

I envision class projects centering on students going out and interviewing these veterans and preserving those videotapes for local history purposes, but to send a copy to the Library of Congress so that the library can digitize it, index it, and make it available, not only for today's historians and generation, but for future generations.

I envision students, young people in the 22nd, even the 23rd century, being able to pop up on the Internet the videotaped testimonies of their great-great-great-grandfather or grandmother and learn firsthand from their grandparents' own words what it was like to serve during the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam or the Gulf War. What an incredibly powerful learning opportunity that will be for future generations.

Every year I organize, on Veterans' Day, kind of a class field trip. I bring student groups into the VFW and American Legion halls, and I connect them to the veterans in our local communities and the veterans share their stories of the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam, for instance, and the students are silent with attention, absorbing every last syllable that these veterans enunciate during that time.

It is an incredible event that goes on, not only the veterans sharing of the stories, many of them for the very first time since they served their country, but for the students to learn on this firsthand account what it was like with the sacrifice and the courage that our men and women in uniform provided our country at the time of need.

That is what is behind this Veterans Oral History Project. Last year we had some veterans that went into the American Legion Post 52 back in La Crosse that remind me of the purpose of this legislation. Ed Wojahn, a veteran of the Second World War; Jim Millin, also a veteran of the Second World War; Ralph Busler, who served three different tours of duty in Vietnam, all of whom came out and spoke to these student groups at the American Legion in La Crosse, Wisconsin, in my congressional district.

I can recall as if it happened yesterday, Ed Wojahn telling his story and breaking down as he recounted visiting last summer in Belgium the grave site of a World War II comrade in arms who fell during the opening days of the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Wojahn is 77 years old, and he told the students he was a 22-year-old Army combat engineer when he was captured by German forces in Belgium on his birthday, on December 18, 1944. His unit was without food, without ammunition, and was surrounded by German soldiers for 2 days before his captain finally surrendered. He stated, "There was no way to go. You went forward, you went backwards, sideways, there were Germans everywhere." It was an incredible story that he told along with the other veterans on that day.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I ask my colleagues, 250 of whom are original cosponsors, to move this legislation forward as quickly as possible since time is of the essence.

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

(Mr. SCOTT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DICKEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE FUTURE OF RURAL AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I and a group here rise tonight to talk about rural America, the heartland of this country. The last few years we have had the most fantastic economic boom in this country in our history, but the question many ask is why has so much of rural America been left behind. Why has rural America struggled for its economic life when suburban America is flourishing and enjoying unparalleled prosperity?

We believe that a lack of leadership is very much a part of that. Rural America has not fared well under the Clinton-Gore policies. We are also very concerned that rural America will not fare well under a Gore administration.

Agriculture, at a time when this country has expanded its ability to grow products, wonderful products, better, better yields, better quality, our farmers are fighting for their economic life. World markets have not been opened because of inappropriate public policies.

Mr. Speaker, public land, America owns a third of our land; and when we have Federal public policy changes, it impacts rural America, not urban-suburban America. It impacts rural America, because that is the land we own. We are a country rich in natural resources, and many people claim that our strength and our great past was because we had those natural resources.

Have we had appropriate policies for energy, for mining that allowed us to

enjoy the fruit of what was here? Many think not.

Defense, the number one issue in the Federal Government, would it be strong under a Gore administration? Rural education, as we have the debate now going on education, how has rural America fared? Most rural districts receive 1 percent to 2 percent of their money from the Federal Government when the Federal Government's claiming that they are funding 7 percent.

The complicated urban-type formulas are stacked against rural America in many people's opinions. Rural health care fighting for its economic life, rural hospitals fighting to stay open. Rural America sometimes gets paid half as much under the current policies and formulas devised by HCFA that has been managed by the Gore-Clinton administration.

Timber, good forestry, a country rich in soft woods in the West and hard woods in the East, we are now importing. I am told, about half of our soft woods. Because of policies similar to oil we are now importing 60 percent from foreign countries.

Endangered Species Act needing to be changed, positively, to save endangered species; but it has been used by radical groups to push their will on the American citizens and supported by the Gore-Clinton administration.

Regulatory process, something Americans do not think enough about, because, in my view, an overzealous bureaucracy that regulates you, they are regulating instead of legislating. When we legislate, we debate. We debate the facts. We make decisions. We cast votes, but when the regulators have too much power, and I think everyone agrees that the Clinton-Gore administration has been far too zealous in their regulatory powers. The courts have been turning over many of their regulations.

So as we go through these issues and a few others tonight, the first person I want to call on is my good friend, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATKINS), of the third district who is interested in agriculture in Oklahoman agriculture and energy, and how it affects Oklahoma and how it affects rural America.

Mr. WATKINS. First, let me thank my colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) for his concern and for his time tonight for us to talk about some of this inappropriateness and lack of action by this Gore-Clinton administration.

Mr. Speaker, I would like first for my colleagues to know that I stand tonight not for political reasons, but because of an emotional concern, a life-long emotional concern about small towns and rural areas of this country, yes, our farms and our agriculture interests also throughout this Nation.

