

amended. We are 9 months from the Department of Energy's deadline to begin accepting nuclear waste, but the Department says it will not be able to keep its promise and fulfill its responsibility.

The latest estimate by the Department of Energy is that it will not have a permanent repository available until at least the year 2010. This is not acceptable. In the meantime, nuclear waste is beginning to pile up at nuclear power plants across the Nation.

In my own district, for example the Prairie Island nuclear plant has been forced to build and operate a temporary storage facility because of the Department of Energy's failure to fulfill its responsibilities. This is a serious concern to the local communities who rely on the plant for jobs and those who count on it for electricity as well. This is an enormous concern to the Prairie Island Indian community, who share their island with the plant. The tribe is very concerned that their island, at the confluence of both the Vermillion and Mississippi Rivers, will become a de facto permanent repository if the Federal Government does not live up to its responsibility.

Similar concerns are shared by Americans all across the Nation. Seventy-three spent nuclear storage facilities will be built in 34 States unless the Department of Energy establishes a temporary facility. The Department of Energy has ignored the concerns of citizens across the country, and has continued to insist that it is unable to begin accepting and storing used nuclear fuel, as promised in the past. Even a recent ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals that the Department of Energy is obligated by law to begin accepting spent fuel has not changed the Department's position.

While the Department of Energy has been forced by the courts to recognize their obligation, they have refused to develop any solutions. As a matter of fact, the administration is threatening to veto the solution proposed by Congress. This avoidance of responsibility is outrageous and morally wrong. America's electricity consumers have faithfully funded this program, and they are right to expect the timely, safe, and centralized storage they have paid for.

The continued refusal by the Department of Energy and the administration to keep their promises will result in unnecessary additional cost to the taxpayers. The Department of Energy has already lost one lawsuit and the damages from breaking their contract could cost the taxpayers an additional \$20 to \$40 billion, not to mention the loss of jobs and electricity as nuclear power plants are forced to turn out their lights. The jobs and the electricity may be lost, but the spent fuel will remain.

Despite the lack of leadership by the administration, I am pleased to announce today that our colleague, the gentleman from Michigan, FRED

UPTON, has introduced a bipartisan piece of legislation which would restore the responsibility to the Federal Government's Waste Management Program. This legislation provides for a specific solution to protect our environment, protect our taxpayers, and restore the trust of electric consumers who have paid the Federal Government billions of dollars for this solution.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that all Members would join with me and the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. UPTON] in supporting this very important legislation.

The legislation simply states that as the Department of Energy works on a permanent site, a centralized temporary facility should be located at the Nevada test site. This site is an area the size of Connecticut that since the Truman administration has been the home to atmospheric and underground nuclear test blasts as well as countless active and abandoned nuclear labs. Its remote, arid location is ideally suited to store nuclear waste. By pursuing a policy that puts nuclear waste behind one fence, in one location, we can concentrate our resources on making sure it is safe.

The Senate has under consideration a similar piece of legislation to ensure that the Department of Energy keeps its promises.

URGING MEMBERS' SUPPORT OF H.R. 1270, THE NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY ACT OF 1997

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Idaho [Mr. CRAPO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. Speaker, I too rise today in support of H.R. 1270, the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1997. This is very critical legislation that is being dealt with this week in the Senate, legislation that I have worked on now for 4 years with the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. UPTON], the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. HASTERT], the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT], and many other Members of this House. It is legislation that is so important that we must deal with it this year, and deal with it this year soon.

The Federal Government has a legal responsibility to take used spent fuel in 1998. The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in July 1996, that the DOE has a legal obligation to take spent fuel from the Nation's commercial reactors. If the Government fails to perform, the American taxpayers could be forced to cough up more than \$50 billion in liabilities.

The Federal Government has not kept faith with its people on this issue. The Department of Energy has broken its promise, indeed its legal obligation, to take used nuclear fuel from commercial reactors beginning on January 31, 1998.

Despite the fact that it has had 15 years to establish a central storage facility, DOE now says it cannot accept the used fuel on time in the 1998 deadline. What is more, absent legislation forcing it to live up to these contrac-

tual commitments, DOE does not have any plans to begin taking this used fuel prior to the year 2010.

