

What then is the answer? Is America a police state? My answer is maybe, not yet. But it is fast approaching. The seeds have been sown and many of our basic protections against tyranny have been and are constantly being undermined. The post-9-11 atmosphere here in Congress has provided ample excuse to concentrate on safety at the expense of liberty, failing to recognize that we cannot have one without the other.

When the government keeps detailed records on every move we make and we either need advanced permission for everything we do or are penalized for not knowing what the rules are, America will be a declared police state. Personal privacy for law-abiding citizens will be a thing of the past. Enforcement of laws against economic and political crimes will exceed that of violent crimes. War will be the prerogative of the administration. Civil liberties will be suspended for suspects and their prosecution will not be carried out by an independent judiciary. In a police state this becomes common practice rather than a rare incident.

Some argue that we already live in a police state and Congress does not have the foggiest notion of what we are dealing with. So forget it and use your energies for your own survival, some advise. And they advise also that the momentum toward the monolithic state cannot be reversed.

Possibly that is true. But I am optimistic that if we do the right thing and do not capitulate to popular fallacies and fancies and the incessant war propaganda, the onslaught of statism can be reversed. To do so, we as a people once again have to dedicate ourselves to establishing the proper role a government plays in a free society. That does not involve the redistribution of wealth through force. It does not mean that government dictates to us the moral and religious standards of the people. It does not allow us to police the world by involving ourselves in every conflict as if it is our responsibility to manage an American world empire. But it does mean government has a proper role in guaranteeing free markets, protecting voluntary and religious choices and guaranteeing private property ownership while punishing those who violate these rules, whether foreign or domestic.

In a free society, the government's job is simply to protect liberty. The people do the rest. Let us not give up a grand experiment that provided so much for so many. Let us reject the police state.

PROTECTING AMERICANS FROM POLLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMONS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, ultimately the Federal Government has

an important responsibility to protect the quality of life for our citizens. My sense is that it is important for us to promote liveable communities where the Federal Government is a partner to help make our families safe, healthy, and more economically secure.

Unfortunately, when it comes to dealing with hazardous waste, we, as a Federal Government, have failed to follow through on our commitment. This is very serious business for most Americans. I, in the State of Oregon, have eleven Superfund sites. One in four Americans live within 4 miles of a Superfund site. Ten million American children live within a short bicycle ride of a Superfund site. These are areas, some 1,200 priority sites around the country, many of which are polluted by hazardous chemicals known to cause cancer, heart disease, kidney failure, birth defects and brain damage.

There has been a very simple principle at work for over 20 years as far as the Federal Government is concerned, and that is that corporations, businesses that have been involved with serious pollution should clean up after themselves. If they are responsible for the environmental damage and the public health threats, they should be held financially accountable for their contaminated sites and should help keep them up.

The law that we put in place in 1980 is based on this "polluter pays" principle. When the companies that are responsible for this pollution and the public health threats are unable to clean up after themselves, then the Federal Government steps in. And that part of that same legislation created the Superfund site, created a Superfund itself, that was to be supplied with money from a special tax on oil and chemical companies who, by and large, have been responsible for much of this pollution.

The money from the tax was placed in a trust fund, the so-called Superfund, and designated for cleaning up polluted sites where the responsible party either could not pay or we were unable to identify them.

Unfortunately, the tax that provides the Environmental Protection Agency with the funds to clean up these abandoned sites expired in 1995. Part of the Gingrich revolution was simply a refusal to reenact the tax, despite the fact that every Congress and every President since its original enactment was supportive of that effort.

Now, originally when they have refused to renew the tax in 1995, it was not an immediate disaster because over the years money had accumulated in the trust fund; and, indeed, at the time of the tax termination there was over \$3.5 billion in 1996. But now that fund has dwindled from \$3.8 billion down to a projected \$28 million next year.

