

collapse from within. So I think that we need to think about this and realize that there may be some lessons that we can learn here.

I think we can continue to be the predominant Nation in the world but only if our moral and spiritual underpinnings remain strong. I think if we look at our current crisis in the business community, we can see very clearly what a crisis of confidence in just three or four companies does to the overall economy; and, right now, it is not 9/11. It is what happened at Enron and Andersen and Global Crossing and companies like this, which is really holding our economy back more than anything.

The framers of the Constitution did not envision freedom of speech embracing obscene material. That simply was beyond their thinking. The framers of the Constitution did not envision that even a minute of silence at the beginning of a school day would be unconstitutional, would violate somebody's religious freedom.

The framers of the Constitution did not envision the rise of post-modernism. Post-modernism is basically the idea that there are no moral absolutes, that everything is relative. This has become a very pervasive thought pattern in our world today, in our country today.

So the idea would be that adultery is not absolutely wrong. It may depend on what part of the country someone is in, who is involved, but it really is relative to the circumstance.

Today, we would not say that stealing is absolutely wrong, according to post-modernism, because it depends on how much someone needs, what they are stealing, who they take it from, and certainly if someone steals from the government, it does not count.

Lying is not absolutely wrong, according to post-modernism. Everyone does it. Sometimes we need to protect our career, our reputation. It may even be possible to lie under oath and get by with it.

Then, of course, fourth, it is not absolutely wrong to take an innocent life, according to post-modernism, because maybe that life is not old enough to be viable; maybe that life is too old to be useful; maybe that life is terminally ill; maybe that life simply does not want to live anymore. So it is all relative.

This is a very prevalent philosophy, and I think it would be very foreign, be something unheard of to the founders and the framers of the Constitution. As great of a threat as terrorism is, I believe in the present time that the greatest threat to our Nation is a collapse of values.

That may sound like an extreme statement to say at this particular junction. I do not want anyone to believe that I am at all minimizing the importance of the war on terrorism. I believe that every dime that we have appropriated here to fight the war on terrorism, everything the President

has done to try to keep things on track has been very, very appropriate, but I would also say that what is happening internally, what is happening to our children, what is happening to our value system, long-term, long haul, may prove to be every bit as threatening, if not more, than the war on terrorism.

Someone once said America is great because America is good. I believe that is true, and I believe America is still good. There is no country in the world that is as generous, as philanthropic, is based on spiritual values as the United States.

I would also say that there are some storm clouds on the horizon. There are some things out there that concern me, and so those who do not like the shape of those clouds should do all that they can to elect people who will appoint people to the courts who reflect their values.

Currently, in the other body, we have failed to fill 100 vacant judgeships for various reasons. It has almost brought our judicial system to a halt. The question is, who in the next 2 or 3 years is going to be making those decisions over in the other body as to who will fill those judgeships? Within the next 2 to 3 years we will probably have two to three members of the Supreme Court who will resign or retire; and when that happens, who is going to shape those nominations and those decisions?

If people like the way we are headed right now, then they certainly are committed to one course of action. If, on the other hand, people think we are treading on dangerous ground, then I think we better think very carefully as to who we send to the other body, who represents the people in this area here. I think it is incumbent upon the American people to elect people who aggressively promote a moral society and will protect our young people from obscenity.

This has not been an easy thing to talk about. It has not been an easy thing to think about, but I do believe that we cannot put our head in the sand. I believe this is a real problem. I think it is something we are all involved in, we can certainly address. So I would encourage, Mr. Speaker, those who are listening tonight to become active, to become politically active, become involved. Because the only thing that is going to let this thing continue to succeed and continue to fester is if we stand by as a Nation and continue to let it happen.

#### THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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

Mr. TANCREDI. Mr. Speaker, as I sat here and listened to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE), I am made even more proud of the folks who

represent our side in this great deliberative body that we call the Congress of the United States; and the heartfelt plea that he makes to the Nation I think is, and the rhetoric, the chosen selective rhetoric that he used should certainly be an example for all of us to follow in terms of how to explain an issue and a position that stems solely out of true moral courage, and really no politics are involved at all.

I guess I would just like to say to I am proud that I know him, and I am proud to serve in the same assembly that he serves in today.

Also, I must add that waiting to address this body and to discuss the issues that I have on my agenda today, I have, of course, listened to my friends from the other side talk about another issue; and they did so at great length, talked about the upcoming debate on a proposal for Medicare, specifically for drug benefits, and how we will provide these drug benefits to senior citizens in this country. In a way, I think it was a great example. It was almost like a class discussion of cynical politics 101.

