it promotes the use of ethanol.

At a time when energy is on the Nation's agenda, let us not ignore the role of ethanol, the clean-burning, homegrown natural fuel source, or the role that agriculture plays in our Nation's prosperity and security.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S ANTI-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOR

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to highlight some of the serious shortcomings in the Bush administration's environmental arena as it relates to national energy plans.

Last month, President Bush stood before Congress in these very Chambers and spoke to the American people, saying he would pursue alternative energy sources and environmentally sound policies to help solve our energy crisis. In fact, I want to quote the President because he told us, and I quote, ''We can promote alternative energy sources and conservation, and we must.'' He was so right. At the time, I thought the plan sounded too good to be true. Unfortunately, with the recent release of the administration's budget blueprint, I realize that it was too good to be true.