

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 5668,
SWEETEST ACT—SACCHARIN
WARNING ELIMINATION VIA EN-
VIRONMENTAL TESTING EM-
PLOYING SCIENCE AND TECH-
NOLOGY

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 15, 2000

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, today I submit legislation that would eliminate need-less bureaucratic regulations in the labeling of the sweetener saccharin. I've called it the "SWEETEST Act" which stands for Saccharin Warning Elimination via Environmental Testing Employing Science and Technology.

Saccharin was first discovered in 1879 and it has been safely employed as a no-calorie sweetener for over one hundred years now. Concerns over saccharin's safety were first raised twenty years ago after a flawed study that administered huge quantities of the artificial sweetener to laboratory rats produced bladder tumors in rats. New and better scientific research has decisively shown that the earlier rat studies are not at all applicable to humans.

Earlier this year, the National Toxicology Program (NTP) removed saccharin from its 9th Report on Carcinogens. In doing so NTP joined numerous other world health agencies in recognizing the safety of saccharin.

NTP's action negated the need for the current warning label mandated by the Saccharin Study and Labeling Act of 1977 (SSLA) on all products containing saccharin. The Food and Drug Administration recognized that the mandated warning label is inappropriate and agreed to support its repeal.

This legislation removes Section 403, paragraph (o) of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 343) and Section 4, paragraph (c) of the Saccharin Study and Labeling Act (P.L. 95-203). Those requirements formed the basis for the unnecessary warning statements found on common packets of sweeteners used every day in thousands of households and restaurants across the nation.

Given saccharin's favorable synergistic properties in combination with other sweeteners and its low cost, many food, beverage, and health care manufacturers are very interested in developing new products utilizing this sweetener.

UKRAINE AT THE DAWN OF THE
21ST CENTURY

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 15, 2000

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, today, as we conclude the work of the 106th Congress, it is appropriate that we mark an important milestone in Ukraine: This afternoon, at 1:16 local time, the Chernobyl nuclear power plant was shut down for good.

On April 26, 1986, Reactor Number Four at the Soviet-designed Chernobyl nuclear facility exploded, releasing more than 100 tons of lethally radioactive material into the environment. The human cost of this disaster is stag-

gering. It is unlikely we will ever know how many deaths can be directly attributed to Chernobyl, but surely the loss of life is measured in the thousands. Hundreds of thousands more were subjected to radiation poisoning.

Nearly 15 years later, the consequences of the world's worst nuclear accident continue to plague Eastern Europe. Ukraine has been especially impacted. Vast tracks of once prime farm land remain dangerously contaminated. Thyroid cancer among children living near Chernobyl has risen to levels 80 times higher than normal. The concrete and steel sarcophagus that encases the ruined Reactor Number Four is leaky and in need of repair. In addition, the loss of Chernobyl's generating capacity exacerbates an already difficult energy shortage in Ukraine, which depends heavily on energy imports, especially during its harsh winters.

It is fitting that the first year of the new century should see the closure of this apparatus from a dangerous past. At the same time, we must be mindful that Chernobyl's legacy remains a heavy burden for the people of Ukraine which does not end with the shutdown of this facility today. The fatally flawed nuclear technology that build Chernobyl was truly a kind of Pandora's Box that, once opened, released lasting harm and grievous sickness into the world. The sole consolation is that we can yet hope to redress the damage.

The final closure of Chernobyl ends a tragic chapter in Ukraine's history, and begins a new one. I call on every member of the House to join with me in remembering the victims of this tragedy. Let us resolve to do our part to help Ukraine build a brighter future.

INTRODUCTION OF UNIFORM POLL
CLOSING ACT

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 15, 2000

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join today with my colleagues Senator STEVENS and Senator INOUE, along with Representatives TAUZIN and DINGELL and 20 other Democratic and Republican House and Senate Members to introduce the bipartisan Uniform Poll Closing Act.

Over the years, both the Democratic and Republican parties have been concerned about the fact that the news media frequently projects a particular Presidential candidate to be the victor in key battleground states before all the polls have closed nationally.

In 1980, many Democrats were outraged when Ronald Reagan was proclaimed the victor of the Presidential race on network television at 5:15 p.m. Pacific time. At that moment, polls were still open in approximately half the states, in every time zone—including many in the eastern and central time zones, and all the polls in the Mountain, Pacific, Alaskan, and Hawaiian time zones. As a result of the networks' decision, many voters felt there was no longer any point in going to the polls, a development which may have affected the outcome of many state and local elections. In 1984 and 1988 many Democrats feared that network's projections in the early evening that the Republican candidate was going to be the overwhelming electoral college winner may

have again affected voting in many state and local contests in the west.

This year, many Republicans were angered when the networks projected AL GORE the victor in Florida, prior to the closing of polls in the Florida Panhandle. At the same time, some GOP lawmakers raised concerns that network projections regarding the likely victors in many other key Presidential battleground states in the East or Midwest may have affected voter turnout in other states in which the polls were still open.

I believe that there is a relatively straightforward way to reduce a repeat of these concerns: adoption of a uniform poll closing time for Presidential elections. That is why today, we will introduce legislation which would establish a uniform poll closing time. Under this bill, for Presidential elections, polls in all 50 states would close at 9 p.m. eastern standard time, which is 8 p.m. central standard time and 7 p.m. mountain time. In the Pacific time zone, in Presidential election years only, in order to achieve a 7 p.m. poll closing time, daylight savings time would be extended for two weeks. This will allow the polls on the West Coast to close at 7 p.m. Pacific daylight time.

The House approved identical legislation in 1986, 1987, and 1989, but it was never enacted into law. We have an opportunity now to rectify this situation, establish a uniform poll closing time, and minimize the potential that future premature projections by the television networks regarding the winners of a Presidential election will influence voter behavior in other states.

While the public may be divided over whom they want to see become our next President, both Democratic and Republican votes agree on the need to establish a uniform poll closing time. In fact, a recent CBS poll reports that 71% of the American public would like to see a uniform national poll closing time established. This reflects the public's recognition that standardizing poll closing times for Presidential elections would reduce the likelihood that when the television networks declare a winner in one state, they may depress voter turnout in any remaining precincts in the state in which the polls remain open, or affect voter turnout in other state across the country.

I look forward to working with Senator STEVENS, Representative TAUZIN, DINGELL, and other interested Members to advance this proposal. Over the last several days, I have spoken to Senator STEVENS, who has long been a leader on this issue in the Senate, and who had a strong interest in working out a formulation that would accommodate Alaska and Hawaii. With this bill, we have been able to accomplish that goal by allowing those states to open their polls on Monday afternoon and then bring them into the framework of the nationwide uniform poll closing time we are establishing for election Tuesday at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

In introducing this bill today, we are hoping to begin a debate on this issue by putting onto the table the main proposal that the House has previously approved, and we are open to considering other reasonable alternatives. What we would like to assure, however, is that this time, the Congress acts to reform the rules governing poll closing times in Presidential elections.