

downtown business community that has a number of the small business entrepreneurs who made our business community vibrant, we will work with them. To the media, we will thank and work with them continuously as they provide information throughout all of the community.

Likewise, I am delighted to be able to recognize the donation of Mr. George Foreman, a native Houstonian, of \$250,000, and of course a number of the corporations, as well. We will offer a resolution of appreciation, as well as assisting the community with any other support and legislative initiatives that may be brought about.

I want to thank the Harris County delegation for their leadership in this effort, and I hope that we will be able to recover together as a community united as one.

Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the work by thousands of Houstonians to recover in the wake of the disastrous flooding that inundated Southeast Texas and to remember those lives lost over the last several days due to this tragedy.

There has not been a complete accounting of all of those who have been reported missing in the Houston area, but there are already 21 deaths, which have been attributed directly to the flooding that occurred in the city. The death toll could have been much higher had it not been for the bravery and dedication of our city's fire fighters, law enforcement officers, public works crews, and emergency management personnel. I would like to also extend thanks and appreciation to those private citizens who rushed to the aid of fellow citizens who were in danger of succumbing to the floodwaters. These heroic individuals may not all be known, but the evidence of their caring and humanity is evident in the number of those who are reported to have been lost. These Houstonians used their personal boats and watercraft to rescue neighbors, friend, family and strangers from the rising floodwaters.

My appreciation also extends to those surrounding counties that provided assistance to residents of Houston, when the city was not able to respond due to the overwhelming numbers of request.

The catastrophic flooding has left 17,000 resident of the City of Houston and surrounding area in desperate need of emergency shelter, this is in addition to the sizable Houston homeless population. Across Harris County Texas it is estimated that as many as 21,000 homes are thought to be without power, phones, and water, with about 5,000 homes having been flooded.

Reliant Energy/HL&P reported that 34,000 of their customers, who included hospitals, were without power during the flooding.

The medical personal of Memorial Herman Hospital are to be commended for their quick action to move patients to safer ground when the hospital was threatened by floodwaters. Memorial Herman Hospital is a level 1-trauma center and transplant center with multiple levels of adult, pediatric and neonatal intensive-care capabilities. The flood forced the hospital to suspend service on Saturday, and move all of its patients to safety.

I would like to thank our fellow Americans for rushing to the aid of the residents of the

City of Houston. I would like to remind us all how important it is to offer assistance to those in distress due to natural or man made disasters. Therefore, I thank President Bush for acting quickly to declare Southeast Texas a federal disaster area. The City of Houston is estimated to have a billion dollars in damage as a result of the flood.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has also recognized the enormity of the flood in our area by providing an automatic extension from the June 15 deadline for filing or paying taxes to August 15 of this year. I thank the Director of the IRS for allowing this additional time for Houston area residents.

The flood and its severity were exacerbated by the fact that land in and around the Houston area has been subsidence of land. Many report that the area around the Medical Center area had subsided about 2 feet from 1973 to 1995. New data on subsidence in the Houston area is due to come out at the end of this month, according to the National Geodetic Survey office.

The floods economic impact to the area may be difficult to assess. There are an estimated 76,000 ATM bank machines that were effected by the flood, which may have implications for 22 states. The Pulse ATM network reported that the flood disrupted transactions when the primary and secondary power supplies was flooded in Houston. This led to the forced closing of the Bush Intercontinental Airport, suspension of Metro bus service, the flooding of major highways into and out of the city, such as I-10, Highway 59, I-45, parts of the 610 Loop, have all had a tremendous impact on the city's business community.

Houston is in recovery due to the efforts of thousands of public servants, businesses, and individual efforts. I would like to commend and thank the Houston Chronicle and KHOU-TV (Channel 11) for leading an effort which has raised almost \$6 million to aid the Red Cross' massive relief effort. Those stations that also joined in this effort are KPRC-TV (Channel 2), KRIV-TV (Channel 26), KTMD-TV (Channel 48), KLN-TV (Channel 45), and KRBE-FM (104.1).

Clear Channel Communications reported more than \$30,000 in donations and 50 to 60 truckloads of supplies, and businesses and organizations contributed \$353,000, with \$100,000 of this amount coming from Calpine Corporation.

Former heavyweight boxing champion Mr. George Foreman, a native Houstonian, donated \$250,000 to this effort.

Furthermore, I will work with local, state, and federal governments to ensure that Houston has the resources necessary to make a full recovery from the floods. I will investigate the severity of this flood and evaluate methods that can be put into place to prevent another tragedy of the magnitude from happening again.

I thank my colleagues for their support during this difficult time.

#### NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. HART). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BEREUTER. Madam Speaker, I have taken this hour under the leadership's prerogatives this evening in order to address three related subjects. I will be joined, I am sure, by some of my colleagues who also have something to say about these subjects because of their recent involvement in a meeting.

First of all, I would like to spend some time talking about the NATO Parliamentary Assembly; second, relatedly, about the subject of NATO expansion, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization expansion; and third, about two of nine applicant countries, Lithuania and Bulgaria.

It has been my privilege to participate in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, formerly known as the North Atlantic Assembly, since 1984 on a rather regular basis. Since 1995, I have had the opportunity to chair the House delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

This organization, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, has now been in existence and operating efficiently and I think quite effectively for more than 40 years, first for the 12 countries of the NATO Alliance, later expanded to 16, and now 19 members.

Congress participates as a result of a statutory decision which provides for participation for both the House and Senate and bipartisan delegations that meet with our European and Canadian allies in NATO, their parliamentarians semi-annually, and in fact a third meeting that involves part of the assembly which takes place in Brussels in February, where we meet not only with our colleagues from the NATO countries but also with officials of NATO, the North Atlantic Council, the Secretary General of NATO, and more recently, with the European Union and some of its components, like the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Without a doubt, the NATO organization, NATO, has been the most effective collective defense alliance in the history of the world. It has provided the collective security to those nations of Western Europe, and it is no surprise that many countries of the former Warsaw Pact now aspire to membership not only to the European Union but to NATO itself.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly has provided a forum for discussion, for dialogue, for research by the parliamentarians of the 16, now 19, NATO countries. It is by, all accounts, the most substantive of all of the inter-parliamentary efforts in which the House and Senate are involved.