This leaves us with three stark choices. We either reinstate the tax, we dramatically reduce our clean up efforts, or we force the taxpayers to pick up the tab from already strained budg-

ets. The Federal Government now, as we know, is hemorrhaging red ink. We have gone from last year being concerned that we were somehow going to pay off the national debt too quickly, to a point where we are going to be borrowing over a trillion and a half dollars from the Social Security fund.

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Sadly, the administration has chosen to abandon the notion of renewing the Superfund tax. It has chosen instead to slash the cleanup funding and to rely for what money will be available from the general fund. This is part of a pattern from this administration that is unsettling.

In its first year, the Bush administration decreased the pace of cleanups by almost 45 percent, from an average of 87 sites per year in President Clinton's second term. It originally projected this year, the administration predicted that it would clean up 65 sites this year, but now that number will be only 40.

Last month, the administration announced that it would be cutting funding for cleanup at 33 sites in 19 States. In addition to zeroing out the funding for these 33 sites altogether, it is severely underfunding sites of existing projects. We have two of them that I am following closely in Oregon, McCormick and Baxter creosote plant in Portland on the banks of the Willamette River, and a site designated Northwest Pipe and Casting Process Company, which is an area that is near a number of well areas and that drains into the Clackamas River which drains into that same Willamette River.

I must say that I am rather frustrated at this attitude we have at this point. During the last presidential election, we had the candidates, both Mr. Bush and Mr. Gore, talking a good fight about being able to be forward protecting on the environment. Now when we have a chance to put it into action, we are not seeing the performance.

It does not have to be that way. When we get a chance to work together, good things can happen. Earlier this Congress was able to work with the administration in a bipartisan fashion to deal with cleanup of brownfields, and we made some significant progress. These are the properties that are idle due to actual or potential contamination by hazardous substances and pollutants, by and large in our urban areas. We have an estimate of almost a half million of these brownfields sites nationally.

We found that by moving to restore the environmental health of these sites it is an effective way to revitalize neighborhoods and in some cases an entire city. It can help communities become more livable in a number of ways. It improves the environment by cleaning up the toxic contaminants and preventing their spread and contamination and potential disease-causing aspects, side effects for individuals. The

cleanup makes the communities healthier and safer, and it targets reinvestments in our city.

By providing redevelopment opportunities where infrastructure is currently in place, it saves taxpayers dollars over greenfield development out in pristine farmlands that would require new roads, utility, water, and would take away open space, productive farmland, wetlands that have other purposes that help stabilize the environment.

We see significant job creation and economic development opportunities provided by brownfield cleanup, and it actually boosts the tax revenues for cities and towns by improving property tax bases. In fact, the EPA estimates that for every dollar of Federal money spent on brownfield cleanup, cities and States produce or leverage almost two-and-a-half dollars in private investment.

Sort of a stark example. We have the opportunity to revitalize communities with investments in brownfields, and we have been able to work on that on a bipartisan basis, what has happened with Superfund, where Democrats, I assure my colleagues, are willing to step forward with progressive, environmentally sensitive Republicans and support the administration to make sure that we take advantage of these opportunities to protect the environment and revitalize the community.

I am pleased to be joined by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE), my colleague from the Great Pacific Northwest, from the Seattle area, who has been very active on a whole range of environmental areas. I would be pleased to yield to him to comment, if he would, on corporate responsibility, environmental cleanup and where he sees us going in the months ahead.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman organizing this chance to address this because this is an interesting sort of coming-together of two themes of American values, and one of those values is protect our natural resources for our children, and the other American value is responsibility and accountability and corporate responsibilities which certainly is in the news in a lot of different ways today.

I have come to the floor tonight because I am so concerned that I think the administration is grossly on the wrong track on both these issues on an interesting sort of marriage of two values, where the administration is going absolutely backwards. Clearly we have an environmental challenge in making sure that our Superfund sites remain in operation to clean up these most toxic areas with PCB, DDT, creosote, you name it, in it. So we have got this environmental challenge and cleaning it up is an American value. Americans feel very strongly about cleaning up these sites so that we do not leave water pollution for our children for hundreds and hundreds of years.

