

been a troubling trend, a trend that affects the very quality of their life. During these 2 decades, income and wealth inequality, the disparity in income and wealth due to wages, accumulated wealth, investments and returns, have been well documented.

It is an alarming and disturbing trend because among those rural Americans left behind, fewer can afford healthy meals, fewer can afford health care for their families, and fewer can afford a college education for their children. It is an alarming and disturbing trend because rural America has been disproportionately affected. Consequently, rural America lags far behind other communities in personal access to the Internet as well as the total use of the Internet.

This disparity exacerbates the persistent poverty, high unemployment, inadequate health care and education resources. Thus, as the economy rapidly expands, rural communities find that it is far more difficult to participate.

Moreover, technological advances, which could provide some solutions to these conditions, elude rural communities because of digital disenfranchisement. Such advances as telemedicine, distance education and electronic government, depend upon Internet access.

It is clear that the competition among service providers that is driving the Internet explosion is not as concentrated in rural communities. The lack of population densities, the absence of essential infrastructure and the fact that rural communities are often spread over great distances are reasons cited for this lack of enthusiasm. Even the Department of Commerce has concluded in its Report, "Falling Through The Net," that, "Disparities clearly exist (and) . . . access comes hardest for Americans who are low-income . . . less educated, single-parent families, young heads-of-households, and (those) who live in the South, rural areas and central cities."

However, these barriers should not, must not remain as impediments. A rising tide should lift all boats.

It is for these reasons that this House should have had the opportunity to debate, vote on and support amendments that would require education and training for American citizens who reside in rural and other depressed areas; amendments that would require both public and private sector entities to make reasonable and diligent efforts to find American citizens who are willing to be trained in information technology positions; that would raise the H-1B visa fees; and that would use those increased revenues to, in part, carry out the other amendment mandates.

Mr. Speaker, this House has not had the will to pass a modest increase in the minimum wage, an increase to help move millions of America's workers out of poverty. But we did find the will to pass a bill that mandates that foreign workers earn a minimum of \$40,000 a year. That is what the H-1B Bill that passed provides.

Late last night, Mr. Speaker, those who favor large business interests won. But, the American people, especially those who live in rural America, the many willing and able unemployed workers and this Nation, lost.

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that rural America indeed lost. In fact, the Nation lost. Indeed, I think we should make an opportunity for American workers as well.

TRIBUTE TO LT. BRUCE JOSEPH DONALD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a man from my district, Lieutenant Bruce Joseph Donald of Poughkeepsie, who was killed last Friday when his F-18 Hornet strike fighter crashed in the Persian Gulf.

Lieutenant Donald, known by his call sign, "Straydog," was a 1995 graduate of the Naval Academy where he earned a Bachelor of Sciences degree in Ocean Engineering. Following graduation, Lieutenant Donald spent 6 months at his alma mater on temporary duty prior to being sent to Pensacola, Florida, to begin preflight indoctrination training. Afterwards, he traveled to Corpus Christi, Texas, for primary flight training, and then completed advanced jet training in Kingsville, Texas.

According to his superior officers, Lieutenant Donald performed exceptionally during flight school and, in February of 1998, he earned his Wings of Gold and an assignment to F-18 replacement pilot training at VMFAT-101. Having successfully completed replacement training, "Straydog" reported to VFA-25 in July 1999.

As a member of the "Fist of the Fleet," he excelled as a strike fighter pilot and served as the squadron's naval aviation training and operations procedures standardization officer, air-to-ground training officer, coffee mess officer, and landing signals officer. Lieutenant Donald was an exceptional pilot with sound judgment and was a designated combat section leader.

Although we live in a time of relative peace, we must never forget that the men and women who serve this Nation are constantly putting their lives on the line. We owe a tremendous debt to these men and women and to their families who love and support them through their training and deployments so that we may continue to live in a world of hope and the promise of peace.

Having dedicated much of his young life to the service of this Nation, it is only fitting that Lieutenant Donald can be commemorated here. Lieutenant Bruce Donald is survived by his parents, Patrick and Elaine Donald, his brother Brian, all of Poughkeepsie, New York. I offer the Donald family and their friends my deepest condolences.