The members of the delegation from the House and from the Senate are chosen by the leadership on both sides of the aisle to participate in this assembly, and we have always proceeded in a bipartisan fashion.

Our comments tonight are prompted by the fact that we have recently returned from one of our semiannual meetings. This one was in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Lithuania is not a member of NATO, but as the Soviet Union collapsed, as the Iron Curtain came down, as Yugoslavia began to disintegrate, we had a substantial concern and interest in assuring that these nations of the former Warsaw Pact and indeed parts of the Soviet Union were given an opportunity to benefit from participation in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly as associate members, because it was our view that if we could help them, particularly in their parliamentary bodies, move towards democratic institutions and practices, this would be a major service to those countries.

In fact, we had a very successful and very organized effort to reach out to these countries' parliamentarians and to the parliaments themselves. We called it the Rose-Ross Seminar. They were financed in significant part by the United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development funds, but now they are supported by the assembly itself, with contributions from other countries.

The U.S. no longer has a predominant role in financing these seminars, but they were meant to help these parliamentarians and the leaders of those governments, civilian, military, to understand what it was like to participate and work in a democracy; to build democratic institutions; and, in fact, to try to provide transparency in budgeting, civilian control of the military, and eventually, of course, interoperability with NATO forces, if that is the course they chose.

Nine of those countries have chosen to aspire to and formally request membership in NATO. They range across the face of Central and Eastern Europe from the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania down to Bulgaria in southeastern Europe. They are known today as the Vilnius Nine, from a meeting of the nine that recently took place in Vilnius.

I notice that we are joined by one of my colleagues, who is the vice-chairman of the Political Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly here in the House. My colleagues know him as the chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. It is the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GOSS).

I think as my colleagues appear, since they have busy schedules, we will just let them speak to any of the three subjects that are related that we wish to discuss tonight. We will talk about the assembly itself and how it operates, about the fact that we visited two of the aspiring members, and about the subject of NATO expansion.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Sanibel, Florida (Mr. GOSS).

Mr. GOSS. I thank the gentleman from Nebraska for his consideration in yielding to me, Madam Speaker, and I congratulate him for his leadership of the NATO parliamentarian group.

I am not sure that all Members understand, and certainly most people in

America do not understand, the extraordinary efforts we go to to reach out to parliamentarians in other countries in order to ensure that our form of democracy is well understood, and to make sure that we understand, as perhaps the only world's leading superpower now, some of the problems other countries are facing and how their legislative branches are dealing with those.

That is particularly true with our allies in NATO, the member nations, because we are dealing with a very critical subject here, and that is the national security, and in the case of NATO, the collective security of those who have signed on to NATO.

It is no secret, of course, that now that we have a number of countries that aspire to membership in NATO because of concerns about their national security that we have decisions facing us which are somewhat timely, in fact, as soon as a year from now, and in a few months in Prague next November, where decisions are going to have to be made about the enlargement, and many nations are following specific plans to try and make sure that they are eligible and in fact will be included in NATO membership and the responsibilities that that implies; in fact, not only implies but demands, because there are considerable demands in order to meet the standards of NATO.

For example, a percentage of the gross domestic product of each country has to be used for defense, collective defense. There has to be some type of interoperability. That means speaking a common language. Those types of things are very important.

I believe that it is fair to say that we have a window of opportunity right now that is not going to stay there forever. The gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER), the chairman, has just led a delegation to Vilnius, Lithuania, and to Bulgaria. These are two of the nine states that are aspirant applicants for the next round of enlargement.

We saw there a tremendous commitment among the people, among the leadership, because of the desirability to look west and join the freedom-loving democracies in that form of government, and they are willing to make sacrifices in those countries to meet the standards of operability and the standards necessary for membership to accept all responsibilities.

Some have said that the enlargement issue is a bad issue because, oh, there are cost problems, or it will upset the Russians, or a whole bunch of other arguments that we heard when the previous three countries were brought into NATO, Hungary and the Czech Republic and Poland, all of whom have been very supportive, valued additions to the NATO arrangement since their membership and coming in.

I believe that we are going to see the same thing with the other countries that are ready for enlargement. If we miss the opportunity to capture the enthusiasm that they have for the sac-

rifices they are willing to make to join NATO now, I am not sure where they go or how it will come out.

So I think the enlargement question is a critical question that needs to be boosted forth, brought to the attention of our colleagues, and made clear that it should be a critical point of the foreign policy matters of the Bush administration. I hope that is going to happen.

It is, I suppose, not coincidental that President Bush is at this very time in Europe discussing some of the other issues that are involved. Obviously, we have the missile defense questions that are of interest to our allies, and the whole question of the European security defense, what that is going to look like, because that could color our presence in the Balkans, and many other issues that are of great interest to us.

But when it comes down to the fabric, the atmosphere, the willingness, the commitment, the spirit of NATO, I think the enlargement question is the most important.

I must congratulate the gentleman from Nebraska (Chairman BEREUTER) for constantly through the years being a champion of this, leading the way, taking delegation after delegation over to meet with our colleagues in various places, and receiving those colleagues, those parliamentarians who have come back from those places to get more information from Washington.

It has been a real labor of love. It has shown great results. I think the gentleman's wisdom and vision has preceded him with the three who have already been enrolled as the enlarged members, and with the other nine aspirants out there. I believe we have now visited virtually all of them. It seems to me we are at the threshold of opportunity, and if we fail to take it, I think it is a "shame on us" situation. I thank the gentleman for the time to say that.

Mr. BEREUTER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his kind remarks.

At the Lithuania meeting, I think the controversial elements on our agenda included the Albanian ethnic conflict in Macedonia or the former Yugoslavia, the Republic of Macedonia.

We always talk about burden-sharing. We are concerned and interested as constructive critics over what the European Union will be doing on creating a European security and defense policy, or ESDI, some would say.

They wanted to know our views on missile defense, a limited missile defense that the President is addressing now at various points in Europe.