But there is another thing Americans feel strongly about, and that is responsibility for one's actions. That is why years ago this Chamber and the Senate adopted a Superfund plan that would make sure that polluters pay, not taxpayers, and Americans have felt for years that polluters who dump this toxic material into the soil ought to be the one, to the extent humanly possible, to pay for the cleanup, instead of John Q. Citizen or Mary Q. Citizen who pay their taxes, and Americans have felt for a long time that it is only right because why should the taxpayer have to pay when the polluter was the one who dumped the crud into the ground? That has been the law up until George W. Bush was elected President of the United States.

Now he wants to change that. He wants to abandon this basic American value of personal responsibility and he wants to shift the cost of that onto the American taxpayer, and I think that is wrong.

I think the continued American value is, one, we ought to continue the Superfund cleanup to get these sites done, and two, that the President is wrong in trying to stop the idea and abandon the idea of polluter pays and now make the rule in America being that the taxpayer pays, and somehow we have got to put it on the general fund for the taxpayer to fund these billions of dollars of cleanup, and I think that that is way out of touch with what Americans want to see happen here, and it is but yet one more, just one more manifestation of how the President's administration unfortunately has acted slavishly to these corporate interests instead of the general interests, and the President who has had a history, as we all know, in the oil and gas industry, cannot seem to break that history to answer the general needs of the public rather than the special needs of the polluting industries.

This is not something that we are asking the President to sort of invent a new science or even a new type of legislation. We are just asking him to take his hands off the existing legislation, which requires polluters to pay for their own problems they created rather than the taxpayer. We are only asking him to do what has been the law for years and years and years and years, and that is why it is most discouraging that the President has seen fit to try to go backwards both on environmental policy and on the concept of personal accountability, and we are going to do everything we can to stop him in his efforts.

In the State of Washington we have a number of Superfund sites. They are at risk with many other Superfund sites of not being funded because of the President's threats, and even if they are funded, we do not think they should be funded by the taxpayer. We think they should be funded by the polluter who dumped the stuff in the ground.

I give my colleagues an example. In Bainbridge Island, where I live, one of

the largest toxic waste sites in the West Coast is a former creosote plant and that for years and years and years the owners dumped creosote into the ground right on Bill Point which is a point just on Eagle Harbor there in Bainbridge Island. It is a beautiful location. Trouble is now it is one of the most toxic area substrata around because it is full of creosote, which is pretty ugly stuff. Sometimes when I go by, I can see it bubble up out of the water, and it is real stinky and black and it is quite toxic. We think that the polluters who put the creosote in the ground should be responsible for that cleanup, which is going to take years and years and years, rather than the taxpayers in the State of Washington or anywhere else in the United States, and yet the President wants to reduce that protection.

I just give my colleague a little comment, too. We are now trying, just to tell him how nasty the stuff is, we are trying a new technology of injecting steam into the ground to try to break up the creosote so it can be pumped out, and it is an experiment, really one of the first or second times it is being tried anywhere in the Nation. We hope it works because if it does not work, we have got to build these walls to essentially have a bathtub to preserve this stuff so it does not keep leaking into Puget Sound and causing terrible things in the food chain, and if we have to do that, we have to pump water out of this literally for eternity.

So this is very expensive and we think the one who put it in ought to be responsible. We think that the President should revisit this issue and stick with the existing view of the polluter being responsible rather than the taxpayer. We hope we are successful in this regard.

Today the President gave a speech about corporate responsibility, and he said that corporations need to be more ethical, more responsible, and if he feels that way, why the heck is he trying to shift the costs off of corporations who dump creosote in the ground year after year after year after year, poisoning the atmosphere and the environment, and try to change that responsibility off the taxpayers? That is not in league with what I sense he was saying today, which is corporations ought to be responsible for their own conduct.