Let me share with my colleagues, I loved agriculture to the point in small town rural America, but even to the point that I majored in agriculture when I went off to college, I got a couple of degrees in agriculture, so I stand

with this emotional concern not just political concern.

Back when I served as State president of the Oklahoma Future Farmers of America, I would stand and I shared 16 percent of our people were in production of agriculture in the United States. 4 years later, when I received the Outstanding Agriculture Student Award at Oklahoma State University, I stood up and said there is only 12½ percent of us in the production of agriculture in the United States.

Tonight as I stand before my colleagues, I say there is only 1.5 percent of people in the production of agriculture; that is the erosion that has taken place in rural America. There is no other way I can paint the picture any better.

Not too long ago, earlier this year, I was invited to speak on agriculture before the Farm Credit Association in Oklahoma. They wanted to know the title of my speech. I usually do not have a title, but I said if you need to have a title, you can state it is "American Agriculture changing from the PTO to the WTO."

Now, PTO stands for the power take-off on the tractors which allowed us to get bigger farms and bigger units and allowed us to produce the food and fiber for this country. We can produce. Our big problem is being able to sell and now we have the World Trade Organization that we must be able to market through, 135 countries around this world; and we cannot forfeit those markets.

Let me share with my colleagues something on an inappropriate activity that took place in the Uruguay Rounds back in 1993 under this administration's United States trade representative. At the Uruguay Rounds, they basically had resolved all of the various disagreements in trade, and it came down to agriculture and they could not agree on settling their difference in agriculture. They established a peace clause. Now that sounds good, a peace clause. However, what did it do?

Actually, the peace clause of the Uruguay Rounds, the GATT talks, established and grandfathered in over \$7 billion of subsidies for the European Union. We only have about \$100 million, and there is a lot of differences in \$100 million and \$7 billion of subsidies which allows the European Union to grab our markets, preventing us from being able to sell around the world in many cases. I can go on and on and talk about agriculture, but I had to make that point.

But I stand with a sadness tonight, because I see what is happening is just pure politics concerning the energy industry. The Vice President attacks the fossil fuel industry; but I would like to point out to the American people and to my colleagues, he has no alternatives, he has no other options, except to attack, that would endanger us even more.

One of our colleagues earlier from Florida stated the fact that we now im-

port about 56 percent of our energy from oil from foreign sources compared to that or less than 40 percent back there in the oil barrel embargo. We are becoming more dependent.

Let me say, I submit to my colleagues, I submit to the American people that today we are more dependent than we ever have been at a time when we think we are independent. We are more dependent on a viable source of oil supply for this country, and the fact remains under the 8 years of the Gore-Clinton administration, they have not developed a national energy policy for the protection of this country.

We have not moved forward to try to make sure we secure the energy and develop the energy for this Nation, the fossil fuel, as well as the renewable energy. We still have today more fossil fuel reserves in the ground than we have mined or drilled and taken from the ground. It is a matter of us having a policy that will allow us to move forward.

So the people of this Nation need to know our national security is at stake. Yes, we have a volatile energy policy it appears, to say the least, when it goes from \$20 down to \$8 which not only disturbed the energy patch. It literally took nearly 100,000 of employees out of the rural areas of this country that were producing the energy for our Nation.

It is hurting the consumers. I have suggested that we reached out in a bipartisan way and we come together and we develop a national energy policy that would stabilize fuel prices in an amount we can all work with and live with and let us produce the Nation's needed energy. To do no less is making us subject to blackmail. We have seen this go overseas to OPEC and get on bended knee and beg, that is un-American.

Let me say it hurts not only the consumers in the urban centers of this country, but devastates rural America.

I hope and I pray that we will move forward, and I hope and pray that we do quickly because the future of our children and our grandchildren are at stake and the future of our country is at stake.

I say to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON), I think the gentleman is lifting an issue of rural America and the lack of support, the lack of effort being made in the energy and agriculture and other areas that our people of this Nation need to know that under 8 years of the Gore-Clinton administration they have done nothing, zilch, zero in trying to move us towards some kind of independence in the field of energy.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATKINS).

I am not minimizing the importance of agriculture, because it is vital, what do we do in rural America. We farm. We mine. We drill for oil. We cut timber. We manufacture, all under attack, in my view, through the regulatory

process of this administration. And it is where rural jobs come from, and it is why urban areas are becoming crowded and rural America is becoming more sparsely populated, because the jobs have been forced out of rural America.

We have become as a country dependent on the rest of the world instead of strong and independent because of our own natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, next I will yield to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS), who is going to talk about mining and the interest he feels passionately about.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON), my colleague and good friend, for inviting me to join him in this dialogue this evening and on a very important issue about the future of rural America and its importance to this great country.

As the gentleman has just said, our rural economies and our rural areas are so valuable to the natural resources of this Nation. Mining, of course, like the gentleman before us from Oklahoma (Mr. WATKINS), who spoke about the oil industry and the fact that we are becoming so dependent upon industries outside of the borders of this country for our economy and for our well-being and for the quality of life that we have. Mining also fits into that very same category.