But I think ultimately it always comes back to, as one element in our discussion, the subject of NATO enlargement. I think it is appropriate for the gentleman and for this delegation to talk to our colleagues in the House and to the Congress in front of the American people about the U.S. role in enlargement and the advantages that brings to the Alliance, and the responsibilities we have to assure that worthy applicants, countries that have

met some of the criteria that the gentleman mentioned, have an opportunity to bring the NATO umbrella over them and to make a contribution to the collective security.

The first enlargement of NATO was an easy one when the Federal Republic of Germany took into its arms the German Democratic Republic, East Germany. As a result of the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Iron Curtain, that was an easy addition.

But then we may remember, and I am sure the gentleman does because he was involved in it, along with this Member, that it was the House of Representatives that really took the lead in pushing for the enlargement of NATO. The Senate followed us, and then the Clinton administration, in recognizing and supporting the Congress of the United States, took the leadership role within the North Atlantic Council in the meeting of our Secretary of State with their foreign ministers and our Ministers of Defense, and pushed for NATO enlargement.

□ 1745

For us, we have always said the doors are open, as long as these countries are willing to move towards democratic institutions and to assure civilian control of their military and to have no aspirations for the territory of their neighbors, to make the kind of commitments necessary for providing an adequate defense, to contribute to the NATO alliance, they ought to be eligible for membership.

So we have as a result of that, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland as the first round of members by a decision in 1999. I think the only disappointment in the Congress is that one other country, Slovenia, which most of us had considered to be quite worthy of membership at that time and, indeed, that was the expression of the Congress, was not taken in. But they are certainly a leading candidate for the next round.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. Goss) mentioned that this decision will come before us again as a group of 19 NATO countries in Prague in 2002. My estimate is that unless the United States takes the leadership, expansion will not proceed at that time. And I think we have that responsibility. We have, within the U.S. government, I think, a leading role.

I only regret that votes on the tax cut bill kept us from visiting one other country, because Slovakia, among the first four considered for membership that took a different turn in its politics, now has made dramatic advances; and we were planning to visit Slovakia, as well as Lithuania and Bulgaria.

I might explain to my colleagues that we solicit advice from a number of sources, our State Department, people outside government, the supreme commander of Europe, General Joseph Ralston, as to the countries we might visit now as being among the front runners

for NATO membership and countries that needed to have recognition for the advances that they have taken. That is how we selected our visitation as a result of the trip to Vilnius.

I wonder if the gentleman has any reaction to the demonstrations that we saw in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I think it was extremely heartening. I cannot speak with enough admiration for the respect I have for the Baltic nations and what they endured under the past years of tyranny before they were freed, and that has been freedom that has been very precious only for a decade.

Their enthusiasm is somewhat, therefore, more understandable when you are there; but the very strong ardent feeling, passion about being free and democratic and leaning West and wanting to be associated with the things we stand for and willing to shoulder the responsibility and, as I say, make the sacrifice, because there is some sacrifice, that is not one of the wealthiest Nations in the world by any means. And there is some sacrifice involved.

There was very strong support for NATO, very clear friendship, very clear understanding of what they were getting into, how much they wanted to be involved in this, and how far they were willing to go.

I have spent some time, and I congratulate our speaker for his outreach to parliamentarians in other countries as well, including the former Soviet Union, Russia.

The Speaker has reached out to the Duma and to the leadership of the Duma and has made a recent trip there. And one of the conversations that we, of course, had with our fellow colleagues in the Duma as legislators is the concern that they have that NATO is getting too close somehow to Russia.

We point out always to the parliamentarians, to the Duma, that NATO is a defense organization. It is not a defensive organization, and one of the cases we use is how well in Vilnius they have dealt with problems that were serious problems previously in the relationships with Russia.

In fact, Vilnius, has, I think, responded very, very favorably in the dealings with Belarus. I do not think anybody can say they have been anything except good neighbors and gone the extra mile to work out appropriate sovereign questions with the Belarus. In terms of the Russian interest in Lithuania itself, the concern has always been the Kaliningrad Corridor, how do you get to Kaliningrad Corridor, another part of Russia, which is on the other side, as it turns out, of Lithuania on the Baltic.

The problem of the responsibility of that has been worked out extremely proficiently, very well, and to the Russian satisfaction and to the Lithuanian satisfaction under Lithuanian leadership.

So if there is some danger to the Russians by Lithuania somehow acting responsibly and democratically and freely and joining with counterpart organizations and NATO, I fail to see what it is.

If anything, the Russians should argue that the Lithuanian neighborhood has become much more friendly to Russia since they have been aspirant to NATO because they understand the responsibilities of that.

I am not sure that the Russians are ready to accept that argument yet, but I certainly congratulate the Lithuanians.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for those comments. They are exactly right. It should bring some additional stability to the region, and the Russians really should have nothing really to fear. Let me go back briefly to give a history of what has happened to the Baltic Nations.

Back in the late 1930s, we had the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop which ceded those three Baltic nations to the Soviet Union, and then they were forcibly annexed, and thousands of people were killed or sent to Siberia and then we had the Nazi invasion of the region, and they come under Nazi control before they fell back under the control of the Soviet Union.

Now, to the resounding credit and resounding yet today, the United States never recognized the annexation of these three nations into the Soviet Union. In fact, you could go up 16th Street and see some of the embassies, free Lithuania and free Estonia and free Latvia operating, and the diplomats actually got to be old men and women here waiting for freedom which finally came with their way with great difficulty.

One of our colleagues who has taken a very special interest in the NATO parliamentary assembly, participating only since the February meeting, but an even greater and longer-term interest in the Baltic Nations is our colleague from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS).

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois for any comments he would like to make about NATO enlargement or Lithuania or whatever subject he would like to discuss.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me and I thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Goss) and I really am honored to have been able to travel with you and deal with issues regarding with NATO.

I have learned a lot and grown a lot, and I appreciate the wise council and expertise.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit the following op-ed for the RECORD:

SHOULD THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION EXPAND?

(By Congressman JOHN SHIMKUS)

As I fly 31,000 feet above Bosnia and Herzegovina, I think of its present strife. I see the steep slopes and terraced farmland. It is quiet and serene at this height, hiding national tensions that have made the Balkans the powder keg of Europe.

