

perhaps more, where we have no real understanding of how many thousands, how many hundreds of thousands indeed. Indeed, the estimates are that it could be as many as 50 million acres that are contaminated.

Until Congress gets on top of this issue, I fear that we are going to be putting the Department of Defense in a situation where, with an inadequate budget, they are given no choice but to go from hot spot to hot spot, from the focus of emergency from the media, political pressure or some other contingency forces their attention.

A much better approach is for us to take a comprehensive look. I would suggest that my colleagues join me in cosponsoring H.R. 2605, the Ordnance and Explosive Risk Management Act that calls for the identification of a single person who is in charge. Right now there is not a single point of contact.

It calls for increased work in terms of research so that we know how best to clean up these sites, that we do a comprehensive inventory so at least we know how big the problem is. Of course, we all need to make sure that we are adequately funding this problem.

People who followed this in the news noticed that American University has filed suit against the United States Government for almost \$100 million in damages.

Ultimately, we were responsible for cleaning up after ourselves in terms of Federal Government. Those of us who care about promoting livable communities that make our families safe, healthy and economically secure and who believe that the single most powerful tool available to us is not new fees, new laws, new requirements, but rather the Federal Government led by this bill, modeling the behavior that we expect of other Americans whether they are families, businesses or local government.

We have an opportunity to do that right now in moving forward with legislation, with adequate funding to make sure that the toxic legacy of over a century of unexploded ordnance and environmental degradation is taken care of, is addressed, that we do clean up after ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues join me in support of H.R. 2605 and that we urge our colleagues on the Committee on Appropriations and the Armed Services Committee to make sure we are all doing our job, making the framework so that Congress is no longer missing in action on the issue of unexploded ordnance.

HONORING THE KABOOM! CORPORATION AND NASCAR FOR THEIR PUBLIC SERVICE CONTRIBUTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. Speaker, last night about 10 hours ago this Congress passed the VA-HUD appropriations bill for the year 2002. In so doing, we have appropriated billions of dollars to assist low- and moderate-income Americans in the purchase or rental of their housing.

Mr. Speaker, 13 years ago when George Herbert Walker Bush, the former President of this country, made his acceptance speech, he made a speech about the "Thousand Points of Light," those Americans who go unnoticed every day but do so much good for their fellow man without credit or without compensation.

Today in Washington, D.C., a point of light will shine brightly. Under the auspices of a not-for-profit playground construction company known as KaBOOM! In the Jetu Washington apartment complex where over 500 children reside, a new playground will be dedicated to improve the quality of life and the environment for those children, a safe, attractive and accessible playground. The KaBOOM! Corporation, over the course of many years, has built 270 playgrounds in America for disadvantaged children and assisted in the renovation of 1,200 such playgrounds.

They do so by partnering with the private sector to provide the manpower, the resources and the funding. I am pleased today to acknowledge the Home Depot Corporation and NASCAR, who have partnered to provide the manpower, the funding and the resources for the playground that will be built today.

I particularly want to pay tribute to the Home Depot Corporation. Its founders, Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank, when they started their company not too many years ago in their first store, insisted on community participation on behalf of their employees, and themselves were philanthropic in the gifts of their money to support good causes.

Last year alone the Home Depot Foundation donated \$75 million in America for our at-risk youth, for their recreation and their quality of life, and for their health care. They truly are points of light that make our community better.

So as last night we celebrated the expenditure of billions of dollars in taxpayer money to assist Americans, let us also pay tribute today to the untold billions of dollars in manpower, man-hours and actual money donated by those points of light in America who for no reason but the goodness of their hearts make the quality of life for the less fortunate better.

Today in Washington, D.C. that will happen at the Jetu Apartment complex thanks to the not-for-profit company, KaBOOM!, the for-profit companies of NASCAR and Home Depot, two points of light that will make a difference in the lives of hundreds of children.

IN SUPPORT OF CLEAN PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, many of us know now that the Republican leadership postponed any debate or vote on the patients' bill of rights, the HMO reform even though it was scheduled for last week. Now, of course, we are hearing that it may come up this week perhaps as early as Thursday, later on this week.

Mr. Speaker, I mention it because myself and many other Democrats have come to the floor frequently over the last year, and perhaps over the last 2 or 3 years, demanding that we have an opportunity for a clean vote on a real patients' bill of rights because we know of the problems that Americans and our constituents face with abuses when they are in the managed care system, where they have an HMO as their insurer.

What I fear though, Mr. Speaker, from the pronouncements that we are hearing from the Republican leadership is that there will not be an opportunity for a vote on HMO reform unless they have the votes for a weaker version of HMO reform or they call it the patients' bill of rights than what the majority of the Members of this House have been seeking.

The majority of the Members of the House, almost every Democrat and a significant number of Republicans, in the last session of Congress voted for a very strong patients' bill of rights, the one sponsored by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), who is a Democrat and also by some Republicans, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE), and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), who are Republicans.

It is very important that the opportunities be presented here in the House if it is going to happen this week to have a clean vote on the real patients' bill of rights.

I think it is crucial that my colleagues and the public understand that there is a difference between some of the different versions that have been sort of circulating around this Chamber, and to suggest that we are going to have a vote on the patients' bill of rights but not have the opportunity to deal with the really effective strong one, I think would be a major mistake.

Let me give an example of the differences and why I think it is important that we have a vote on the real bill, on the one that is going to make a difference for the average American.

President Bush has said over and over again that he does not support a real patients' bill of rights. He does not support the Dingell-Ganske-Norwood bill because, first of all, there will be

too much litigation, too much opportunity to go to court. Secondly, because it will drive up the cost of health insurance.