Mining is endangered at this very point, because of the policies of this administration and as well as I can imagine under any type of administration from a Gore administration would be as well.

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How are they doing that? They are taking the control of the public lands upon which most mining occurs. They are regulating through the administration these businesses out of business. Secondly, they are taking away the utility of our natural resources and our ability to produce them and keep the economy of this great country going.

In doing so, what their ultimate choice is to endanger both the economy and the national security of this great Nation.

Let us look at how they control vast areas of this country. As the gentleman has said, approximately 800,000 square miles of the United States, the western part of the United States, a size equal to most of the leading industrialized world combined, including Japan, Germany, Great Britain, France, and Italy, plus Ireland, and Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, as well as a few Luxembourgs thrown in for good measure, 815,000 square miles of public land is regulated by the administration.

Upon those lands are where we gain much of our natural resources, including mining. Mining is indeed part of our everyday lives, and as we know, most individuals, every man, woman, and child in this great country consumes about 44,000 pounds of mined

materials in one form or another every year. That is 44,000 pounds of mined materials, whether it is coal, fuel, the electricity plant that generates the energy for our daily living, or whether it is metal mined for a vehicle to drive us to and from work, that we use in our jobs, or even the jewelry that we wear is part of our everyday life.

And especially when we start thinking about medical apparatus, medical technology, the mining industry has indeed provided us with the quality of health care that we have today that is indeed pushing out new frontiers and keeping America alive, making our own lives longer, and giving us a better quality of life due to mining.

Well, with that 815,000 square miles, and this administration seemingly hell-bent on acquiring more land and using administrative procedures to push the public off the public land to push mining companies off of land and force them overseas, we are growing into a new dependence, for all the strategic minerals and metals that we need for our armed forces and for everyday living, on countries where they can go mine and have the opportunity to do so. Therefore, like oil, we are soon to become dependent for these metals and materials.

We are left with two very critical choices. Mr. Speaker, we are left with a choice of whether we develop our own resources and keep our children, our sons and daughters, home, or do we go ahead and allow for mining activity to move overseas at the insistence of the Gore administration, and following up by sending our sons and our daughters over there to defend the national security when those vital critical elements to our economy are cut off at some point? So we have those very delicate balancing choices we need to make.

I am really concerned about what this administration is doing through the United Nations as well. I heard recently that many of the leaders of the United Nations have tried to enlist 25 specified international agreements to establish a legal framework of international governance, a body of binding rules that would also affect how we operate in this country and make it even more difficult for mining to succeed.

Such conventions and protocols are the primary interest of environmental programs which have been on a campaign to make new world environmental organizations the deciding factor in what we do at home.

Let me say just one quick analogy here. If resources were the measure of a country's wealth, the United States would not be the number one economy in the world, Russia would be. Russia has more oil, gas, more timber, more mined minerals than any other Nation. But because Russia could not develop those natural resources, because Russia had to depend upon outside sources, Russia is not the number one economy in this world, the United States is, because the United States learned long ago how to develop its own natural re-

sources, whether it is timber, whether it is mining, whether it is farming and agriculture, developing the land and making those resources work for us.

I am interested in what these candidates stand for and how an administration is going to critically hurt our rural America. I looked at the vice president's book, *Earth in the Balance*. The vice president himself argued that some new arm of the U.N. should be empowered to act on environmental concerns in the fashion of a Security Council, and in other matters. There should be global constraints and legally valid penalties for noncompliance.

Well, most mining companies today have a very strong, very hard dependent environmental quality that they use in their operations every day around this world. I will be the first to admit that there are some historically bad practices out there in the past that have given mining a bad image, but today's practice is environmentally sound. We have most mining companies, they are shareholder-owned, citizen-owned. They have a responsibility to their shareholders, a fiduciary responsibility, and they are going to keep our country and our resources in this world I think used with the highest priority and safety, environmental safety, that we have.

Let me also say that the administration under Vice President Gore has proposed a new tax on the mining industry, a tax that amounts to a royalty on mined minerals that would amount to about \$200 million a year over a 10-year period. That is a \$2 billion new tax. At a time when our government is flush with surplus tax revenues, they want a \$2 billion tax increase.

Do Members know what they plan to do with that money? I think they plan to acquire more public land, kicking the public off.

Nevada is one of those States where I think it has the highest percentage of land in its borders that is managed and owned by the Federal government, at about 89 percent. That leaves us with about 11 percent for our real estate tax base developed property. It takes away a lot of the area that mines could go and work with private individuals.

So buying up more land only excludes the public from this land. It excludes our mining industries, again forcing them overseas, so buying up that land is not in the best interests of rural America. It puts people out of jobs. It puts communities on the brink of disaster and failure and financial bankruptcy. All of this makes those rural communities become more and more dependent upon urban communities for their support. I am sure America does not want that.

I am also worried that the next president must understand mining, and our president must make great strides in becoming a responsible steward of the land. He must understand that mining is a responsible steward of the land. I would hope that he understands that

mining is as important to our urban communities as mining is to our rural communities, not just for the jobs but for the direct result of what they produce and put out for consumption to the American public.