My return flight originated from Sofia, Bulgaria, as an official member of the U.S. delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Our short trip was designed to compliment the Bulgarian people on their movement to a constitutional democracy, with rule of law and respect for human rights. We also assessed their potential as a friend and possible future ally.

Bulgaria is not only an example to the Balkans but a very stabilizing force. And in addition to being a stabilizing force for the Balkans, Bulgaria is a constructive link between occasionally feuding current NATO allies Greece and Turkey.

From the Bulgarian President to the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Parliament to the Defense Minister, all were on message as to the importance of NATO and their hope to be included in the next round of enlargement. Our meeting occurred weeks before a competitive upcoming national election. As a politician myself, I understand the value of time. Their availability reinforced the importance they place on their Western contacts, the continuing importance of the United States in European affairs, and their appreciation of NATO membership.

Prior to Sofia, I attended the NATO Parliamentary Assembly spring session in Vilnius, Lithuania. Another strong applicant for enlargement, Lithuania is an associate member of NATO and a member of several demanding programs for NATO aspirants. They did not miss their opportunity to impress the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. (Which made this fourth generation Lithuanian very proud.)

Lithuania has also developed a constitutional democracy, the rule of law, and a respect for human rights. Lithuania has attempted to be an additive element to NATO. Immediately upon the breakout of hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, Lithuania deployed troops in support of both NATO missions. Not constrained by the old Soviet force structure, Lithuania is moving to light infantry for deployability and forest defense. Lithuania's rapid ascent to a functioning democracy, tolerance for its Russian minority, and a willingness to put a painful 20th Century history behind it make the country a serious candidate for alliance membership.

The Lithuanian president fought against the Soviet army as a member of Lithuania's Homeland Defense. He eventually fled for freedom and gained success in the United States. His election marked a westward look by Lithuania. Lithuania's leadership is young and motivated. At the Ministerial level, the Chairman of Parliament, and the Prime Minister . . . the ages run from 38 to 53 years old.

But one of my poignant memories of the trip was the jeweler from the open air historical museum of Rumsiskas. Above the door of his shop were these words in English, "I want to be in NATO, because my family died in Siberia." Lithuania has been run over numerous times and has suffered great destruction. Most recently, Germany and the Soviet Union in World War II. No Lithuanian was untouched by those events. Yet the current government has energetically sought good relations with all of its neighbors, including Russia.

Why would Bulgaria, Lithuania, or any other country want to join NATO? Why is this important to the United States and the 20th District of Illinois?

For many years the Statue of Liberty has been a symbol of freedom, security, and economic opportunity for many immigrant families. The Statue faces east, welcoming immigrants to our shores. Now I think as she faces east, she also looks east toward Europe at these former captive nations who struggle as newly emerged democracies.

Many of us multi-generational immigrants, after years of security and freedom, take our liberties for granted. Many of us are too young to have experienced the fresh air of newly found freedom. This trip revived my senses. Not only could I smell the sweet air of freedom; I could see it, touch it, and taste it. I am a better father, citizen, and representative for it.

This will be true for NATO. For NATO to be relevant, it must expand its current protective umbrella over these new emerging democracies. By expanding, NATO will experience heightened senses—seeing, feeling, touching, and tasting freedom. We will also have a better chance that our young men and women will be spared the horrors of war. The taxpayers also may be spared the great expense of war with a little preparation and prevention.

As President Clinton said, the goal of NATO is to "expand the frontier of freedom." Hopefully President Bush will say the same with this addition: "from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, a Europe whole, free, and secure."

Mr. Speaker, the last paragraph says as President Clinton said, the goal of NATO is to expand the frontier of freedom. Hopefully President Bush will say the same, with this addition, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea a Europe whole, free, and secure.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this special order tonight because this is occurring at the time when the President is overseas, and there are a lot of anxious people going to be hanging on every word that he says, like the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. They are going to be dissecting it, because it means so much.

I have done a couple of things in preparation for tonight, and the gentleman mentioned the rallies, and I brought some small photos from the rallies.

Mr. BEREUTER. Those rallies in support of NATO membership?

Mr. SHIMKUS. Rallies in support of NATO membership. First, I want to show some photos of times that I remember. My involvement with NATO goes back as a young second lieutenant on the German border with Czechoslovakia serving in defense of freedom under NATO auspices which I did for 3 years.

These are the photos I remember. Here is an East German border guard looking across at the people who would recognize this who remember the old pillars. And on the other side, here is the actual fence with an East German guard and the dog trailing behind as there is a patrol, as we did so often, is keep checking on each other.

These stand in stark contrast to our most recent trip, where we have photos from the rally that happened right outside the meeting arena. I wanted to make sure I had that.

There were some signs up of the people who were present. One says here, it says NATO Lithuania, good, okay. This other one, the small one says, the victims of Gulag are calling for justice.

In our trips and in my op-ed, I am not sure if there was a single family that was not touched by the occupation of all of these forces.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to relate the experience I saw, at a little booth there with the jeweler working and displaying his ware, and he had NATO, yes. My family was sent to Siberia.

His entire family never came back from Siberia, so he wanted to make sure that does not reoccur in some fashion in the future.

There was this artisan who has a very strong commitment to NATO membership for Lithuania.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments. Mr. Speaker, another photo is what we touched on earlier, and it actually represents the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. And it says, the Pact of Molotov-Ribbentrop is our past; NATO is our future.

I think what I have enjoyed about this brief experience into the NATO parliamentary assembly is, as I say in my op-ed piece, is really breathing the fresh air of freedom. I tried to make this point to a lot of my parliamentary colleagues from some of the other countries in that for NATO to be the NATO that I know, it has to expand. It has to have a protective umbrella over these emerging democracies.

In one of my closing statements in Vilnius, I said if not here, meaning in Vilnius, my question was where? If not now, my question is when? There is a lot of debate about the where and the when.

I will just say that we, as a Nation, have had a lot of people sacrifice for freedom. Some have actually had to fight and die, and we just celebrated Memorial Day. They understand the value of a free society and the sacrifices.