That is all I could think of while I listened to it. Because, as my colleagues know, Mr. Speaker, I have on several occasions sat here waiting for my turn to address the body and listened to my friends on the other side of the aisle talk about a variety of issues, but in the last several weeks, I have noticed that every single time I have been here, and to the best of my recollection almost every time that Members of the other side have taken the floor, they have done so to attack what they call the Republican raid on Social Security and suggests that the profligate spending of this Congress for a variety of programs and specifically the war on terror will cost us a lot of money, money that we do not have and money that we will, therefore, have to borrow from the American public. And that is absolutely true.

They have gone on and on and on and on. If anybody has observed the debate in this House over the last several weeks, they have turned every single issue that we are debating into a debate on this raid of the Social Security trust fund in the hope that they could scare the bulk of the voters in this country, especially the elderly voters, into siding with them come November.

Presenting a point of view, a reasoned, logical, truthful point of view is one thing, but this attack on the majority party for what is perceived to be our predilection to profligate spending, this is what I call I guess the cynical politics 101 that everyone should pay close attention to this evening and, as a matter of fact, on into the November elections.

For weeks, we have talked about and the folks on the other side have condemned this Congress for spending money in the areas I have described. Specifically, of course, it is the war on terror, combined with the downturn in the economy, that have caused us to go into deficit spending; and they have

condemned this. Forget about the fact that for the 40 years prior to this Congress or at least this House being in control of the Republican party that we were never ever, ever able to achieve a balanced budget. Forget that. While the other side had control, we were in deficit spending every single year, and nobody even thought about the possibility that might not be good for America. Forget about that.

Let us now turn to today's discussion.

We heard for the hour prior to the gentleman from Nebraska's (Mr. OSBORNE) taking the floor that the Democrats have a better plan for Medicare and specifically for the drug benefits for American seniors and that our plan is too stingy, our plan is complicated by issues of choice, the fact that we would give seniors the opportunity to choose among a variety of different alternatives for their drug benefit. They characterize that as immoral and something that we should avoid at all costs.

□ 2115

And they suggest that their alternative plan, one that is essentially socialized medicine for all Americans, is better. But I just ask, Mr. Speaker, that we all think about this: How can we spend weeks and weeks and weeks on this floor talking about the fear of raiding the Social Security fund to pay for other programs while completely ignoring the fact that the plan being presented by my Democrat colleagues will cost about \$1 trillion over 10 years, \$1 trillion over 10 years, and yet that is not, of course, raiding the Social Security trust fund? That somehow is figured into a budget, which of course we do not have; a budget that they refuse to propose.

It is a course in politics, as I say politics 101, maybe cynical politics 101, that we should be observing tonight, that we should be referencing, because it is easy for someone out of power to suggest that the majority should do something quite irresponsible. It is easy to do that. It is very difficult to govern. The fearful thing I have in my heart is that some day they may be in power and do exactly what they are suggesting, and that we may turn this entire Nation, the entire Nation's health care system over to the Federal Government.

That is a very alluring thing to a lot of people. They just do not want to think about health care costs. This is something so close to one's own emotional hot button that it is very difficult to discuss this logically, and that is something that we on this side of the aisle, I think, try to do often. We try to address these issues from a logical standpoint, not an emotional standpoint. But we are always at a disadvantage in that debate. It is easier to make the case that no one should worry about health care and that the government essentially should be relied upon to keep everybody alive for-

ever, to do everything possible to keep everybody alive forever no matter how much that costs.

There are a lot of people out there tonight, I think, Mr. Speaker, who would say, yes, I do not care about future generations, and I do not care about the war on terror, and I do not care about all the other things this Nation spends money on. I care about getting my prescription drugs at a lower cost. And if that means passing it on to someone else, a younger person, a healthier person, so be it; that is the way it should be done. I do not care, because of course I will be dead before too long and who knows and who cares what happens after that.

That is a way a lot of people look at this issue, and we hear from them all the time. I do. I am sure the Speaker does, and I know all of our colleagues do. People tell us, I really do not care about the cost. I do not caring about the dollars. We are told that over and over again by people who take polls, people who provide some sort of political consultation to us. They always say, look, the Republicans get too much into detail. Nobody cares about dollars; nobody cares about the detail.

Well, I guess that may be true; but I cannot avoid that discussion. I cannot help but talk about the problems this Nation faces from a fiscal standpoint and the degree to which irresponsible spending is a threat to the Nation, is a threat to our own security.

Now, I cannot tell my colleagues that I have all the confidence in the world in the Republican plan for Medicare and prescription drug benefits, because, in fact, I may be a "no" vote on that bill, but it is not because I think the Democratic plan is better. I think our plan costs \$350 billion over 10 years, the Democratic plan \$1 trillion. I do not think that our plan is that much better; it is just that their plan is so much worse.

