

in the course of evaluating agency rules. Although H.R. 4924 does not require GAO to review public data, neither does it forbid or preclude GAO from doing so. I bring this up, because some hope that H.R. 4924 implicitly contains a gag order, forbidding GAO to consult any analyses or data except those supplied by the agency to be reviewed. This reading of H.R. 4924 would defeat the whole purpose of the bill, which is to enable Congress to comment knowledgeably about agency rules from the standpoint of a truly independent evaluation of those rules.

Instructed by GAO's independent evaluations, Congress will be better equipped to review final agency rules under the CRA. More importantly, Congress will be better equipped to submit timely and knowledgeable comments on proposed rules during the public comment period. I say this, notwithstanding the words "where practicable," which some CORA foes hope will ensure that all GAO analyses of proposed rules are untimely and, therefore, worthless. I am confident that, despite the "where practicable" language, GAO will want to please rather than annoy its customers and employers, and will not fail to help Members of Congress submit timely comments on regulatory proposals.

Thus, even though a far cry from the original idea of an independent CORA agency, and although inferior to the Kelly-McIntosh bill reported by the Government Reform Committee, H.R. 4924 will increase the transparency of important regulatory decisions, promote effective Congressional oversight, and increase the accountability of Congress. The best government is a government accountable to the people. For America to have an accountable regulatory system, the people's elected representatives must participate in, and take responsibility for, the rules promulgated under the laws Congress passes. H.R. 4924 is a meaningful step towards Congress's meeting its regulatory oversight responsibility.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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FARM ECONOMY IN THE UNITED STATES

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

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to address this Chamber on the topic of the farm economy in the United States and the agricultural policies that we have adopted in Congress.

The 1996 farm bill, generally called the Freedom to Farm Act, has been effective in one respect, and that is it has given farmers flexibility to plant what they are interested in raising and not be tied as closely to particular commodities by the design of the farm bill itself.

Unfortunately, the Freedom to Farm Act has become a freedom to fail act, and we have farmers that are exiting

from farming at a record rate. We have prices for commodities in this country that have dropped to levels that are as low as they have been in 100 years, if we adjust for inflation. We constantly hear about the plight of those who were producing oil and now we have gasoline at \$1.50 to \$1.75 a gallon throughout the country.

Well, if farmers had seen their prices go up without any adjustment for inflation, they at least would be paying \$2.50 for corn, \$3.00 for wheat, and higher amounts for other products. Tragically, in the United States, in the midst of a very robust and healthy and growing economy, one sector of the American economy that is hurting severely is agriculture. So I am pleased to announce that today I have joined with my colleague, the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY), and we have introduced legislation that is the Family Farm Safety Net Act of 2000.

The purpose of this legislation is to provide an outline or guide to the type of prices that are necessary in order to enable a farm to survive in the United States.

Since 1996, we can see what has happened to the prices for corn, wheat and soybeans. Prices have dropped precipitously. In 1996, corn was at \$2.71 a bushel. Here we are in the summer of the year 2000, corn is roughly half that price at most of the elevators in the Midwest.

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The drop in the price of wheat has not been quite as dramatic, but it still has come down by roughly \$1.80 a bushel, and the price for a bushel of soybeans has come down by about \$2.50 a bushel.

This certainly is not success in terms of agricultural policy.

In terms of flexibility, we also have a very frustrating situation. This chart shows what has happened in terms of the planting of wheat compared to the planting of soybeans. Soybeans, according to agricultural economists, are favored by the current situation. Wheat, by comparison, is not as advantageous to raise. So as a consequence, we have seen the acreage of wheat, it has been reduced by thousands of acres, and at the same time, the planting of soybeans has gone up by about a corresponding amount.

Mr. Speaker, we need to reestablish parity among the various crops. One way to do this is to take the loan rate for the marketing loans and harmonize the loan rates so that the loan rates for soybeans, for corn, for wheat, barley and other crops are neutral, and at the same time, have the loan rates pegged at a level where America's farmers can cover most of the costs of their operation. So as a consequence, our proposal is to increase the loan rate for corn as an example, to \$2.43 a bushel; the loan rate on soybeans to \$5.50 a bushel; to extend the period of the marketing loan to 20 months; and to include payment limitations, so that this

farm program does not enrich those that are farming tens of thousands of acres, but instead, focuses its benefits and its attention on those farmers that are moderate size, family farming operations.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that this is the track that we need to take if we are going to get American agriculture back on course, and I urge my colleagues to join with the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) and myself on this legislation.

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TOPICS OF NATIONAL INTEREST

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on two unrelated, but very important topics of national interest.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, first, I spent 7½ years before coming to Congress as a criminal court judge, trying felony criminal cases. I tried several death penalty cases, and I think I am the only Member of this Congress who has sentenced anyone to the electric chair.

It is almost impossible, Mr. Speaker, to get a jury to return a death sentence today. Despite polls showing very high support for capital punishment, it is one thing to favor the death penalty, but a much more difficult thing to actually impose it. It is so difficult, in fact, that most prosecutors will not even ask for a death sentence except in the most gruesome, horrible cases; and that is the main point I wish to make today, that juries return death sentences only in extremely brutal, terrible crimes.

In fact, it has been the law in this country for many years that an ordinary, simple murder, if there is such a thing, with nothing more, is not a capital case. To have a case justifying the death penalty, there must be aggravating circumstances that outweigh any mitigating factors, anything sympathetic in favor of the defendant. There have to be multiple crimes or killings, circumstances that make the case especially heinous.

I do not think a death sentence is appropriate except in 1 in 1 million very rare, very unusual kinds of cases. But I do believe that there are cases which are so gruesome, so horrendous that a death sentence is the only appropriate punishment. Those who oppose the death penalty should ask themselves, would they oppose it if their daughter or wife or sister was brutally raped as her three small children watched and then all were strangled to death, an actual case.

