

I will yield to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. HOEKSTRA] to close, if he would like.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. What we have found as we have gone across the country is schools, where they are working, where they have done a good job with the children, are those where there is local parental control, not where Washington is dictating the agenda.

This is about where are education decisions for our children going to be made. Is the direction going to be at the local level, or is it going to be moved to Washington, DC? All we have to do is go around the country, take a look at the grass-roots level. We will be surprised at the wonderful things that are going on in all types of education, public, private, parochial, religious education efforts. But it is because of grass roots, not because of what we are doing here in Washington.

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Moving to national testing is moving more decision making to Washington away from the very people that are making a difference in our kids' lives today. We need to begin a process of moving power and money back to parents and the local school districts, not continuing on this trend of moving it to Washington. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for this special order.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for joining me. I want to conclude by saying that national testing is one of those ideas where the proponents believe that Washington knows best and I suggest they are wrong. Washington does not know best how to educate your children in your school or my children in my school. You can do it better.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to help us to reject the idea of national testing, which would give too much responsibility to Washington and take too much away from the parents and their child's teacher.

PLUTONIUM POWER SOURCE PROVEN SAFE ON NASA PROBE TO SATURN

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the recent Cassini mission to Saturn. This was a successful launch on a Titan launch vehicle that left Cape Canaveral a week ago tomorrow morning. Actually, it was 4 a.m. on Wednesday. It was a mission that garnered a lot of publicity, primarily because the probe, this deep space probe that was going to one of the moons of Saturn, it is a moon called Titan, it had a plutonium power source on it. The source of electricity to run all the computers and the sensors on this satellite, this probe, was

plutonium, and as everybody knows, plutonium is radioactive and it is dangerous.

Mr. Speaker, as soon as I heard about this mission 6 months ago or so and I knew it was going to be going off, I immediately had some of the leaders of the Cassini program from NASA come into my office and brief me, because I live in that area and I remember very well the controversy surrounding the Galileo mission. I am sure many Americans remember the Galileo mission, which was a mission to Jupiter, and we had a probe that went into the Jupiter atmosphere. It was a very successful mission and got a lot of publicity.

So 5 years ago when that mission was taking off, at that time there was a lot of controversy as well about the plutonium power source. I was also concerned because I live in the area, my wife and daughter live in the area, my father lives in the area, all of my friends live in the area. So I wanted to find out the facts on this issue, and I was actually very disappointed to see, they never really came out in any of the press coverage on the Cassini mission.

The plutonium that they use to power these vehicles is plutonium that has been solidified in a ceramic. It is encased in metal and it has essentially been tested and tested and tested so that it can withstand a disaster. And indeed I discovered on my research on this issue that actually at one point there was a mission that failed on the launch pad and the rocket blew up with the plutonium on board. It was out in California at Vandenberg Air Force Base. And not only did the plutonium power source, they call it an RTG power source, not only did it not break up and spill plutonium into the atmosphere, they were actually able to clean the thing up and put it on another satellite, it was constructed so well to withstand the blast.

The other issue that there has been some concern about is that this thing could reenter the atmosphere and in the process of burning up, that it would release all of this plutonium into the atmosphere. And they have also designed the plutonium power source so that if it does reenter the atmosphere, it has a casing around it and the casing absorbs the heat and it never actually burns up.

Indeed, I found out that plutonium RTG's were actually on the Apollo mission, and Apollo 13, when it reentered the atmosphere, there were plutonium RTG's on the Apollo 13, and they survived the reentry and there was no release of plutonium into the atmosphere.

The bottom line is here that the engineers, the men and women who designed this power source, and it has been used 26 times safely on various missions, and as well they use the same technology in Russia and they have used it on many missions. It is designed to withstand an explosion on the launch pad without releasing any

plutonium into the atmosphere, and it is designed to reenter if there were an accident and it were to fall back to Earth and not burn up and not release any plutonium into the atmosphere.

So, Mr. Speaker, the point is basically this. They have designed it so that it is safe and there is no way, if one talks to these scientists there is no way that we could send probes out to Jupiter, out to Saturn, to those outer planets, without this power source.

People will say, well we can use solar. The solar rays are so weak when probes get that far out from the sun that we would have to have a solar array as big as the State of New Jersey to drive this probe. It is impossible to do that.

Well, it turned out the mission went off successfully. It was a successful launch. Cassini is on its way to Titan and it is going to yield valuable scientific information. The news media did a disservice and the scare tactics did not work, and I congratulate NASA.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 97, FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1998

Mr. MCINNIS (during the special order of the gentleman from New York, Mr. OWENS) submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-333) on the resolution (H. Res. 269) providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H. J. Res. 97) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 1998, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2247, AMTRAK REFORM AND PRIVATIZATION ACT OF 1997

Mr. MCINNIS (during the special order of the gentleman from New York, Mr. OWENS) submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-334) on the resolution (H. Res. 270) providing for the consideration of the bill (H. R. 2247) to reform the statutes relating to Amtrak, to authorize appropriations for Amtrak, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1534, PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS IMPLEMENTATION ACT OF 1997

Mr. MCINNIS (during the special order of the gentleman from New York, Mr. OWENS) submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-335) on the resolution (H. Res. 271) providing for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1534) to simplify and expedite access to the Federal courts for injured parties whose rights and privileges, secured by the United

States Constitution, have been deprived by final actions of Federal agencies, or other government officials or entities acting under color of State law; to prevent Federal courts from abstaining from exercising Federal jurisdiction in actions where no State law claim is alleged; to permit certification of unsettled State law questions that are essential to resolving Federal claims arising under the Constitution; and to clarify when government action is sufficiently final to ripen certain Federal claims arising under the Constitution, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

CONGRESS SHOULD EXERCISE OVERSIGHT REGARDING IRS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I suppose the item of the day in terms of significant news is the fact that the Democratic minority leader has decided to also throw his lot in with those who want to make the highest priority of reforming the IRS, the Internal Revenue Service. I want to get on board, too. I cannot think of any American out there who does not think that we could improve the Internal Revenue Service in some way, and hopefully in a way which relieves us of some of the unjust items that have affected us in the past in some way.