I would like to see, frankly, a couple of things. I would like to see the government actually get out of the business of determining what is the appropriate service that any individual in Medicare can have and how much we should pay for that. That is really not my business. I do not know what is the best service, and I do not think any bureaucrat has the slightest idea how much we should pay for it. But that is the Medicare plan that we created in the 1960s. It has grown. It has grown so fast that in the first year of its existence it actually surpassed what Lyndon Johnson said it would cost us in 20 years.

It could consume the entire national budget. It easily could do that. Health care costs are astronomical. There is no real market. That is one problem. The other problem is that everything is exacerbated by government bureaucracies. But I am here to say that we need to do a couple of things in that area; and regardless of what we do, it should not cost us a lot more money.

It is not something that the Federal Government should actually even be

too involved in except to say that if there are people who are in dire straits, people that cannot afford health care costs because they have reached that point in life when they are on fixed incomes and the cost of medication and the cost of health care in general has gone beyond their ability to pay, okay. Okay. If we just do that, if we just focus on that, then we should come up with a true Medicare reform proposal that is something like the following:

The Federal Government should say to everybody eligible for Medicare that we will accept a certain amount dollar-wise, in terms of our responsibility for their health care costs, and we will give it to them in the form of a voucher. They can then use that voucher for the purchase of insurance from any of the wide variety of vendors. But our job, the Federal Government's job, is not to determine which provider gives them the service and how much and how many benefits they should derive from their insurance company. That is not our business.

If we have a responsibility, if this body determines that we have a responsibility to older Americans for health care costs, it should be in the manner I have described: to say to them, here it is, here is what we have determined. Somewhere between \$4,000 and \$5,000 a year we are spending per recipient on Medicare, is what I am told, so simply give a Medicare recipient a voucher and have them go out and buy the insurance that will cover their medical costs, which includes, by the way, the cost of prescription drugs.

We ought to get out of the business of determining who pays for the doctor, what doctor is eligible, what procedure is eligible, and how much it should cost. That is a plan for disaster. The other side, the Democratic Party, the Democratic suggestion, of course, is a plan for an even greater disaster, because not only will it destroy health care in America and turn us into a Nation similar to those who have already attempted nationalized health care and whose people now come to the United States for their own care, but it will also essentially bankrupt the Nation.

Now, I know there are a lot of people out there, as I say, who tell us, I do not care, I do not care what it costs; it is of no consequence to me because someone else will be paying for it. I know there are many people who feel that way. I certainly hear from a lot of them. But I do care, because we are not simply talking about just another one of those government programs.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, as I was walking in, a gentleman asked me if I was going to support the bailout for Amtrak. He thought that I should do so because, after all, the government, as he says, supports a lot of dysfunctional programs. I cannot argue that. I cannot argue that we in fact do support a lot of dysfunctional programs. But I have tried my best, for as long as I have been here anyway, to vote against every one of them. Now, sometimes

you get caught up by having to vote for a major piece of legislation that has a lot of dysfunctional programs under it, but we are trying to accomplish a greater goal.

That is what we have done, and that is what we have promised people, and that is what they think government is all about. I suggest that every single person who believes that the government is responsible for their health care should go to the Constitution and seek the specific citation in the Constitution that provides that particular responsibility to the Federal Government, that gives that responsibility to the Federal Government. I cannot find it when I look for it.

Of course, we do lots of things that are unconstitutional, that are not provided for in the Constitution. I realize that. But, again, as I say, I try my best to vote against them. So unless we do a number of things in that particular piece of legislation, I plan to vote against it. Either way, certainly our side and certainly the other side's position.

I would like to see us create a real market system for the purchase of drugs, a market system that allows for drugs to be purchased in every country based upon what the going rate is around the world, not just in one country. I would like us to be able to have people in America buy drugs from Canada or Mexico or China or anyplace else if the drugs were that much cheaper, because that is a worldwide market.

Now, I recognize that people say, well, we cannot guaranty the wholesomeness of the drug. But right now, as my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT), says all the time, we import literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of prescription drugs every single year from Canada and Mexico. We do it kind of illegally, on the sly. People go down and get it because it is against the law for us to import a drug from these other countries. But people do it because it is so much cheaper, and so far not one single person has died as a result of taking an imported drug.

So I must say that, yes, there may be a risk involved; but there is also the fact that there will be enormous, enormous savings to the American consumer by implementing a true market system in the area of drug benefits. The government really has no ability to guaranty everybody cheap drugs or health care that is the finest that the world can provide and that everybody else will pay for.