The folks who are considered the old captive nations, they have this exuberance of freedom that helps create optimism and faith in democratic ways of life, the rule of law, equal treatment, human rights. They are struggling to form a more perfect union. They are not all perfect, but one way we can definitely help is to provide that protective umbrella through a defense alliance, such as NATO, to give them some foundational support as they pursue becoming a more perfect union themselves.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments, and I hope he will make contributions any time he feels the urge to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman yielding further, because our colleague who was a wonderful addition to the group of parliamentarians in Vilnius because he is so familiar with the territory and the experience there made it more value-added than it normally is for a visit for those countries.

I congratulate him for his expertise and his patience in educating the rest of us on some of the issues, and food not the least of which, the gentleman is an expert on many things.

I was struck by something the gentleman said. It so happens that in Vilnius, Lithuania as in somewhat similar situations elsewhere in the Baltic nations, Latvia and Estonia, there is a KGB museum. And it was, in fact, a show place of terror and torture and inhumanity and all of the history, that painfully recent history that the gentleman has referred to and it is shown off as an example of what should not happen in a free and humanitarian civilized society.

Clearly, there were barbaric acts of torture, treachery, horrible suffering, heartbreak, all of these pieces brought to the surface and even the photographs that were lining the meeting halls, which were reminders to us of the atrocities that took place in such recent history during the Cold War under the whole very cold harsh hands, unsympathetic leadership from a foreign country.

□ 1800

The curious part of that is that, in my view, the Baltic nations have gotten over it and on their way so well and are willing to go forward and positively in the future. I think that is terrific. But I think the fact that they have that KGB museum is a reminder of why they are so anxious to be in NATO, so this can never happen again, is a perfectly rational straightforward approach.

It so happens the juxtaposition of two other countries that happened to be in on this recent trip, with the chairman's leadership, and also splitting my time partly with the Speaker in Russia, is in Russia the KGB is looked on very differently.

The KGB has undergone a name change and some cosmetic surgery and is now called the SVR and is becoming more fashionable. It is true that the present leader of Russia is a former KGBer. Mr. Putin is, in fact, a KGBer, and he has many of the KGB folks around him. There is sort of a rehabilitation of being a KGBer involved.

So if one goes from the Baltic nations in one day and goes to Russia, one gets a very different approach if one goes to the KGB museum in Moscow. It is great that the Baltic nations have gotten over it. They remember it. They are not happy about it, but they are willing to go forward in a constructive way.

It appeared to me that the juxtaposition with the Russians are, no, they are still trying to justify it, they are resurrecting it, and they are not being realistic at all about their future. To me, it is a striking problem, and it is a problem that we have to deal with with Russia. I think that we are committed to do that.

But I think it is a question of understanding rather than threat. I do not believe the Baltic nations propose in any way a threat to Russia, nor I think does the United States of America seek to propose a threat to Russia.

That is not what the enlargement of NATO is about. It is a defense organi-

zation. I say that because, also, we were under the leadership of the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) in Bulgaria. Bulgaria has a very different arrangement with Russia, a very different type of situation as a former part of the Soviet bloc and has kept a different approach to dealing with Russia today, which is not as decisive a feeling as has existed in the past in the Baltic nations for all the understandable reasons.

So we have many different views and many different points of view. But the people who are looking positively into the future for their own security, whether they be the Baltic nations or the Bulgarians or the Romanians or the Slovenians or Slovaks, are looking for the guarantee of security, the stability, the idea to participate in civilized Western society and go forward with all that opportunity and pay the price of doing that in terms of the sacrifice they have to make.

That is the difference. That is our job, not only to honor the fact that we have opportunity in the open window for the aspirant nations who wish to come into NATO, but also to assure the Russians that that is not a threat to Russia.

I honestly believe our friend Jerry Solomon, who used to be our leader in these endeavors, used to joke and say the day is going to come, and we are going to be able to invite Russia into NATO. I hope that day comes to pass. If we do our job right, it may very well come to pass.

The only other point I would want to make, if the gentleman from Nebraska would indulge me for a minute more, is that I sometimes hear from others who do not entirely understand NATO today and the NATO concept, that NATO is engaged in other adventures like the Balkans, where we have basically a peacekeeping operation going on that is very delicate and somewhat dangerous and actually doing quite a good job under extraordinary difficult circumstances by NATO member countries, in fact other countries as well, Partnership for Peace countries and others.

Mr. BEREUTER. Including the Baltic Brigade, and elements of Lithuania and Poland are there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. GOSS. Indeed. Mr. Speaker, in fact, one can say that the Baltic, think of that, the Lithuanian-Polish Brigade helping out, two folks that were having troubles before now working together, this shows that things are possible. But when you get through, the argument always in Russia is, but you see, you go off and do different things.

I think it is interesting that the Petersburg tasks are now being more and more assigned to the U.S., the new ESDI, the European pillar, whatever that is going to emerge as, and that that would be the place that those get parked, and that there will be a reaffirmation that the NATO is, in fact, a defense treaty organization. I think that we have work to do to stress that point.

The point to the Russians is that, if they are concerned about the European security defense initiative, they need to talk to the European Union about that because those are the folks that are about that. That is not our main issue.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to Bulgaria in a minute. But I want to comment briefly again on the Baltics because those three countries have not had it easy. There has been a significant Russian population from some of them, particularly Latvia, not so much in Lithuania. So the tensions have been there as they have moved to an independent status. The language issues. But I think they have done an admirable job of addressing those and trying to permit full participation of Russian and other non-Baltic nation ethnics into their society.

I also think it is interesting how much they look to the United States as a role model and how much we have to live up to to meet their expectations. Well, for example, there is a big American connection in so many ways and in the government of those three Baltic states. One finds U.S. citizens who have dual citizenships in the parliaments of all three countries. The President of Lithuania is a former resident of Chicago, I believe was the EPA Regional Administrator.

The very impressive President of Latvia, indeed, spent much of her career as a scientist and as a teacher in Canada and had many connections with the United States.

I know as I have gone in the past to the Baltic States, first in 1996, I think, as a part of our outreach to their parliaments with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) and our former colleague Congressman Solomon, the Omaha Lithuanian community was very interested in discussing my upcoming trip and then having to report back because they have a sister city relationship with one of the communities in Lithuania. Indeed, I have a large Latvian active community in my own major city of Lincoln.