Electric ratepayers are getting ripped off. Already through their monthly electric bills, ratepayers have paid the Federal Government nearly \$13 billion to finance the construction of storage facilities for spent fuel. The Government has taken the money, often spending it for other purposes, but has failed to live up to its commitment to build these storage facilities.

If nuclear power producers have to continue to provide onsite storage because the Government fails to accept and fulfill its responsibility, the ratepayers will end up paying twice. They will pay once, as they have already paid for the construction of the storage facility, and a second time for the cost of storing it onsite.

The cost to ratepayers of providing this additional onsite storage will be billions more. Investors are losing money due to Government inaction. The used fuel crisis is hurting the value of investor-owned utilities that produce nuclear power. The crisis exists not only because the Government clearly intends to violate its contractual obligation to accept the spent fuel, but also because we have military fuel that is stored in States like Idaho that needs to be addressed in similar circumstances.

The uncertainty over whether the Government will dispose of used fuel, if it does at all, is complicating the utilities' planning process. The Nuclear Waste Policy Act makes environmental and economic sense. Used nuclear fuel from commercial reactors and defense facilities is now being stored at 80 sites in 41 different States.

Common sense dictates that storage of nuclear waste in one remote, unpopulated location, where safety and cost efficiencies will be maximized, is the best policy. The legislation itself incorporates amendments to strengthen environmental safeguards.

Nuclear power plants are running out of space to store spent fuel. The Federal Government says its repository will not be ready until the year 2010, at the earliest. But by 1998, 27 of the Nation's 109 nuclear powerplants will run out of onsite storage space and by 2010, 80 nuclear plants will have no space to store the used fuel at all.

Finally, the Department of Energy and the Navy are only obligated to fulfill strict legal obligations to the State of Idaho with regard to spent fuel stored there. The State of Idaho entered into a binding contractual agreement with the Department of Energy and the Navy recently, which has been implemented by court and has become a part of a court order that requires timely deadlines to be met in the transfer of this spent fuel out of the State of Idaho into permanent storage.

The longer the Federal Government fails to proceed timely on its required obligation to accept this spent fuel, the greater the risk these obligations will

not be met. This bill will provide for the much needed centralized storage of our Nation's defense high-level waste and spent fuel from our nuclear Navy. This bill goes further than the bill last Congress to address the needs of these facilities, and currently awaits needed action in this House.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for this House to act promptly and decisively on this issue and send a message to the White House that not only should this legislation not be vetoed, this legislation should be welcomed with open arms, so a critical problem facing America today can be resolved.

ANOTHER LOST OPPORTUNITY IN HAITI?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, a wise man once said: Four things come not back: The spoken word, the sped arrow, time passed, and the neglected opportunity.

As I reviewed the observer reports from this weekend's elections in Haiti, this aphorism came to mind. We all congratulate the Haitians who worked so hard on election day, and those who came out to vote, despite the many factors that might have kept them away from the polls.

But when 20,000 American troops invaded Haiti, as opposed as some of us here were to this action, we all hoped somehow the end result would bear fruit for our troubled neighbors in Hispaniola. Sadly, that opportunity has not been fully realized.

This weekend's elections, the last in a cycle to create the institutions set forth in the 1987 Haitian Constitution, offer testimony to the disappointing reality in that country. Haitians, expressing disillusionment with democracy and certainty that the results were already determined, barely participated in their elections. Observers have placed turnout in the range of a dismal 5 percent.

Why? After five rounds of voting in the past 3 years, many of the Haitian observers spoke with those who echoed sentiments like the Haitian who said: My children cannot eat this vote. They cannot eat democracy. They need food.

Frustrated Haitians told observers I spoke with that "At least when Duvalier was here, things worked. Today nothing happens. Today the machinery sits and rusts, and the people get nothing. The money comes to Haiti but we do not know where it goes."

People will recall Duvalier was a brutal dictator. If it is worse than that now, things are not well in Haiti. Still others told observers that "Everyone here knows already the winner of these elections. These are simply reflections of the situation."