We try our best, and I think our Nation is to be commended for what we do for senior citizens, certainly what we did for my parents, my father, who is in a nursing home and on Medicaid and a recipient of government largess. I understand the incredible value here. I just suggest to us all that we have to at some point, at some point we have to think about what we cannot afford any more; and I would certainly suggest that a plan that costs us \$1 trillion

today is not something we can afford, and especially presented after weeks and weeks and weeks of attacks on our party, on the Republican Party, for what they determined to be profligate spending and the raiding of the Social Security trust fund.

I assure my colleagues that the Social Security trust fund will be a footnote, a small tiny footnote in the entire cost of the Democrat plan for prescription drugs, for socialized medicine. What they say is, we will pay for everything. Go get your drugs; we will pay for it all. That is nice to say. It sounds so wonderful. And it will gain them votes, I have no doubt about that. It will garner them votes. But at what cost? Well, \$1 trillion. But even beyond the actual monetary cost, there is a cost to the Nation in terms of our own stability, or financial stability.

□ 2130

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on to another issue tonight, and that is the fact the State of Colorado is experiencing what I know other States in the Nation, especially Arizona are experiencing tonight, the ravages of wildfires. Arizona is in a situation that almost dwarfs our own situation in Colorado, which is horrendous. Right now, we have the biggest fire in Colorado essentially under control or contained, I should say. There are other fires that are ravaging the State that are not quite as threatening as the Hayman fire, which is the largest fire in terms of acreage consumed in the State's history. It is, as I say, partially contained.

As indicated here by this picture that was taken from the Space Shuttle, there are other fires burning in Colorado. This is the Hayman fire. There is the fire by Durango and the fire in Glenwood Springs and several started over the weekend by lightning. The Durango fire is really progressing quite rapidly.

Tonight I want to simply do one thing when it comes to this particular issue, and that is to thank the many people around this country who have come to the rescue of the people who are adjacent to these fires, helped save their homes; and they have come from 25 different States in the Nation, firefighters from all over the country. I know the prayers of millions of Americans have gone out in order to bring these things under control, bring these fires under control.

Sunday I had the opportunity to once again fly over the Hayman fire, the scene of so much destruction. Although it was disheartening in many ways, it was also encouraging because you can see that the fire has, in fact, been contained. It is due to a variety of reasons. Of course, weather has something to do with it. We have had a little more humidity, a little cooler days, but it also has to do with the fact that literally thousands of people have risked their lives and put themselves in harm's way to help stop this fire.

I want to simply come to the floor tonight to say thank you to them. Four of those folks were killed in an automobile accident on the way to fight the fire; and there have been many memorials in our State and in the State of Oregon that have been offered up in memory of these people, of these brave young folks who set out to do something good for someone else and whose journey ended in such a tragedy. Our thoughts, our prayers, and our solace go out to the parents and to the relatives of the people who died in that horrible car crash coming to Colorado to help us.

We have learned several things. I have been in Congress a relatively short time. This is only my second term; and, unfortunately, I have experienced several tragedies as a result of what has happened in my district during that time. Of course, the first was Columbine High School. I had only been here a few months when that occurred and had to try to figure out how to deal with that and bring some sort of closure to the issue and to the horrible, horrible events of that day in April.

One of the things that I realize that happened during that time is that, no matter how horrible an event is, and the Columbine experience was far worse than even these fires. These fires have cost lives, it is true, but nothing can be compared to the loss of lives of the children who were killed at Columbine, and the adult. But out of every single tragedy something good can develop and usually does. No matter how horrible it is, we have to try to concentrate on the fact that something good can happen. In Columbine, I saw many things happen that I can describe as positive, even as a result of this horrible tragedy.

First of all, I can tell Members that families, not just in the Columbine area but all across the Nation, families re-evaluated their relationships and became I think a little more in touch with the fact that life is so precious and that their children should be valued above all. We did have sort of a coming together of families that I think perhaps we would not have had under other circumstances. Hundreds of thousands, and I know that is maybe stretching it in some people's minds, but I believe it is true that hundreds of thousands of people, especially young people, came to Christ as a result of the kind of stories that were told about some of the young people that died in Columbine; and their own commitment to the Lord and the courage that they showed in this horrible, horrible time was an inspiration for many, many people, adults and children.

In this fire which is a tragedy, not reaching the proportions of Columbine but a tragedy nonetheless, and as I say there have been deaths, four people coming to fight the fire and one individual that has been identified as a result of the fire, a lady who had a severe asthma attack as a result of the smoke

from the fire and has perished, but out of it can come something of value to the Nation, something good. That is that we will have some idea how not to just prevent but perhaps control these horrendous events.