We need an administration that will invite all interested parties to the table. When it comes to establishing public policy, this administration has not. It has relied solely on extremist environmental groups to make those decisions. They have dictated mining out of existence.

It is not my nature to stand here and join with my colleague and be so political, but I believe this election is going to be particularly important to America. It is going to be particularly important to rural America. It is going to be pivotal to the future of this country. It will be pivotal to determining the future of mining.

Because there is an old saying: Mining works for Nevada, but if it works for the rest of the Nation as well, then it is a good product. It is a good organization. It is a good industry to have.

There is one final saying that I want to leave my colleagues with here today about mining. That is, in mining, you have to remember that if it isn't grown, it has to be mined.

I want to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, for allowing me to stand here and give a little bit of introduction on the value of mining. I just want everybody to remember the 44,000 pounds we each consume every year of mined minerals. It is critical to the future of this country and to the quality of life each and every one of us have.

I thank the gentleman for allowing me to be here.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. If we are not mining it from our own lands, we will be buying it from some foreign country.

Mr. GIBBONS. If the gentleman will continue to yield, as the gentleman says, our oil right now, we are 60 percent dependent upon international deliveries of oil. When we reach the point where mining is overseas and our metals and strategic metals are now produced overseas, we will then become dependent upon those countries, as well, and we will end up making the choice, do we send our sons and daughters over there to defend the vital national interests of those strategic minerals to the United States?

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. I thank the gentleman. Most of us tonight that will be speaking have large rural districts, some of the West but some from the East. I have the largest district east of the Mississippi in Pennsylvania, but our next speaker, Mr. SHERWOOD, who joined us in 1998, 2 short years ago, comes from a district almost as large as mine, a gentleman who was a very successful businessman and had not served in government per se except for the school board, local government; I should not say except for local government. That is the most

important government we have, local government.

He served very well there, has been a very successful businessman, and has transitioned into a very successful Congressman. He brings so much knowledge and experience of the community with him.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend, the gentleman from the eastern part of Pennsylvania (Mr. SHERWOOD), who will share with us the perspective of his rural district.

Mr. SHERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me.

Mr. Speaker, I ran for Congress because it had been my observation that in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania, we exported our milk and our stone and our timber and our manufactured goods, but we had also for a couple generations been exporting our children.

The reason we exported our children is they would grow up in these good families and get an education and go somewhere else to find a job, because we did not have enough good jobs at home. I have worked very hard to get more good jobs in northeastern Pennsylvania. We have been pretty successful at that. But the first rule if we want a good economy in our own districts is to protect the jobs we have.

What do we historically do in the country? When I was a young man growing up in Nicholson, we had three feed mills, or excuse me, five feed mills, two car dealerships, three creameries. If we go through that town today, there are not any of those.

Why did that happen? That happened because we lost our agricultural base. In the country, there are a few things we do for a living. We farm, we timber, we quarry stone. Those are all very important revenue producers and sources of employment and sources of good, stable family life in my district.

I am concerned that we have policies in this country that are making those industries less and less viable. I am concerned that we are looking at an election coming up right away for president where one of the candidates does not believe in any of those industries, does not really seem to believe in a rural way of life.

We talk about the environment and we talk about rural jobs and resource jobs as if they were exclusive. With a well-run country, they are not mutually exclusive. We can have a good economy and a pristine environment if we continue to manage it carefully.

In Pennsylvania, we have the sustainable forestry initiative. We have the Chesapeake Bay initiative. Both are programs that have taught our forest industry people when they can timber, when they can't timber, when they have to be worried about degrading the water supply. They have taught our farmers nutrient management, and that everything we do runs downhill and eventually ends up in the Chesapeake.

We have learned a lot in the last 20 years. We have learned a lot about how

we are good stewards of our environment and the people that are downstream.

Yet, we have an EPA now that wants to make all farming operations point source polluters, all forestry operations point source polluters, when these two issues have been very capably dealt with by our Pennsylvania DCNR.

That would be an unprecedented power grab by the EPA that would federalize all these small business practices, all these landowners that are farming on their land or harvesting their timber. It would be an unnecessary escalation of the authority of the Federal government, and it would be very cumbersome, very hard to manage.

So that is why I am concerned, as some of my colleagues are concerned, about the direction the country might take when we have our election in November.

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We need a rural economy that stays strong. We need to protect those jobs, protect those families, protect the small towns that live off the forest products industry, the mining industry, and agriculture. We need sustainable agriculture. We do not need it all concentrated in just a couple areas of the country.

If one has small dairy farms dispersed around the country, that is a very environmentally friendly way to raise our milk and our food and our fiber. When one has huge concentrations of animals in one area, one gets problems like we saw in the Tar River and the floods of a year ago.

So we want policies that will keep our farmers operating in the Northeast. To do that, we have to have a good energy policy. And we have to understand what we have to work with, that we need to work on our domestic supply, and that we have to understand the industry.