We know from the Texas insurance, and there are ten other States that have the good bill of rights including my own in New Jersey, that the fear of lawsuits is not real and the fear about increased cost of health insurance or people having their health insurance dropped is not real. In the case of Texas, it is well documented since 1997 when the patients' bill of rights went into effect in that State there were only 17 lawsuits. The average cost of health insurance in Texas has not gone up nearly as much as the national average. So we know that these fears that President Bush talks about are not legitimate.

What the President has been supporting and what the Republican leadership has been supporting is a weakened version of the patients' bill of rights that has been introduced by the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. FLETCHER).

Just to give an example of what the differences can be on these bills, let me talk about some of the patients' protections that are guaranteed in the real patients' bill of rights that we would not have in the Fletcher Republican leadership bill. For example, we know that what we want is we want doctors to be able to practice medicine and be able to provide us with the care that they think we need. Well, under the Fletcher bill, for example, doctors could be told by their HMO that they cannot even talk to a patient about a medical procedure that they think a patient needs. It is called the gag rule.

Doctors also would continue to be provided financial incentive, or could under their Fletcher bill by their HMO, financial incentives not to provide us with care because they get more money at the end of the month if they do not have as much procedure, if they do not care for as many people, if they do not do as many operations.

Another very good example is with regard to specialty care. Under the real patients' bill of rights, the Dingell-Norwood-Ganske bill, we basically are able to go to a specialist on a regular basis without having to get authorization each time we want to go. Well, that is not true under the Fletcher bill. For example, under the real patients' bill of rights, a woman can have her OB-GYN as her family practitioner. She does not have to have authorization each time she goes.

Under the real patients' bill of rights, if we need pediatric care, we are guaranteed specialty care for our children, for specialty pediatric care. Under the Fletcher bill neither of these things are true.

So there are real differences here. That is why it is important that we have an opportunity this week to vote on the real patients' bill of rights. I ask the Republican leadership, do not put any roadblocks procedurally in the

way through the Committee on Rules so that we do not have a clean vote on the real patients' bill of rights.

Let me talk about another area. Well, I guess my time has run out, Mr. Speaker. But I would ask that we have an opportunity this week to vote on a clean bill.

GRANTING PRESIDENT BUSH TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the House of Representatives will consider legislation granting President Bush trade promotion authority. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Why do we need restored trade promotion authority to the President and to America? The answer is jobs and our children's future. Currently the United States is at a severe disadvantage when we have to compete with the rest of the world. Not because of the quality of our products. They are high. But because of the trade barriers we face abroad. According to a report released earlier this year of the estimated 130 free trade agreements around the world, only two today include the United States.

Giving the President this authority to negotiate on our behalf would help give America the tools we need to break down the barriers abroad so we can sell American goods and services around the world and the potential is huge. Ninety-six percent of the world lives outside the United States. Ninety-six percent of the world lives outside our borders. While they cannot all buy the products we buy today, someday they will, and we want them to buy American products.

Here is an interesting static. Half the adults in the world today, half the adults in the world have yet to make their first telephone call. Well, if it is European countries to sell those telephone systems, they will create European jobs. If they are Asian companies that sell those telephone systems, they will create Asian jobs. If they are American companies that sell those telephone systems, we will create American jobs.

These are jobs for our future and for our children going through the schools today.

Countries around the world are hesitant to negotiate trade agreements with us. They are scared Congress will change every agreement 1,000 different ways after it has been negotiated. What trade promotion authority does, it gives Congress, your representatives, a final say on whether an agreement is fair and free. I want that say.

Mr. Speaker, in order to keep America the greatest economic power in the world, we have to be able to compete in the trade arena. The only way we will

be able to do this is by granting President Bush trade promotion authority on our behalf.

PRIVATE PENSION BILL FOR RETIRED RAILROAD WORKERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, it is a great morning, but I am going to talk about a disconcerting bill that we might be taking up today or maybe tomorrow. It is the private pension bill for the railroad workers in this country.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) and I are sending out a dear colleague this morning, Mr. Speaker. I hope all staff and workers and Members who are concerned about reaching into the Social Security-Medicare trust fund next year will take a look at this dear colleague, and then take a look at the railroad retirement bill that cost \$15 billion.

I have been working on Social Security since I came here in 1993. In working with the Social Security system and researching its origins back to 1934, I discovered that the railroad employees were included in the social security system at that time in 1934.

The railroad workers and employers who were tremendously influential politically back in the 1930's as they are today, came to Congress and said we do not want to be part of the Social Security system, we want our own pension system. So government passed a law and took them out, and it became sort of a quasi-governmental pension system for this private industry—the only private industry that has sort of this government back-up of a private pension system.

The railroad retirement system was established during the 1930's on a pay-as-you-go basis just like Social Security; but unlike Social Security, which now has three workers to support every one retiree, the railroad retirement system has three beneficiaries being supported by every one worker. That is why they have come back to Congress so many times to ask the American taxpayer to bail out their pension system.

The disproportionate ratio of beneficiaries to workers is a direct result of historical decline in railroad employment. Since 1945, the number of railroad workers has declined to 240,000 from 1.7 million. So we can see as there are fewer workers, but all the existing retirees are living longer life spans, it has come to a tremendous burden on that workers asking each worker to have the kind of contribution that would support three retirees, so they have not been able to do it.

Declining employment. Many benefit increases have produced chronic deficits. The railroad retirement system has spent more than it has collected in