For years now the Forest Service of the United States has been in a quagmire, constructed somewhat as a result of the impositions that we have placed upon them from this body, the government of the United States, the Congress of the United States, passing law after law after law which impeded their ability to actually fight fires. That is on one side.

On the other side is the environmental community that has taken advantage of all of those obstacles to in fact file appeal after appeal after appeal and lawsuit after lawsuit after lawsuit to stop the Forest Service from actually managing forests. Those two things have combined to create a disastrous situation, one that is exemplified by the fires that we see this year brought on by incredible drought and careless activity on the part of human beings, but made far worse by the fact that we have not been able to actually manage the forests. We have not been able to clean the forests and take out a lot of the fuel loads.

The General Accounting Office reports that one in three forests in America is dead or dying. This after how many years of environmental impact statements, literally hundreds of steps that have to be taken by every agency dealing with the forest, whether it is the Forest Service themselves, the Division of Wildlife, every single entity, BLM, Bureau of Land Management, to have to go through the hoops that have been created by us and by the environmentalists, we now find one in three forests dead or dying.

The Clinton administration cut back timber harvesting by 80 percent and used laws and lawsuits to make swathes of land off limits to commercial use. I am quoting from a Wall Street Journal article of June 21. We now see that millions of acres are choked with dead wood, infected trees and underbrush. Many areas have more than 400 tons of dry fuel per acre, 10 times the manageable level. This tinder turns into small fires which turn into infernos, outrunning fire control and killing every fuzzy and endangered animal in sight. In 2000 alone, fires destroyed 8.4 million acres, the worse fire year since the 1950s. Some 800 structures were destroyed. Control and recovery cost nearly \$3 billion.

Maybe the good thing to come out of all of this is that we have learned something about how to minimize the effects of wildfires in the forests of our Nation. And maybe, just maybe, we will be able to do something in the Congress of the United States to reduce the number of obstacles in the path of those folks trying to do their best, Forest Service personnel especially, to keep our forests in a way that they can be enjoyed by all people in this country.

I do not know if we will accomplish it. The obstacles are great internally within the Forest Service itself and externally in the environmental community. They believe that no people should be in the forest, that no activity should be allowed because any activity is "unnatural," close quote.

The fires that I saw in my State, I wish I could have taken every single environmentalist who had filed an appeal stopping the Forest Service from doing any work in the 5,000 acres of what we call part of the national forest that was identified as roadless area. A year and a half ago we could have been in there beginning the work, beginning to thin that area so as not to be so susceptible to these incredible forest fires. Appeal after appeal was filed. We were never able to go in and do the work, and now there is no use in filing any appeals because that part of the forest is long gone. It is nothing but charcoal.

Maybe that is what environmentalists think is natural. Maybe they look at that same scene and think, that is just nature's way. Of course, fires are nature's way. Fires can be healthy things in a forest, but not the kind of forest fires that we are looking at today, not the Hayman fire, not the Glenwood Springs fire, not the Durango fire, not the fire in Arizona now 300,000 acres and growing.

In Colorado, we have, as long as we have kept records, we have the most severe fire, the fire that has been the most destructive prior to the Hayman fire, which has consumed 140,000 acres so far; but prior to that in 1876, I believe, we had the other most destructive fire that the State of Colorado has ever experienced in record-keeping time. That was 26,000 acres. I assure you, Mr. Speaker, between 1876 and today, we have had many, many droughts.

□ 2145

We have had many, many times when the forests were tinder dry, as they say, and susceptible to horrendous damage if a fire started. But in fact when fire started naturally or even in those days caused by man, they did not consume 100,000 acres. The reason is because there was not a fuel load in the forest to allow that to occur. Today there is. Why? Because 100 years of fire suppression has created this incredible amount of fuel on the forest floor. This fuel burns hotter and faster and more destructively than a normal or a, quote, natural fire, so destructively that it will actually burn the ground, burn the soil, it gets so hot; and for several inches down, everything is essentially sterilized.

Nature puts down a barrier below that called a hydrophobic barrier that actually, when this occurs, when it does that, it is actually impermeable. What nature is trying to do is hold the rest of the mountain together. But that means that everything above that barrier will go the minute we have rain. And where does it go? It will go into, in

this case, the Denver water supply and will have to be filtered, will cost us hundreds of millions of dollars perhaps to do that because this particular fire is incredibly damaging in that respect.