The media does a great job gaining sympathy for those who are about to be put to death. I wish they would do just as good a job describing the sickening details of the murders that have been

committed, even if almost shockingly, a prosecutor can get a rare, unusual jury to return a death sentence, the trial judge sits as the 13th juror and must later approve the verdict or grant a new trial or sometimes a lesser sentence. Following the trial judge, both State and Federal appellate courts review the case. Usually at least 30 or 40 judges review a death sentence before it is carried out, and many of these judges are philosophically opposed to the death penalty. There seems to be a real drum beat in the media to do away with capital punishment.

I urge my colleagues and others to look very closely at this before they jump on this particular band wagon.

SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS IN AMERICA

Mr. DUNCAN. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, another important, but unrelated issue of national concern is the impending teacher shortage. This is a very artificial, political government-produced shortage. It has come about only because the teachers' unions and colleges of education want to drastically restrict and limit and control the number of people allowed to teach in the Nation's public schools.

If a person with a Ph.D. and 30 years of experience, say a chemist, wanted to teach after working for years for the Government, he cannot do so under the rules in most States today. If a small college went under and a professor with 25 years of teaching experience, let us say a professor of English, wanted to move to a public school, he could not do so in most States today. If a very successful businessman wanted to teach for a few years as a way to contribute back to society, he could not do so today, despite all of his great wealth and success and experience. Why? Because they would not have the required degrees in education.

So school boards are restricted to hiring 22-year-olds with no experience because they have taken a few education courses over people with Ph.D.s and great experience and success and knowledge who have not had the education courses. This makes no sense at all at any time, but it is crazy in a time when there is or is about to be a teacher shortage. School boards should never hire an unqualified teacher, but they should be given the flexibility and freedom and power to hire people who have great knowledge or experience or success in a particular field, even if they have never taken an education course. If they could do this, there would be no teacher shortage in this country. There are hundreds of thousands of experienced, well-trained, well-educated people with degrees and even graduate degrees who have not taken education courses, but who could and would make great teachers, if only government regulations would give them the freedom and opportunity to do so.

HIV/AIDS, THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST DISEASE

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to discuss one of the most challenging and life-threatening public health issues facing the global community, HIV infection and AIDS. I will also highlight significant actions our government and fellow Americans have taken to combat this threat.

HIV/AIDS is now the world's deadliest disease with more than 40 million persons infected worldwide. Not surprisingly, the pandemic affects the most vulnerable citizens of our global community. In fact, nearly 95 percent of infected persons live in the developing countries, with sub-Saharan Africa being the hardest hit of any other region in the world.

The statistics are startling. New HIV infections in Africa have numbered more than 1.4 million each year since 1991. That is an average of more than 3,800 new HIV/AIDS infections per day. Nearly 6,000 will die within this same time frame. Mr. Speaker, 23.3 million adults and children are infected with the HIV virus in the region, which has about 10 percent of the world's population, but nearly 70 percent of the worldwide total of infected people.

Life expectancy in these nations has been reduced by the disease to between 22 and 40 years. Some sub-Saharan African countries could lose as much as a third of their adult population by 2010, and 16 African countries have an HIV infection rate of more than 10 percent. South Africa is 20 percent, Zimbabwe and Swaziland are at 25 percent; and in Botswana, which has the highest infection rate in the region, 36 percent of adults are HIV infected.

When I hear these daunting statistics, I am reminded of a quote by John F. Kennedy. He said, "Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind." HIV/AIDS and its death toll have declared war on our humanity. We must fight back. All sectors and all spheres of society have to be involved as equal partners in fighting this assault. The health sector cannot meet this challenge on its own, nor can one government or nation. It is imperative that we have a collective global effort.

Although I do believe we can do more, I am proud to say that the executive and legislative branches of our government, as well as the private sector, have taken significant steps in that direction. Earlier this month, the U.S. Export-Import Bank extended up to \$1 billion in financing to 24 sub-Saharan African countries to buy anti-AIDS drugs. The financing will be combined with a \$500 million commitment from the World Bank to help these countries purchase reduced-priced drugs, buy medical equipment, and develop specialized health services.

More recently, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), along with

the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON), and the Congressional Black Caucus successfully offered an amendment adding \$42 million to the Infectious Disease Account for international HIV/AIDS funding in the House-passed version of the fiscal year 2001 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act. The amendment increased this important funding for HIV/AIDS to the President's original budget request of \$244 million, which is \$190 million over current-year funding.

Additionally, during the 13th International Annual AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa this month, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced a round of grants amounting to \$100 million to prevent AIDS in mothers and children, assist AIDS orphans, and relieve suffering in dying patients. Of this funding, a \$50 million grant will go to Botswana, the country in sub-Saharan Africa with the highest HIV infection rate. That will be matched mostly through drug donations by the U.S. Merck Pharmaceutical Corporation.

When the history of this war is written, it will record the collective efforts of societies. Future generations will judge us on the adequacy of our response. I commend the Ex-Im Bank, my colleagues in this House, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for their compassion and foresight in addressing this issue.

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TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to comment this evening to this body on the 10th anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act.

I want to make a quote: "I now lift my pen to sign the Americans With Disabilities Act and say, let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down."

That was spoken by President Bush on July 26, 1990. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reflect on how far we as a Nation have come since that summer day 10 years ago when I was honored to be an original cosponsor of the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Today, I joined another President and disability advocates at the F.D.R. Memorial, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, to commemorate this landmark law.

I want to discuss a little bit what has happened in the decade since its enactment, but I would like to recognize for about 40 seconds the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS), who would like to make a comment.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I join with the gentlewoman in the celebration of