So we have had this American association. The Scandinavian countries have provided some assistance, particularly Denmark. It has been an effort to bring them along through the Partnership for Peace Program and to participate, as the gentleman says, in peacekeeping activities in the Balkan region.

I visited Bulgaria for the first time, I think, in about 1983, and what a different place that was compared to today. They had a very different and more positive relationship with Russia, the Soviet Union, than with any other of the so-called satellite countries in the Warsaw Pact, probably because they shared more closely a religion, language, and they had no common border with the Soviet Union, perhaps the important distinction. In fact, the czar had been in there twice to in their view rescue them from the Ottoman Empire.

But in any case, I think what has happened in Bulgaria has also been equally impressive because they have embraced democracy. They have taken an interesting turn or two in the process. But their elections have been free and fair by international observers' unanimous view. They are facing another one on June 17.

So the American delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly will perhaps pay more attention to that than most Americans. But it is every expectation it is going to be a free and fair election. Perhaps the government party will have to share power.

But when they went through that election in 1997, they took a different course even more emphatically, and they became very concerned about embracing ethnic differences in their own country, about being a good neighbor to Macedonia. They have a positive relationship with two of our NATO allies, Greece and Turkey, that sometimes have their differences.

Bulgaria, in fact, has become an element of peace and stability in that region. We watched their changes there, their suffering difficulties. Their people are impatient for more economic progress. They have the problems of the mafia from other countries that plague them. But I think they are striving in a very direct fashion, and it is going to give them the kind of results that those citizens of Bulgaria want, if they have enough patience, if we help them and give them every opportunity to justify their applicant status in NATO.

Mr. Speaker, I yield again to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS).

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I, too, was impressed by our subsequent visit to Bulgaria for the reasons that the gentleman from Nebraska mentioned. Their ability to help unite our allies and work with both Greece and Turkey and the stabilizing force that they do establish in the Balkans and the ethnic diversity was very striking. Just walking down the main streets, to see the different places of worship really standing right next to each other in that part of the world, that is not happening as much as it should.

I was struck with one of our luncheons when it was asked, well, how come, Congressman SHIMKUS, House Concurrent Resolution 116 specifically talks to the Baltic nations and not all the rest of the applicants? It was a fair question. My response was there is a different attitude of Russia to the other applicants for admission than to the Baltic area. This is not to exclude the other applicants or to place them in competition with each other, but this is to say to our friends in Russia that they are treating them differently. We do not want them to be treated differently. They have no veto authority.

Our appeal is that the President, in the next day or so, continues to make the case of the open door policy, which the whole parliamentary association

reconfirmed that no one has a veto, and that geography is not going to be a determining factor.

I was also struck with the gentleman mentioning a lot of the new elected officials, especially, well, Lithuania and Latvia. He was talking about all the U.S. citizens that have gone back to be involved in the private and the public sector.

The people who have endured years under domination actually made a conscious decision in their elections to look west. In their electing of these expatriates or dual citizenship individuals, they made a conscious decision to look west. That is the critical aspect of this whole debate.

When they are looking west, we should not take the time to close the door on them. We should welcome them as they look west to democratic institutions, ethnic pluralism, human rights, and all the benefits of that.

They are making a tremendous sacrifice to meet the requirements for NATO admission by trying to get the 2 percent of their GDP. For new emerging democracies that are coming out of a centralized economic command and control economy, for them to put so many resources into getting up to NATO standards should be applauded, should be welcomed, and should be rewarded.

The last thing that I want to mention in this little section is that some of these same debates about the Baltics occurred with Poland, that it would be destabilizing, that our friends in Russia would not like it. But I think history proves that the relationship between Poland and Russia is even better today than it was before their entrance into NATO. I will stake my name on it right now that the relationship with the Baltic nations will be better with Russia after their admittances to NATO than if we prolong this over a period of years.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, in fact, the Russians have benefited economically from Poland's emergence as a market-oriented economy and as a part of the West. I have every expectation that this would happen with the Baltic nations as well. Russia uses those ports. The Baltic people are very entrepreneurial in their outlook. There is no doubt that there would be benefits to their next-door neighbor Russia as well in my judgment.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, if I may just add, the relationship has only been strengthened in Lithuania, especially with the Kaliningrad area in that there is normal everyday discussions of transportation of goods and material to the enclave there in Kaliningrad, and there has been zero incidences.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, one of the surprises to me has been the reluctance in the past, and I think today, of some of our European NATO allies to embrace expansion. They have been very slow to expand the European Union east when that is an important element of bringing economic pros-

perity and stability to Europe, to make Europe, as we say, one, whole in one, and safe for democracy and for people to pursue their dreams and their aspirations.

We have, I suppose, some reluctance on the part of some of the European countries because they see their economic relationship, perhaps the debt that they have with Russia as a point of concern. I should say their creditors have debt, that the Russian government owes those banks.

□ 1815

I think it will take American leadership once more. Perhaps that leadership will come from this House when we insist that the door remains open. It is not a matter of whether or not NATO is going to expand, it is when, and when the countries make the necessary steps.

The GNP contributions of Bulgaria, for example, are 3 percent. We are pushing hard for some of our existing NATO membership to reach 2 percent because the quality of the forces has deteriorated in some of our NATO member countries. And we look at this in sort of amazement and concern when they are actually creating an ESDP, another entity, a rapid reaction force within the European Union.

I know the President is going to be pushed hard to be explicit about what direction, which countries should be brought in, and in my judgment at least that is not appropriate for him to make that kind of explicit statement at this point. But we want to encourage all of those members to meet the requirements, the criteria listed or otherwise, that will qualify them for membership. So I hope that, in fact, the President gets an opportunity in Warsaw, where he is expected to make comments about this, to give every encouragement to the nine aspirant countries.

Mr. GOSS. May I ask the gentleman to yield for just one moment.

Mr. BEREUTER. I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. GOSS. I notice that there happen to be four of us here because of the chairman's leadership I think on this side, but this is strictly a bipartisan effort. We have colleagues on the other side of the aisle too, and they are equal players and very valuable to putting this whole message out. So I do not want anybody to think that this is a one-party initiative. This is an effort of the House, and the gentleman leads it very well.