Thank God and thank the firefighters that have come into Colorado. We lost around 117 homes in the Hayman fire. But if this fire happens again, because it certainly could, all the conditions are exactly the same and right on target for another disastrous fire at any time in any other part of the forest, if it happens just a few miles north of where this one occurred, we will see thousands of homes go up in smoke and thousands of lives shattered, another 100,000 or more acres destroyed, habitat for many, many endangered species.

Here is one little interesting tidbit that we have to deal with, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the idiotic environmental problems we face with trying to manage forests. Today in Colorado we have had the opportunity to do a controlled burn. This is part of forest management, where you go into a particular area and you will have create a fire, you will burn the underbrush but you keep it under control so that you burn away a lot of those fuels and do not ignite the whole forest on fire.

There is an area called the Polhemus Burn in Colorado. It took ages for them to agree to get the EPA to allow this burn to occur, because the EPA said that a controlled burn of 5,000 to 8,000 acres would actually cause a problem. The smoke would cause a problem with the system designed to keep the air pure and that sort of thing and the plan for Colorado, the air quality plan in Colorado. So it took forever for them to agree to it. They are always putting up obstacles to a controlled burn because of the smoke that they say that the EPA said would pollute the atmosphere if you burned 5,000 acres.

So we have burned 140,000 acres in one fire alone in Colorado and guess what? That does not count against the air quality standards. We could burn down the entire forest if it is done by an illegal campfire or by a lightning strike. We could burn a million acres, 5 million acres, 10 million acres, and it would not count.

Let me tell you what that means right now. Right now, with 140,000 acres in the Hayman fire, every morning when I got up this weekend when I was home, I would look out and you could not see the mountains really. There was a haze over the mountains. And I live not too far from the mountains. This is a peculiar site in Colorado which has prided itself for many years of having this pristine scene, the mountains, the clear blue sky. You cannot even see the mountains. One lady has died already because of the pollution in the air. The ashes will accumulate all over.

I went out. I was blowing out my garage and driveway. I am a little anal about this. I want to keep it clean. I was blowing it all out. This huge cloud

of smoke comes up from my driveway because of all the ashes that had accumulated there. I live 25 or 30 miles from the fire. But that does not count. That does not count against our air pollution control, air pollution cleanliness thing set by the EPA. That does not count. We can do that. But we cannot do a controlled burn.

Let me tell you about the Polhemus Burn. It happens to be on the periphery of the Hayman fire. I flew over it. Mr. Speaker, it was incredibly interesting. Because, as you fly over the fire, you see that where we did the burn just a little more than a year ago, the fire actually stopped. The Polhemus Burn was a buffer against that fire moving farther east and into homes along the front range. You can see where what we have done has worked, but we have to fight every single step of the way with the EPA to do a controlled burn of 8,000 acres. But 100,000, 200,000 acres, no problem as long as it was started by a campfire or a lightning strike. That is okay. That pollutes the air for weeks and weeks and months to come. But, no problem.

This is the idiocy of trying to actually have a Federal control of this process that really and truly does not allow for the kind of thing I have just described here. It does not allow us to actually manage the forest. These are idiotic laws, idiotic regulations that have cost us severely. We have to change it; and maybe, maybe, the outcome of these horrendous fires will move this Congress in that direction. Maybe we will do something to try and reduce the possibility of the lawsuits, the frivolous lawsuits, the frivolous appeals and the internal inertia in the Forest Service. Those two things have combined to create this event, captured by the space shuttle.

You can blame that on the things I have just described, bureaucratic inertia and environmentalists, extreme environmentalists, obstacles they have placed in the way of trying to manage a forest. I am not saying the fire happened because of those things. I am saying that the seriousness of the fire, the severity of the fire is directly a result of poor management; and the poor management is a result of the things that I have described.

So maybe we can overcome this. I do not know. I certainly hope so, because something good has to come out of this, that at least we can eventually, several years from today can say, well, we learned a lesson from this. Yes, it was a terrible price to pay, hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of acres gone, the watershed destroyed, wildlife habitat destroyed. It will take 100 years for what has been burned to be replaced by something that looks like a forest again, 100 years. I will not see it. I do not even think my kids will see it.

What worries me is that this is June 23 or June 24. We are at the beginning of the season. How much more will it be on fire this year? I do not know, and

next year. Because, believe me, even if we implemented, even if tomorrow we started to do everything we needed to do in terms of forest management, it will take us years to clean the forests and get them back to a position that they can sustain these kinds of fires in a natural setting.

But it is an example of good ideas gone awry. It is an example of so many things we see here in government, where everybody thinks they are doing the right thing. Law upon law upon law upon law is passed every year; and each one, if studied individually, yeah, that seems right, absolutely, we should do that. But when you put them all together, they combine to create this kind of problem.