I am not afraid of the internal combustion engine, and neither is rural America.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from the eastern part of Pennsylvania (Mr. SHERWOOD). Rural America does not go very far without it. We do not accomplish very much agriculture without it. So I thank the gentleman from the eastern part of the State.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), another Pennsylvanian, to share with us something that he shared with me earlier tonight that a large number of our Armed Forces of our recruits come from rural America. He is going to talk about rural America's concern about our defense.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for this special order on rural America. Let me talk briefly about two categories of our defense. The first is our domestic defense. Our domestic defense

relies on the 32,000 organized departments that are in every rural town in America. In fact, as my colleague knows, Pennsylvania has 2,600 of these rural fire and EMS departments. They are in every small town in every county in this Nation, in Montana, in Idaho, in Alabama, in Arkansas, in Hawaii, in New York, California. They are there. And 1.2 million men and women, 32,000 departments, 85 percent of them are volunteers. In fact, they are the oldest volunteers in the history of the country, older than America itself.

Now, the important thing is, what has this administration done to these people who are serving America, who are responding to floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, hazmat incidents, and fires? Well, they have cut the only program for rural fire departments which has been authorized at about \$20 million a year. This administration cut it last year to this year from \$3.5 million to \$2.5 million. What a disgrace. The President sneezes and spends more than \$2.5 million a year. Yet, this administration has done nothing for rural fire departments.

Now, why should they? Well, these people lose 100 of their colleagues every year that are killed. Name me one other volunteer group from America where 100 of their members are killed in the line of duty. They have ordinary jobs, but they are killed protecting their towns and their communities.

But this administration, they claim they are for volunteers. We saw them develop the AmeriCorps program. Is that not amazing, a \$500 million program supposedly designed to help create volunteers. But guess what, the volunteer fire service cannot apply because it is not politically correct to fight fires and respond to disasters. So here we have an administration that is so insensitive to our domestic defenders that they created a half-a-billion-dollar program, giving scholarships, incentives for people to volunteer, but they cannot volunteer in their communities, especially the rural communities where they so desperately need people to man those trucks and their ambulances. This administration just does not get it.

Now, Harris Wofford, the head of that program, just called me today, and they now want to do something after the program has been in existence for about 6 years because they realize how insensitive they have been.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) talked about our international defenders, our military. He is right. The gentleman from Pennsylvania is often right, and he is right. The bulk of our military personnel are from the farms. They are from rural America. They are patriotic. They are dedicated. They will go any place that America sends them, and they will perform any task.

But do my colleagues know something? Look at what has happened to them. We have had three simultaneous things occur under this administration:

the largest decrease in defense spending, the largest increase in the use of our military around the world, and the absolute ignorance when it comes to arms control and the proliferation that has been occurring by China and Russia to rogue states, which further harms our Americans.

In fact, it was rural Pennsylvanians, 15 of them that came home in body bags in 1992 because this administration and other administrations had not done enough to build missile defense systems to stop that Scud missile when it hit the barracks in Saudi Arabia.

This administration has not done well by our military. The best evidence of that is our retention rate right now for pilots in the Air Force and the Navy is 15 percent. People are getting out because they are fed up with all of these deployments.

None of the Services over the past 3 years have been able to meet their recruitment quotas except for the Marine Corps because young people are saying, I do not want to join. Those farmers are saying, in the past, we have gone in the military, but I am fed up now because you are sending me from one deployment to the other.

Our once proud Navy which went from 585 ships to 317 ships now have to take people off of one aircraft carrier and move them to another, and they are still 600 sailors short on every aircraft carrier deployed in harm's way today.

What this administration has done to our military and has done to those brave Americans, many and oftentimes most of whom are from our rural areas, is absolutely outrageous. In fact, I think it is going to go down in history, the past 8 years, as our worst period of time in our history in undermining America's security.

If we look at the history records of World War II, the Vietnam War, World War I, the conflict Desert Storm, our volunteers from the heartland of America are always the first to come and volunteer for this country. But, again, we have not done well by them.

Those veterans out there across America have not been taken care of by this administration. This Congress had to fight to give our veterans and our military personnel cost of living increases because this administration thought it was more important to give an IRS agent an increase in their cost of living than they did to men and women who were serving and our veterans who have served.

We have got to change that. We need a President that will lead a Congress in proud support of our international defenders and in proud support of our domestic defenders. AL GORE just does not cut that.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. RADANOVICH) who is going to talk about the war on the West.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I thank very much the gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) noting that I will be talking about the "War on the West". I just want to make sure he knows I define the West as anything west of the East Coast.

So I appreciate this time to be able to talk on this subject, mainly about rural America and I think this administration's assault on rural America. While the "War on the West" might be a tired slogan, it is not nearly as tired as the people who continue to fight their own government to preserve their way of life.

As President Clinton's reign over western lands draws to a close, the war has been renewed with fresh vigor. New regulations sprout like kudzu, an unstoppable creeping vine, it strangles the jobs and life out of many western and rural communities.

During the past 8 years, the Federal Government has been a tough opponent. Few small businesses and landowners can withstand the due diligence of government lawyers who have unlimited funds and unlimited time.

For the victims, bureaucratic time is like Chinese water torture, slowly eroding the small business owner's ability to meet payroll and pay the bills. The waiting game is the government's most powerful weapon against individuals.