Mr. BEREUTER. I thank the gentleman and appreciate his bringing that up. It has always been bipartisan. In fact, we have had presidents of the assembly itself that are Democratic colleagues on the House side; and more recently, our former senior Senator from Delaware, Senator Roth, was the president.

Madam Speaker, I now yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. REYNOLDS), who made his first visit to a

NATO parliamentary assembly meeting in Vilnius, and we welcome him to the delegation. I am interested in what a newcomer's attitudes and outlook would be about what he saw in Vilnius.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Well, I thank the gentleman, and he made the trip a highly successful one for this newest member of this bipartisan delegation that was in Lithuania and then in Bulgaria.

I somewhat shared with my staff that I felt it was like taking a three-credit hour, 1-week class to learn a little on NATO, a little on Europe and its politics, the European Union interaction and European history to understand all that.

Mr. BEREUTER. Surprisingly, I have been accused of working the delegation too hard. I cannot understand that, but I yield back.

Mr. REYNOLDS. From that new knowledge, and as I understand the presentation now, I have gained an appreciation of some of the general direction of NATO and our role in that important body, as well as the subject of NATO expansion and Lithuania, which was our host. I might add that our colleague, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS), of Lithuanian descent, was immediately a recognized hero not only for his basketball skills but by his presence and his caring for his homeland. He also had the unique opportunity of sharing some of that with his family, which I know was very, very important to him.

When we look at the picture of not only that meeting in Lithuania but the opportunity to go to Bulgaria, it was a new enlightening experience for me to see a country that many had considered the 16th part of the Soviet Union but who have now shown not only stability for themselves but been a tremendous partner in the region of stabilization. Particularly as we arrived there, we saw the meeting with the President, the Prime Minister, the chairman of the parliament, as well as a number of ministers, and recognized the relationships they had built with their neighbors, both Greece and Turkey, and the interaction and confidence both those countries had with Bulgaria.

It was interesting looking at the democracy underway; that they have chosen to look at the Western Hemisphere as a model of where they want to pursue trade and opportunities of partnering, and also with Europe and the opportunity of trying to be successful in the admission to the European Union and to NATO. This showed me a country that is very important to the United States and, more importantly, to the world's interest with regard to the stability of the region.

I think as a candidate for both NATO and the European Union membership we have an important role in Congress in the debate over that NATO enlargement. The first measures urging enlargement during the last round came from the House in 1994, and it is time

again for the Chamber to enter the debate. Certainly Bulgaria, in the visit and the extensive conversations and meetings we had with its government, shows that they are doing everything in their power to prepare themselves to be ready to be a candidate for both the European Union but, more importantly for our mission, to NATO. And I look forward to their progress in the coming year as that is measured.

Mr. BEREUTER. I thank my colleague from New York for his outstanding statement. It is obvious he has gained a lot and made a major contribution by his comments here tonight. But I am also impressed by the fact that both the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. REYNOLDS) made major contributions to the defense committee in one case and the political committee in the other case during our meetings in Vilnius.

I think maybe as we look ahead as to what our role is as a Congress, as the United States, we ought to recognize and I think emphasize to our colleagues that leadership from the United States is going to be required to expand NATO, appropriately expand it, to countries that meet the criteria.

President Bush is in Europe at this moment. He is about to make an address in Warsaw. It will be, as I understand it, a major address on NATO. It is my strong desire and hope that the President will clearly indicate that there are no new barriers or any old barriers to NATO membership and that no part of Europe would be excluded because of history or geography. In short, there is no veto. We are going to look appropriately at the northern part of eastern and central Europe, the Baltic region, and countries like Slovenia and Slovakia in the center. And I would hope there will be one or more countries in southeastern Europe, in the Balkan region, that will qualify in our judgment and the judgment of the other 18 members of NATO for membership.

It seems to me if one or more of those countries in the Balkans meets the criteria and can be brought in, it is an outstanding example to the other countries and ethnic groups in that troubled part of Europe that there is an opportunity for them to have a higher degree of security through NATO membership and perhaps to successfully aspire to membership in the European Union as well.

I do want to say to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) that I recognize the contribution he has made by resolution that he has introduced before the Congress. It calls for the admission of new members to NATO, including the Baltic states, when the criteria for membership is fulfilled. And that is what it should come down to. So I heartily endorse and am pleased to be a cosponsor of the gentleman's legislation. It is the kind of initiative we had some time ago when we moved the country, moved the NATO alliance, to-

wards expansion to the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.

I look to my colleagues for any concluding comments they might make in the last 5 minutes or so. I will yield to the gentleman from Florida, and then I will go to the gentleman from Illinois and the gentleman from New York. The gentleman from Florida.

Mr. GOSS. Madam Speaker, I thank very much the chairman for leading this and for all he does on this subject. I honestly believe that the world has changed in a great many ways. It is not just the technology, it is not just the evolution, it is not just the alignment of countries and the sovereignty questions and borders. It is all those things and more we are confronted with. And we are confronted with them in an extraordinary way of great privilege and honor but great responsibility and duty as members of the United States Congress when we talk to parliamentarians elsewhere, because people do look to the United States of America for help and guidance in so many ways.

The point I would make is that I honestly believe that this window is open on enlargement. We have enthusiastic, spirit-filled activity going on in these countries. This is real commitment that we are seeing. And the good-news part of it, beyond all the good news that is inherent in that message, is that if these countries are able to qualify and come in in a steady way under the NATO defense umbrella, it seems to me that that removes uncertainty; and removing uncertainty removes playing fields for mischief makers. I think that is the nature of the security threat we have today, is too many mischief makers taking advantage of areas of uncertainty.

So I think that stability factor we talk about is very important, and I think this is a critical time for leadership. I congratulate the gentleman for his leadership, and I hope we can get other leadership to list as well. I know the Speaker of the House is very interested in this and has been a great ally, and I am sure he will continue to be.

Mr. BEREUTER. I thank the gentleman for his comments. And on a practical side, of course foreign investors, which are so important in that region, look to NATO membership as something that will bring security to their investments. We heard that in Bulgaria.

I yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. SHIMKUS. I just want to highlight the bipartisan aspect of the resolution: 25 Republicans, 15 Democrats. I want to also mention the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH), who is the co-chair of the House Baltic Caucus highlighting that point.