But, in all seriousness, it is long overdue. The IRS has been neglected by Congress for too long. Congress, in general, is delinquent in its oversight responsibilities for the Federal Government. In the 15 years that I have been here, I have watched how time is frittered away and it is always the item which captures the most headlines for the moment that gets the most attention, while the important functions of government, and the gigantic agencies of government, like the Internal Revenue Service, they go on and on and they get very little oversight.

I suppose that is why IRS stumbled into a \$4 billion blunder in the setup of their computer operation in an attempt to computerize themselves. Not enough Congressmen were watching. Not enough outside independent monitoring was going on, and there are probably numerous other areas in the IRS which need reform.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that the debate on IRS will not degenerate or remain at the level that it is. It is sort of standing at a very low level. We are interested more in paper clips and rubber bands and operations that are at a very primitive level than we are in the total philosophy that guides IRS and the total setup of policies that emanate from the Congress through the Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committee.

I hope that the debate about IRS will be a long and fruitful one. I hope that it will be a very thorough one, and I hope that we will look at all aspects of what is happening with our Internal Revenue Service, what is happening with our revenue collection processes.

Revenue has always been, and I have said this many times before, neglected by people who are progressives, liberals, whatever we want to call us these days. We have never spent enough time looking at revenue collection, taxes, tax policies, and that has caused some serious problems, the fact that there has never been a balanced debate or the kind of attention focused on the revenue process that we should have.

For the past few years, I have been insistent that we take a hard look, an intense and thorough analysis of what is going on with respect to revenue collection. I was fascinated. I am not on the Committee on Ways and Means, I am on the Committee on Education and the Workforce. I am concerned primarily about why there are no funds for programs like the school construction program. I am concerned about the fact that while we are lumbering along with an antiquated education system in some obvious ways. It needs help from the Federal Government and we are not supplying that help. I am concerned about our priorities and why we continue to give the impression to the American people and the world that we are a bankrupt Nation or almost a bankrupt Nation when it comes to the area of education, in the area of youth employment or a number of other worthwhile programs. We always have enough money for defense and we increase the defense budget, but we do not have enough for education.

So, my concern for expenditures related to positive programs like building schools led me to take a closer look at the revenue side of the equation and several years ago, I became fascinated by the fact that our income tax collection process, our income taxes produce a large amount of taxes from individuals and families and a much smaller percentage from corporations.

Corporations are where the money is, so I was fascinated by the fact that at present about 11 percent, of the last figures I looked at, the records that I saw, 11 percent in 1996 of the income tax collected was collected from corporations, while four times that much was collected from families and individuals, 44 percent.

So, the policies and the laws which govern and guide IRS are of very great interest to me. How much of that inequity in collection, inequality in the collection between corporations and families and individuals is due to the fact that Congress made the wrong kinds of laws, or the laws are imbalanced, they are not in balance in terms of collections from corporations versus individuals and families. How much is doing to the wrong policy? The wrong philosophy? And how much might be

due to IRS and its administration, its implementation of the policies that have emanated from Congress? Is IRS delinquent in the way it pursues collection of revenue from corporations? Does it spend too much time, an inordinate amount of time pursuing families and individuals and shy away from pursuing collection of taxes from corporations because they are so big, they are so complicated, they have lawyers, they have tax accountants?

We have all seen in the past remarks made by people in the executive branch of government concerning the need to focus on collecting taxes where we can collect them more rapidly. I think in the Reagan administration there was a statement made that IRS should not waste so much time with corporations, it takes too long to get the collection. Middle-class people are the people who will respond when the IRS goes for the collections. If there are problems, then pursue middle-class taxpayers and we will get a better return, a more rapid return in terms of collection.

How much of that permeates the modus operandi of the Internal Revenue Service?

Those kinds of questions I would like to see raised and answers.

There is another aspect of the debate which I think also I have raised before and we should take a hard look at, and that is how fair is our revenue collection policy and how fair are the procedures?

When we have a situation which has persisted for a long, long time, more than 10 years, we will talk about just the last 10 years, but it is probably the last 20 years that we have had the situation with respect to New York City and New York State. We have a situation where big cities like New York City and big States like New York, industrial States, have consistently paid more into the Federal coffers, the Federal Treasury, than they have gotten back. The balance of payments has been way out of kilter consistently over the years. I have discussed it on the floor of this House on several occasions.

Senator MOYNIHAN quite a number of years ago started making a study, an analysis, of which States are in a position where they are paying more into the Federal Treasury than they get back in terms of Federal aid. So it has become a very thorough kind of analysis, and now it is supported by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and they produce a nice booklet every year and the latest version of the booklet I have in my hand. It is entitled "The Federal Budget and the States: Fiscal Year 1996," the 21st edition.

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I was wondering before about how long we have done this, 21 years. For 21 years this study has been done, and Senator MOYNIHAN does it now in conjunction with the John F. Kennedy School of Government. It is available,