OIL DRILLING IN ALASKA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to refute some of the comments that were made previously on this floor by Members of this House that know little about what they talk about, and that is energy and energy policy.

I noticed the gentleman from New York was talking about the fragile environment in Alaska. He showed a picture, very frankly, that is not the area which would be drilled in Alaska that George W. Bush suggested last night. He showed a picture that is far south. This is the area of Prudhoe Bay, 74 miles away from the 1002 place where we would drill.

If you notice the caribou here are around the oil rigs. In fact, our caribou herd has increased tenfold from where it was prior to the exploration in Prudhoe Bay, which provided to this Nation of ours every bottom barrel that has been delivered of the 16 billion barrels of oil. That is 16 billion barrels of oil that you would not have to import from the OPEC countries.

You have to keep in mind, Mr. and Mrs. America, that we are now so totally dependent on oil, approximately 57 percent this year, that if there is not a policy change, it will be 60 percent by the year 2005.

I watched the debate last night, and everybody else watched the debate, and I would suggest respectfully that George W. Bush's idea about energy production is vital to you. As you are sitting watching this, if you are a senior citizen and worrying about heating oil prices, right now we are importing, keep in mind, about a million barrels a day from Saddam Hussein. The area which we would like to explore, which is 74 miles away from the pipeline, 74 miles, has the potential, has the potential, of 39 billion barrels of oil. We could increase the production, going through the present pipeline, about a million barrels a day, equal to what we are importing from Saddam Hussein. We would not be dependent upon the OPEC countries. But that is just a small part. Alaska is just a small part.

This administration, the Vice President and the President himself have closed 34 refineries since 1992 in the United States of America. The Vice President asked us to use our reserve to lower the prices, which it will not do so. But as we do take that oil, if he is successful in his attempt, the oil will have to be shipped and refined in Venezuela and then shipped back to the United States because they have discouraged the building of new refineries.

The refineries themselves we have in place are running around 95 percent, which is unhealthy for the refineries because it is hard to maintain them at that level.

□ 1530

We must consider the production and the refining capability, and this Nation with this administration has not done.

I am going to suggest respectfully that there is no energy policy. I have said it once and I will say it again. The only energy policy this administration has had is to be on knee pads begging OPEC to produce more oil.

That is not America. It is for us to set a policy, it is for the next President to set a policy to make sure that we are no longer dependent upon the OPEC countries.

Coal, massive amounts across the Nation and Alaska being discouraged. Nuclear is not being utilized. It is being shut down. Natural gas, the demand has gotten so high now gas has gone from \$2.15 a million to, in fact, \$5.40 today. Now, that to me is wrong.

If we can find, which we know we have when we are given the opportunities and areas are open, we can become at least 50 percent dependent upon ourselves. And my colleagues out there think businesses can be run with 57 percent of their companies owned by someone else, if they think they can do what they want to do when 57 percent is owned by someone else, they are sadly mistaken and know little about business or the economy.

And that is where the United States is today, 57 percent today, 60 percent by the year 2005 unless there is a change in the energy policy.

My State, yes, is an energy-producing State. Thank God for that. It was on this floor in the House right here in 1973 that we passed the pipeline bill that delivered to this Nation 16 billion barrels of oil spent in our country, not spent overseas, in our country. And to show my colleagues the results, the caribou herd is stronger, the environment is safer. And very frankly, this Nation needed it badly in 1973 because of the embargo; and it needs it today.

I ask America to wake up about energy. Think about where we are going to be if we do not change that policy. George W. Bush mentioned it last night in the debate. We must have an energy policy today that increases the development and the production and the ability to refine our energy policy.

NIGHTSIDE CHAT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TANCREDO). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I have listened a good deal to the previous comments, and I was wondering if the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) could answer the question or go into a little more depth about the specific area in which this exploration has taken place.

It sounded as if it was in the middle of a national park in the middle of a wildlife refuge. I thought maybe it would be interesting to hear from the gentleman just the dynamics of Alaska, how much of the land is owned by Alaska, and maybe compare the size of Alaska to Texas for example. And so, I

think the comments of the gentleman are very appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG).