And just a statement to our European allies. We have been there for them year after year after year. They need to be there for these emerging democracies.

Mr. BEREUTER. If the gentleman from New York has any concluding remarks, I yield to him.

Mr. REYNOLDS. I thank the chairman, and I just want to say that I support the Shimkus resolution as a co-sponsor. As he advances that debate in the House, I look forward to participating with him and assisting him in the endeavor of that resolution.

I also want to say this is an important time, while our President is overseas in that part of the world that NATO's whole universe is about, the aspect of defense of our allies. So this is a tremendous time to launch the further debate on NATO enlargement and reminding not only ourselves but the world of the criteria that NATO has established and that these countries are working diligently to meet that strong criteria so that they can be partnering in a NATO alliance in the future.

I believe enlargement is a subject that, while we only discussed it today, should hopefully bring a result in Prague in 2002.

Mr. BEREUTER. I thank the gentleman very much for his remarks. I thank all my colleagues. And I want to say that I appreciate the written remarks submitted by our colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), our Democratic senior member of the Committee on International Relations, who is very supportive for NATO expansion. His views are very consistent with those I think we expressed here tonight.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I want to commend the distinguished gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) for calling this special order on the recent meeting in Vilnius of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. We in the House are indeed well served to by DOUG BEREUTER's outstanding leadership of the House delegation to the NATO parliamentary exchanges. He is serious and thoughtful in his leadership, and he has served our nation well through his commitment to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

Madam Speaker, in NATO and in the growing European Union we have a powerful group of friends and allies who basically share our values and objectives. We have said during the Cold War—and I personally passionately believe it—that NATO was a defensive military alliance. I believe that today NATO is a defensive alliance.

I am completely supportive of NATO enlargement, once the countries which are candidates for membership meet the economic and political criteria that qualify them for membership. The three Baltic countries—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—are moving rapidly in this direction, and I strongly favor their admission into NATO. Whether it takes place in 2002, 2004, 2005 or 2006 is very secondary.

Madam Speaker, I want to make clear my strong belief that Baltic membership in NATO—or the membership of any other country in NATO—is not contrary to Russian interests. In fact, it is in Russia's interest to have the arena of stability and prosperity in Europe expanded to Russia's borders. It is clear that as democratic forces gain strength within Russia, these democratic forces will welcome the enlargement of NATO and the growth of stable democracies in adjacent countries. It is not in Russia's interest to have countries such as Belarus run by a dictator on their border. It is

in Russia's interest to have a country such as democratic Estonia—prosperous, free, and a member of NATO—to be near Russia.

I never accepted during the Cold War—and I do not accept now—the notion that NATO threatens Russia. There is no NATO leader that has the slightest ambition to invade or act in a way that is contrary to Russia's long-term interests. The NATO leadership hopes for the evolution of a democratic and prosperous and stable Russia. The leadership and the members of NATO want nothing more for the Russian people but an improvement in their economic conditions and the improvement of their political and civil liberties.

Madam Speaker, I disagree most strongly with the notion that we have to pay off the Russians in order to win their agreement to modify the ABM treaty in order to move ahead with our own system of missile defense. We should not truncate the natural growth of NATO in order to win concessions on missile defense, and we should definitely not allow Russian efforts at intimidation or blackmail to dissuade us from accepting the Baltic countries as members of NATO.

Madam Speaker, these were our goals with respect to Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland when they were accepted for NATO membership four years ago. These will be our objectives with Slovenia, Slovakia and all other countries that seek membership and are granted membership in NATO in the future.

COMMUNICATION FROM FORMER STAFF ASSISTANT OF HON. JIM MCCRERY, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from Jennifer Lawrence, former staff assistant of the Honorable JIM MCCRERY, Member of Congress.

JUNE 7, 2001.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
*Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: This is to formally notify you, pursuant to Rule VIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, that I have been served with a criminal subpoena for trial testimony issued by the United States District Court for the Western District of Louisiana in a criminal case pending there.

After consultation with the Office of General Counsel, I have determined that it is consistent with the precedents and privileges of the House to comply with the subpoena.

Sincerely,

JENNIFER LAWRENCE,  
*Former Staff Assistant to Congressman  
Jim McCrery of Louisiana.*

COMMUNICATION FROM THE HONORABLE JOHN CONYERS, JR., MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable JOHN CONYERS, Jr., Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
*Washington, DC, June 11, 2001.*

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
*Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: This is to notify you formally, pursuant to Rule VIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, that I have been served with a subpoena for production

of documents issued by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan.

After consultation with the Office of General Counsel, I will make the determinations required by Rule VIII.

Sincerely,

JOHN CONYERS, JR.,  
*Member of Congress.*

□ 1830

AMERICA HAS URGENT NEEDS FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. HART). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to direct the attention of my colleagues to a task that I think is paramount in our Nation and our ability to be able to compete in the 21st century, and that is the task of improving the public schools in this country.

As the hour goes on, a number of my colleagues on the Democratic side have indicated they will join me as we offer a perspective on this critical issue facing our Nation, our States, our communities, and certainly the parents, teachers, and students of this country.

As communities throughout my district and really across this country celebrated the graduation season in the past few weeks, I believe it is an opportune time to look at what Congress needs to do to provide our schools the support they need to succeed in the 21st century.

It does not seem like it, but in just a matter of less than 2 months, school will be convening again all across America. Over 53-54 million students will head back to school, the largest number of public school students in the history of this country. At a time when the classrooms are going to be overcrowded, space will be at a premium and staffs will be challenged. Today my colleagues, Democratic colleagues who will join me, together we joined all of the members of the Democratic Caucus in signing a discharge petition on the bipartisan Johnson-Rangel-Etheridge school construction bill. American people understandably do not follow legislative process close enough to know what a discharge petition is or why it is important.

I regret that we even have to use it, but when there comes a time when the majority estoppels an issue as important as school construction for the children of this country, it is time for drastic action. A discharge petition is the only vehicle we have as ranking minority members to force the leadership to act, such as when they have blocked us from bringing up needed legislation. That is the only way that the Members have an opportunity to get it done. I would remind my colleagues and others that every Member of this body is elected by the same