Delays and uncertainty can destroy any small business. But it is only in the West and in rural America where the Federal Government controls over half of the land, where our economy is dependent on natural resources, that a little bureaucratic red tape puts entire counties out of work.

Ask somebody who comes from rural Oregon or ask somebody who comes from rural California.

An example, in 1997, the Bureau of Land Management decided to carry out environmental assessments on every single grazing permit renewal. These can be very time consuming and expensive. It was a choice only a bureaucrat with government time and money would make.

Over 5,000 permits expired in 1999, nearly a fourth of the total number. Everybody knew that the BLM lacked the manpower to complete all the reviews in time. The ranchers faced enormous uncertainty, they feared they would have no place to put their cows and no extra feed available.

The Clinton-Gore administration showed all the concern that we would expect from Federal agents. They did not show much concern about the ranchers without permits who would go out of business. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, that was the point.

It took Congress to step in and temporarily renew the permits until the environmental reviews were completed. That move was labeled as an antienvironmental rider that "offered a perverse incentive for the BLM to delay environmental analysis."

One thing people do not get is that when one puts ranchers out of business, they sell the ranch. The people who

work there lose their jobs. The suppliers in the town lose their jobs. The people who buy the ranch, they build subdivisions.

This destruction of America's rural jobs is the unavoidable side effect of the Clinton-Gore public land policies. Politics has driven their systemic effort to demonize people who live on the land. They equate producers with destroyers.

They claim to save nature from man, and in the process, they gain political favor in the cities where people do not understand our rural culture, nor do they understand environmental stewardship.

Another example, President Clinton's Northwest Forest Plan virtually eliminated timber harvesting from almost 21 acres of forests in Washington and Oregon. Since 1990, almost 20,000 forests and mill workers in those two States have lost their jobs.

It is estimated that those industries supported another 40,000 to 60,000 service jobs. This all happened in small communities where unemployment is already over 15 percent.

This pattern has been repeated across the West. Thousands of mining, trucking and refining jobs have been lost by preventing the expansion or opening of new mines. The government has starved and destroyed countless small oil and gas producers and drillers by delaying regulatory permits.

The Clinton administration is now taking the final step by restricting recreational access as to Federal lands, a move that will erode the very tourism jobs they promised would sustain rural America after they eliminated the resource jobs.

What is most disturbing is that these unfortunate rural victims seem to be expendable casualties in the game of Presidential politics.

The chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) recently said that Democrats have basically written off the rural areas. That statement alone sheds light on the rural cleansing machine at work.

In 1996, the year of the Clinton-Gore reelection campaign, President Clinton designated 1.8 million-acre of Grand Staircase Escalante Monument in Utah. Initially, the Presidential advisor Katie McGinty, chairman of Council on Environmental Quality, expressed concern about abusing the Antiquities Act and stated that these lands are not really endangered.

But she later changed her position, apparently convinced of the political value in making such a designation. The process was pushed forward in spite of statewide outrage, and the Nation lost access to 62 billion tons of clean coal, 3 to 5 billion barrels of oil and 2 to 4 trillion cubic feet of clean-burning natural gas. The children of Utah lost billions of dollars in future royalties to pay for their schools.

Fast forward to the year 2000. In this Presidential election year, President

Clinton has named 10 new national monuments to the delight of hundreds of important urban activists.

One of the most recent, the Sequoia National Monument, was in my California congressional district. In spite of an existing ban on logging within the sequoia groves, and in spite of scientific recommendations that logging provides critical fire control around the groves, the administration decided to clear 330,000 acres off limits to anybody.

They immediately put 220 people in Dinuba, California out of work. This tragic result has been compounded by the fact that these families not only lost their primary income, but they also lost their employer-provided health insurance.

Possibly the worst effect of the Sequoia Monument, however, is that it has left the Sequoia Monument in the same position as the Bandelier Monument in Los Alamos, New Mexico. There is a virtual timber box of a forest, and prescribed burns are now the only way to control it. Just this year, 75,000 acres burned right next door in the Manter Fire.

So today, at the end of the Clinton administration's sovereignty over western lands, we find we are still fighting a war on the West.

City folk might be tired of hearing about this, but, Mr. Speaker, believe me, the people in rural America are exhausted after 8 years of living with it.

I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) for yielding me this time and also for bringing up this most important issue to my constituents and I think for the country; and that is this administration's attack on rural life in America.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, it is hard to hear any speech given that they do not talk about urban sprawl today. But one of the greatest causes of urban sprawl has been the slow methodical destruction of rural America. The economies, whether it is agriculture, whether it is mining, whether it is timbering, whether it is manufacturing, all those things we do in rural America, as they have been squeezed, and they have been, and made more difficult to accomplish, young people leave, move to the urban areas, and we have urban sprawl. Yet, in rural America, the quality of life is unparalleled, but it is not a quality of life if one cannot have an income.