Three years after the triumphant return of President Aristide, progress on stability and jobs and good governance is as elusive as ever in Haiti. In fact,

those of us who have traveled to Haiti over the years are beginning to see disturbing trends. Not only are things not getting better, in many respects they seem to actually be getting worse, despite the \$3 billion of taxpayers' investment.

The disappointment goes well beyond the lack of economic growth and new investment. Anxiety about business and personal security remains a part of everyday Haitian life. Since the beginning of this year there has been a series of assassinations, brutal assassinations, aimed at the Haitian national police. As has been the case in the past 3 years, still more political figures have either gone into hiding or have just simply left the country, fearing for their lives because of the rising tide of harassment and violence they encounter. The large population center of Cite Soleil is the site of regular random shooting sprees by armed gangs, and cities like Cap Haitien are subject to regular eruptions from populist organizations.

Beyond this, if one looks at the health of democracy in general, certainly the disenfranchisement of the opposition parties from the electoral process, and likely consolidation of one sector's hold on Haitian institutions, from the local through the national level, adds to the sense that things are not going well in Haiti, and in fact, it is not a true democracy.

Maybe that is why the Pentagon announced yesterday that 200 more paratroopers from the 82d Airborne are being sent from Fort Bragg to Haiti. Frankly, today the Haitian peoples are not the only ones with questions about what is happening in the small Caribbean nations. These realities have some Americans such as myself wondering when to expect the next refugee flow, the next political killing, the next setback in the process of economic reform.

What this means is that those of us who have oversight on the questions of how the United States Government spends America's money have a responsibility to ask some tough and serious questions about what has and what has not been accomplished with the opportunity for progress that our \$3 billion and 20,000 troops have provided to Haiti.

The Clinton administration owes us some answers. From there, we are obligated to ask the big question: Why should the American taxpayers continue to send more of their dollars to Haiti? Why? Because while the administration may choose to measure progress in Haiti by whether or not the elections are held, full, free, fair, democratic, and transparent or not, and they were not, Americans know that there is more to the substance of democracy than just the act of holding elections, especially elections that were impacted by armed thugs and blatant intimidation, as was reported this very morning in the Miami Herald.

We need some explanations from the White House. We need them now. We

need not to spend any more good money where bad has been invested.

MEMORIES OF TAX RETURNS AND THE IRS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Washington [Mrs. SMITH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LINDA SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, this time of the year always brings back memories to me, because for nearly 15 years I was up to my nose in tax returns and trips to IRS for clients. In my other world, I prepared tax returns and taught the changes of the law to tax preparers. It always disturbed me when I would go to Internal Revenue with the expertise of the agents, not all of them but many, but also the amount of information that they had about our private lives.

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So you can imagine that it was more personal for me when Tuesday of this week I got a report that IRS had been snooping again. You see, several years ago there was a report that there was a lot of private snooping going on in private records of individual citizens, some celebrities, some people just like me, by Internal Revenue agents. For what purpose, I do not know. Some were convicted. Not many. But it was a pretty extensive report.

And IRS promised us at that time, whether we be citizens or people that represented citizens before IRS or preparers, that they would stop doing it, that they would rein this practice in and protect the privacy of the ordinary American citizen.

Well, this Tuesday, the document release says they are not doing it. In fact, it was so serious it showed that in 1994 and 1995 alone, there were documented 1515 cases where employees were accused of misusing computers, snooping.

Now, the sad part about this is there were not very many firings. It says in the report that they counseled most of the employees; 472 were counseled, 349 were disciplined, but it does not appear in anything other than a hand slap. Only 23 were fired.

Now, in our country the right to privacy and protection of our private lives is very, very important. That is what makes us America.

Mr. Speaker, we should not have the servants of the people, whether they be police, FBI, whatever, but especially not IRS, violating our privacy.

Next week we will have a bill on this floor that will take care of that. We are not going to put it into a study. We are not going to trust IRS to say, we will do it if you wait. We are going to tell them that they are going to do it.

But how we are going to do it is this way: We are going to say, if you snoop, you have civil penalties and criminal penalties. If you snoop and tell, which is really awful, but that has happened,