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I am glad he asked that question. Because the area which we are talking about, the area called the 10-02 Area in the Arctic National Wildlife Range, is a very small part of 19 million acres. It is approximately 1,200,000 acres. And of that 12,000 acres would be disturbed. But it is only 74 miles away from the existing oil field and pipeline, 74 miles, which is a very small distance to tie these two areas in.

It is an area that this Congress set aside when they passed the Alaska National Land bill by Senator JACKSON and Senator STEVENS because we knew the potential of the oil being there. And by the way, Mr. and Mrs. America, this is your oil. This is not the State of Alaska's oil.

My goal is to try to make us more independent so we are not dependent on the foreign countries. This very small area that is not, by the way, the pristine area that people talked about, it is probably the most hostile area. And that is why I referred to the picture that the gentleman spoke before me about ANWAR was a picture that was false, false, false.

I want people to remember that. It is a made-up picture or a picture taken in the southern part of that 19 million acres. And I ought to know because I live in that area. And so, when people say we are going to destroy the environment, and I listened to the Vice President talking about destroying the crown jewel, Alaska is the largest State, 2½ times the size of Texas.

We have more wilderness than any other area in the United States including all the States put together. We have more pristine areas in the State of Alaska than any other area. They will never be touched by man. But this one area has the potential, very small as it is, to provide for the Nation itself so we are not dependent upon the Saddam Husseins a million barrels a day for the next 100 years.

Now, keep that in mind what I have just said, by the next 100 years. Some people say I am exaggerating, that it is not true. This is exactly fact. And when someone says, we do not need the oil, it is only 6 months' times, that means we have no other production and would be totally dependent on Alaska and we never ever expected that. But we should be able to provide at least that million barrels a day so we do not have to buy it from Saddam Hussein. That is what is important to me.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman does not mind, as the gentleman knows, our colleagues that were up here spent most of an hour speaking about what a traumatic situation this was and how terrible this was going to be; and I do not think it was held in its proper perspective. So I think if the gentleman, for example,

would not mind going in a little more detail.

He said, when the original plan was drafted or the bill was passed, there was an area that was set aside for exploration. My understanding is now, when we talk about the 19 million acres, the gentleman said there is 1.2 million, but we are only talking about 12,000 acres of 19 million. Is that correct?

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. It would be 12,000 acres of 19 million will be totally disturbed by mankind. The rest of it is wilderness.

By the way, the Congress set this area aside because they knew the oil was there. And that is one of the reasons it should be opened up.

To give my colleagues an example, in the last 10 years we have lost actually 77 percent of our oil rigs because this administration has not promoted oil development. They have asked us to be dependent upon the foreign country. The domestic oil and gas industry has lost 500,000 jobs in the last decade.

It is ironic to me in this political arena in which sit, Mr. GORE, the Vice President, says, big oil, big oil is bad. Foreign oil is good. Big oil is bad. Buy it from the foreign countries and be dependent. That is good. Let us be domestically dependent on the other countries. No, that is bad.

So I am suggesting that Alaska wants to contribute to the ability of this country not to have to respond to the OPEC countries. And we are so close, 74 miles away. Remember, the pipeline is 400 miles long. We have the potential of 39 billion barrels of oil, and that is the largest reserve we know in the United States today.

And yet we have people talking about destroying the environment. The environment will not be destroyed. But keep in mind, what right do we have as Americans to buy oil from Russia, and yes, we are doing that; to buy oil from the OPEC countries? Do they have any safeguards? They do not. They spill more oil in Russia in one day in the pipeline than we did in the Exxon Valdez. And yet we want to buy oil from foreign countries to feed our appetites, that I would agree with. But each day we stop domestic production makes us more dependent, more responsive to the foreign desires. And they can run that price up.

If my colleagues want to blame somebody for the high price, blame this administration. Blame this administration for really discouraging domestic production. They do not have an energy policy, none whatsoever. And if they want to read an interesting book, read AL GORE's book. He wants to destroy the combustible engine, put everybody on bicycles, like they are in China. And yet the other day he said we have got to lower the price of gasoline because it is hurting our economy and the people.

The reason the prices are high is because the policy they have is to go to the OPEC countries and beg them to