□ 2045

So next I am going to call on my other friend from California who is going to talk about the fires, another failed policy of this administration.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON), for leading us in this special hour today talking about the challenges that we have in rural America, and particularly the challenges that have been brought about and magnified because of, regret-

tably, some of the misguided policies of the Clinton-Gore administration.

Let me begin by just giving a little background on the district that I am blessed and honored to represent in northeastern California. It is some 36,000 square miles, almost 20 percent of the land area of the State of California on the Nevada-Oregon border, just directly north of Lake Tahoe; north of Sacramento. There are some parts or all of 11 national forests within this area: Mount Shasta, Mount Lassen, the Trinity Alps. Again, some of the most beautiful mountain terrain and beautiful forests anyplace in the world are located in this area that I represent. Yet we see a tragedy taking place, a tragedy that began taking place because, I am afraid, of an ignorance within the United States, and certainly with this administration, on what is happening in our national forests.

For example, about the turn of the century and beginning in a major way around 1930, we began eliminating forest fires from our western forests. And of course our forests in the West are very different than those on the East Coast because it rains all summer long here. Fire is not something that people really understand that much on the East Coast. But on the West Coast we are basically a desert in the summertime. We have lightning strikes, and fire has historically been a natural phenomenon. It would be considered a positive phenomenon as well. But what happened, again in early 1900s, as people began living in these forest areas, they began preventing all forest fires. Then what happened is that our forests began to become much denser than they were historically.

As a matter of fact, the Forest Service has estimated that since 1928, our forests in the West are anywhere from two to four times denser than they were historically because, again, we have prevented the natural fires that would burn along and thin out the forests, burn out the smaller trees, and then we would have larger trees which would get larger. As a matter of fact, it was estimated that prior to the arrival of Europeans, there were approximately 25 large trees per acre in our forests. Today, we literally have hundreds of trees per acre.

Now, what happens today? Today, we see when we have a fire, either by lightning strike or accidental fire, we see what they call a catastrophic fire, where the fire begins in the brush area, it moves up and becomes what is referred to as a fire ladder, where it moves up into the smaller trees and then up into the very crowns of the big trees, which historically have lived for hundreds of years, and now we see the entire forest burn. We actually see where these fires get so hot, so intense, that the soil itself, the minerals within, are singed for two to three inches and nothing can grow for several years later. A catastrophic fire.

Now, what is the Clinton-Gore administration doing about it? Well, re-

grettably, not only are we not going in, as has been suggested by many, that we go in and begin thinning out our forests; that we begin removing this brush and thinning it out and restoring it more to its historic level so that we can again have the more normal restorative fires. By the way, the Native Americans, we know, would set fires. Again, it was a positive thing. But not today.

We have seen this year one of the worst fire seasons ever. The Government Accounting Office has estimated that there is some 39 million acres of national forest within the interior West that are at high risk of catastrophic fire. They also mention in this same report that it has been estimated that there is a window of only 10 to 25 years that is available for taking effective action before there is widespread, long-term damage from large-scale fires. That is a direct quote from the GAO report.

Again, what do we see happening? Nothing. We see nothing happening. This administration is following what some within the, regrettably, the extreme environmental community are dictating. For example, the Sierra Club came out 2 years ago in their public policy stating not a single tree should be removed from the Federal forest, not even a dead or dying tree. And, again, we see insect infestations. This is a normal thing to happen, and it is something that unless we go in and take out these diseased trees when it is first starting, we will see healthy trees and an entire forest destroyed. Not even a single tree, even if it is dead and dying, can be removed so as to remove this incredible catastrophic fire hazard, according to some within the extreme environmental community.

Regrettably, and the real tragedy is, that it seems very likely that were the Vice President, Mr. GORE, to become the President, he would continue this same policy that we have seen now for 7½ years into the next administration, the next 4 years; and we would see more trees burning.

How many trees have we seen burn? Well, last year some 5.6 million acres burned across the United States. This year it is already, as of the first of September, 6.8 million acres have burned. The cost of this has been \$626 million that has been spent; not to restore our forests to their historic level, but just to fight these catastrophic fires.

And I might mention that the biggest fire was in New Mexico. And, guess what. The Federal Government set this fire itself. This is what they called "a prescribed burn." Well, prescribed burn might have been great if we were a Native American back in the 1800s when there were only 25 trees per acre. But now, when we have a prescribed burn and we have these fire ladders, we can see what happens. Again, this was a tragedy in New Mexico, with hundreds of homes being burned and many hundreds of homes more threatening to be burned; people's lives being destroyed.

In my own district of Lewiston, a town last year, we had 120 homes burn. The entire community of Lewiston, it was in the national news for several weeks, was threatened to be burned. That was also a prescribed burn. Again, I want to mention that prescribed burns might be fine if we have gone in and restored these forests as they should, but not certainly as we see them today.

Is there something we can do? Yes. We passed legislation just this last year, legislation which I authored. I did not write it, but I authored it here. It was called the Quincy Library Plan. The reason it was called Quincy Library is because environmentalists and wood products people and elected officials and community leaders from within the community of Quincy in northern California, a small town of about 1,200, got together and they thought, well, the only place they would not yell at each other was in the library. So it was called the Quincy Library Plan. They came up with a plan using the latest scientific data, along with all the current laws, put it all together in a plan specific for their forest.