Once again, I want to thank all those people across the Nation for their prayers and for their help in fighting these fires. Many men and women are on the line tonight in Colorado and in Arizona and in other western States. We owe them a debt of gratitude that I want to express as best I can here on the floor of the House tonight.

Mr. Speaker, in the time I have available, I am going to move to another issue, not one that is completely unfamiliar to the people who may be observing us tonight or listening. In a way this has got to do with immigration reform, but in a bigger picture. Something happened in the last week that I feel compelled to bring to the attention of my colleagues here on the floor and those who may be observing it.

The Bill Bennett organization, Bill Bennett was the Secretary of Education in the Reagan administration, was my boss for several years. I was the regional director for the U.S. Department of Education. His organization did a poll recently, asking college students a variety of questions. Some of the answers that they gave to these questions, although surprising to some, were not surprising to me, although they were certainly disheartening.

What I want to do tonight in the minutes I have remaining to me is to explain one of the things that motivates, perhaps the most important issue I feel compelled to actually try to advance or discuss when it comes to the issue of immigration, immigration reform and some of the major ramifications of massive immigration into the United States. It is hard sometimes to get the big picture out there, but in a way this poll that was taken of American college students helps me try to do that.

Mr. Speaker, let me say this. I believe that we are in this Nation and as a member of western civilization as perhaps the leading Nation in what can be described as western civilization, we are in a conflict. It is a conflict that is really quite old in origin. It has been going on for hundreds and hundreds of years. It flares up at certain points of time and subsides at others, but it is nonetheless an ongoing conflict. There are those certainly who would suggest

that the threat to the United States is posed by an organization often referred to as al Qaeda and that it is a relatively small group of people around the world who have the intent to do America great harm.

I would suggest that a thorough study of world history would bring one to a different perspective, and that is this, and I am condensing an awful lot of information into a relatively small period of time here, I recognize. I would suggest that our foes, that is, the foes of western civilization and all that it represents, republican form of government, reliance on individual responsibility, individual freedom being a sort of mainstay of western civilization, the rule of law and not of men being the mainstay of western civilization, these are the philosophies, these are the ideas that we have brought the world, and these ideas are in conflict with other civilizations.

I suggest that it is not just al Qaeda that we are fighting. It is not just a small group of individuals out there, the tentacles here and there in several countries. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, by the way, I should say I am in total support of the President's attempts to try and stamp them out, to try to go wherever they are and eradicate them. I absolutely agree with it. But I think it is foolhardy for us to assume that, even if we were actually able to either kill or arrest every single member of the al Qaeda organization, that America would be safe. Because I think our battle is with something bigger. It is with fundamentalist Islam in this case. That is part of the clash of civilizations. That is the one we are now dealing with most directly.

As I say, over the course of history, world history, you will find that it has happened often, that these flash points have occurred, that there have been times when we can see a much more direct, a much more identifiable conflict, when armies met, Crusaders against the Saracens. But we can see that, as times change, we no longer will be fighting wars with major armies facing each other in some remote corner of the world, the winner and the outcome of the battle determining the winners and losers of the war.

□ 2200

That is not the kind of war we are fighting today; it is not the world in which we live. The world in which we live is a war fought by people blowing themselves up on buses in Jerusalem or in the West Bank. It is a war being fought by people who take airplanes and crash them into buildings in the hopes of destroying a different civilization. It is American civilization; it is Western civilization that our opponents hate. It is not just an issue of Israel versus Palestine. That is only one front where fighting is actually going on in this clash of civilizations. At least that is my belief. If one looks at this I think from a bigger perspective, that is the conclusion to which one must come.

Now, how does this fit with what I started off talking about in terms of Bill Bennett's organization and the poll they took? Well, for us to be successful in this clash of civilization, for us to actually hope to be able to win this war, we have to recognize that we are, number one, fighting that kind of a war. It is not just simply a small sort of tactical attack that we are focusing on here and dealing with, on one subgroup of fundamentalist Islam. It is a much bigger problem, and it will go on for a long, long time. In order to be successful, we as Americans have to know who we are, what we stand for, and believe in Western civilization, because that is what we are actually fighting for. It is not just to stop people from crashing into a building in New York. It is our very survival. I assure my colleagues that the folks who want to do us ill want to do so as a result of the fact of who we are, what we believe in, what we exemplify. That is what they hate, and they will not stop ever until that particular goal is accomplished, and that is the eradication of Western civilization. It is, I think, that big an issue with which we deal.