They came up with this plan, it was voted out of this House virtually unanimously, passed out of the Senate virtually unanimously, and the President signed it. This administration refuses to implement it. We have already been 1 year into it, and this plan has not been implemented. It was a 5-year pilot program, and they are eating up the time. This plan, by the way, does not cost taxpayers money. It brings in \$3 of revenue for every \$1 that is spent. Maybe this would help some of the 43 mills that were closed in my district alone in my 10 rural counties, not because we are short of trees, but because of Federal legislation that would not allow us to go in and thin out.

Again, there is a tragedy happening in our national forests and to our environment. No spotted owls can live where a catastrophic fire has taken place. We need to do something different. I am very pleased with Governor George W. Bush and his intent to work with us on this.

I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for yielding to me.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. We have been joined, Mr. Speaker, by the majority leader, such a delight, and I would like to yield to him now.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman; and I see the he has more speakers, perhaps a wealth of speakers here, so I will not take but just a minute or two.

I want to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for taking this special order on a very important subject, and I would like to make three points that have come to me while I have listened to all of these speakers. The basic question we are asking here is how do we as a Nation preserve, utilize, conserve, and develop our resources to achieve the wealth of a Nation in the lives of

our children. It seems to me it takes a balanced and informed relationship between real people, who naturally will love their land more than anybody could when they make their living off it and they live on it, and a government.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, sometimes the government can do some downright silly things. Driving through Georgia just a week ago, looking at the beautiful landscape of Georgia, seeing the damage that was done by what I call the kudzu government. A lot of my colleagues may not be familiar with kudzu, but if they were to go to south, southeast America they will see kudzu. My colleagues who are uninformed might say, my goodness, that is pretty. But what is kudzu? Kudzu is something introduced in rural America, in the southeast, ostensibly to control soil erosion. And what it does is it grows over and smothers all the natural foliage of the region.

So if anyone has been fortunate enough to have been given kudzu, a gift from the government, and it has been in their neighborhood for very long, they know that it has killed everything, even what they wanted to keep. That is so like the government: comes and shows up and says, "I am Mr. Kudzu, I am from the government, I am here to help you." And before we know it, they have smothered and destroyed everything that is dear to our native regions.

A look at mining reclamation. I wish everybody in America would go out to our great mining States and see what they are doing in mining in America today; to see how quickly they take the ore, the coal, out, extract it, clean up, replace and refill. It is not unusual to see the mine operating very productively, producing the minerals and the ores and the energy that we want, and within hundreds of feet we will see the natural wildlife of the region grazing on what had been, and is today again, the natural foliage of the region.

Once again, the government of the United States might have been helpful and encouraging in that. But today it says we are so extreme, as they did in the Grand Escalante, we will not allow the mining, we will not allow the reclamation. We will deny the Nation the resources.

One of the great philosophical questions of our lifetime is, If a tree falls in the forest and nobody is there, will anybody hear it? Well, if AL GORE becomes President, we might ask the greater question, and the one that has greater relevance to our life, If a tree falls in the forest, will anybody clear it? And we just heard a discourse on that.

There is a place in Idaho, in the district of the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH-HAGE), where you can stand and see that the environmental extremists allowed an experiment. They allowed somebody to do the natural, normal, sensible thing that we would all do as we cleaned up our own

backyards and take the fallen trees, the underbrush, the fire hazard, and clear it. And there is a section right across the road where that was disallowed. The fire came, and it is not difficult to see where the fire's devastation ended. It ended where people did the sensible thing with their land and cleared the fallen trees and stopped the fire hazard.

□ 2100

There are many things that we can see in rural America in our wonderful countryside, resources, wealth, that should be unlocked from rigid, inflexible, dogmatic Government controls that are naive in their understanding, innocent of their awareness, and arbitrary in their implementation.

Let America be what America has been and has built itself from, a free Nation of real people making a living and living on their own land.

I think we should return to this subject again soon.

EXPANDING TECHNOLOGY IN RURAL AMERICA

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

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend and colleague the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) for the opportunity to speak on his special order and for his effort in putting this together.

Tonight we have heard about many of the blessings that we get from rural America. We get timber and paper products. The gentleman from Pennsylvania spoke about that. We have oil and gas. The gentleman from Oklahoma spoke about that. We have minerals extraction. The gentleman from Nevada spoke about that. And the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHERWOOD) spoke about exporting kids.

Also, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) spoke about the number of children, the young people, from rural America who get involved in the military. So we have these great, great resources that we have been exporting.

But on the other hand, there now is a turnaround and we are getting more and more people back in or at least more and more people want to come back to rural America, and technology is allowing that to happen.

I would like to talk for just a couple minutes about technology and education in rural America and why that is so compelling and why that is going to change the nature of what we do in America so that people can go back to where they came from where they enjoy life, where they have clean air and they have beautiful scenery and they have good friends and where they can leave their cars unlocked when they go to church.

We have a number of things that are happening in technology that are happening at a breathtaking rate. And,