So it is important for us to understand that when we ask American students what they think of America, what they think of America vis-a-vis other countries, how they actually kind of rate our system and our society versus other societies, it is disheartening to hear and see the following results: American students, according to this poll, intensely and overwhelmingly disagree with the statement that Western culture is superior to Arab culture. Only 16 percent believe Western culture is superior to Arab culture, but 79 percent do not.

Now, that is the result I suggest, Mr. Speaker, of a deliberate, sort of philosophical point of view that has been expressed in schools, in classrooms in colleges all over America for at least a decade or more, longer than that, 20 years at least; and that is what I refer to as cultural relativism, that it is all the same; that we should never, ever think of another culture as different or certainly less deserving, less important than our own.

Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, the reality of the world is this: that we do have something unique in the United States, and it is not chauvinistic to express that point of view. In fact, we must believe in that if we are to win the war to which I refer in this clash of civilizations. If we believe that all cultures are the same, that there is nothing different between the United States, between Western civilization, between a liberal democracy, between the rule of law, between the intent or the belief that people have the ultimate responsibility for their own lives; if we do not believe in that, then we cannot be successful over the long, long haul in this clash, and it is going to be a long haul.

And if we think for a moment that we are in a Nation that is less desirable than any other, or equally desirable as

all others, then all we have to do is to raise the gates all over the world, raise the gates and allow people to flee from whatever country they live in to the country they want to go to. Does anybody think for a moment that there is going to be a mass exodus from the United States to Saudi Arabia or to Afghanistan? I do not think so. Does anybody think for a moment that if we actually raise all of the gates that there would not be a huge influx of people from all over the world, including the Middle Eastern countries, to the United States where life is better, and it is better because of Western civilization? I am not ashamed to say that; and I am, in fact, proud to say it, because I believe it. I believe it is empirically provable that life is better.

There is a great satirical piece that was done, my son sent it to me, it came off the Internet, something called "James: The Screed." I do not know to what that refers, but he is doing a satirical piece on this poll. And he is suggesting that this is an essay question that is typical today in a college classroom. Remember, this is satire, okay?

Here is the essay question: "Two choices: life as a gay atheist in Fargo, North Dakota, or life as a Christian gay in Riyadh. Write 1,000 words describing how each faces equal hardship. If your essay contains less than 1,000 words, you will either be docked one grade or have your left hand removed with an ornately engraved scimitar, depending on which morally-equal culture the teaching assistant wishes to consult."

This is great stuff. "B: Western culture is equal or inferior to Arab culture because: (check any you believe to apply)" of the following: "Number 1. Our so-called democracies are fronts for corporate interests. Nadar doesn't win here, Nadar doesn't win in Syria. What's the difference?

"2, our so-called freedom of scientific inquiry unshackled from religious strictures is a sham. Galileo was oppressed by the Catholic Church, wasn't he? Didn't every American moon shot end in failure because we believed the sun revolved around the earth and we failed to account for the gravitational pull? Stupid Pope!

"3," this is another option that you can check: "We spend more on flavored massage oil than we do on foreign aid, which is so, like, typical. Saudi Arabia spends more on mosques here in the United States than their citizens spend on 'Hustler,' which should tell you something.

"4, they may stone adulterers, but we are equally puritanical about sex, as evidenced by the recent refusal of the Toledo City Council to grant medical benefits to the pets of cohabitating transgendered city employees."

It goes on. I mean it is a great, great satire, and I encourage everyone, Mr. Speaker, here to go on the Web site and look it up. It is called "The Screed." It is an "attempt to disassemble the indefensible." It is very, very good. Very interesting.

But what it does is point out that we need to know who we are; we need to actually defend that point of view and Western civilization as we know it. And when we talk about how this actually connects to immigration, I suggest to my colleagues that we do need to actually have a country that is a country connected by people who can speak to each other in one language and share a common set of values and ideas. Massive immigration is a threat to that particular philosophy and idea. Not immigration itself. Immigration is a fine thing that has helped the country and has been wonderful in many ways. But the massive immigration we are witnessing today does not help us create a cohesive country, a country that does share one language, one set of ideas, one set of principles. We are becoming Balkanized and, as a result, unable to effectively fight this war in this clash of civilizations.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BECERRA (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of personal reasons.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of official business in the district.

Mr. JEFFERSON (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of personal business.

Ms. KILPATRICK (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of personal leave.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of personal business.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today on account of family business.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BROWN of Ohio) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. HILL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. THURMAN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HOYER, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. NUSSLE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. MORAN of Kansas, for 5 minutes, today and June 25.

Mr. PAUL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KELLER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WELDON of Florida, for 5 minutes, June 25.

#### SENATE BILL REFERRED.

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's