So we will continue in our efforts, and I appreciate this opportunity to join my colleague to talk about this one particular issue that I am very concerned about.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman making that linkage because I think it is important.

There is a lot of talk about corporate responsibility. There is a lot of talk now when the spotlight has been trained on some practices that are having a devastating effect on the pocketbook of Americans across the country, as people are getting their quarterly statements from their individual retirement accounts, their 401(k)s. They

have watched what has happened as the stock market has been hammered by questionable practices that are in turn being reflected in a loss of wealth for Americans.

It is going to make it harder to do business, yet this notion of exercising corporate responsibility is something that could be simply done in terms of an area that would actually add value to every community around the country in terms of reestablishing this principle of polluter pays.

Mr. INSLEE. I may just tell my colleague, we have got a lot of great corporations out there, too, that are being extremely responsible, and those sort of good actors are paying corporate taxes, the ones who are not polluting against the law, and what the President's proposal is doing is shifting the burden for the pollution of the bad actors onto the corporations as well as individual taxpayers. He is shifting the burden for the pollution off the bad actors onto the good corporations that are not polluting. So I mean it is not like just individuals are victims of the President's proposal here. The good corporations that are following environmental laws and taking care of their waste and recycling their products, and thank goodness I have got hundreds of them in my district, Microsoft being one. Why do we have to have Microsoft have to pay for some other corporation that is not following the law, that is dumping this stuff in the ground? So we are defending the corporations who are good neighbors and good community members against the perditions of those who are not, and George Bush is in league with those corporations that want to violate the law and dump this stuff in the ground, and we think that is just absurd and that is the best, most gracious language I can use.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the distinction because in the Northwest we have seen a significant increase in environmental consciousness, worked with programs like The Natural Step. We are seeing models of corporate responsibility where people are trying to reduce their footprint on the landscape, and we are seeing many small- and medium-sized businesses and consulting firms that are emerging that are practicing sustainable business models.

The approach that is being taken here, shifting this onto the general fund, means that instead of identifying sources of pollution historically, it is going to put a greater burden on individuals and corporations who are actually doing an outstanding job. In some cases, it is in effect taxing them twice because they pay their share plus the share of people who are evading responsibilities.

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Mr. INSLEE. If I may add, the other thing that is frankly disturbing to a lot of my constituents, is that this is just one more of a litany of these

antienvironmental actions by this administration.

Everybody makes a mistake. We are all human, and we do not expect perfection from the President. But when we look at the number of times that the President, this President, has sided with these special interests to the degradation of clean air and clean water, it really bothers the people I represent. I have lots of them come up to me and say, "Whatever you do, just do not let him continue down this road."

It started with his efforts on arsenic in the water; then it has gone on to issues to gut the roadless area rule where we are trying to protect the last pristine areas in our forest areas; then the President ignores any affirmative action on global warming; and then the President takes this action that we are talking about trying to gut the Superfund sites. That was preceded 2 weeks ago by his efforts to reduce clean air rules.

This is consistent with his actions, unfortunately, with the Securities and Exchange Commission, to date, where he appointed a gentleman, who, though a very nice person, very intelligent, is from the industry he is supposed to be regulating. Mr. Pitt from the SEC is supposed to be regulating the securities industry and the accounting industry, and that is who he represented. As a result, we have had no effective, meaningful reform in the last 6 months of this horrendous predation on American investors. Yet the President has not stood up for American values, he has stood up and allowed the special interests to dominate his administration to the degradation and damage of the American investors.

So this is a consistent pattern where corporations, not all of them, but some of them, who have acted against the laws, have dominated his decision-making. And this is just another example of how an administration has gone off course. We hope he restores that and rethinks through this pattern of his.

With that, I would like to thank the gentleman for an opportunity to join him this evening.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's thoughts and observations and the leadership the gentleman has provided, particularly in chairing for the minority the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health of the Committee on Resources. The gentleman has had an opportunity to train a searchlight on some of the practices that those who would not place quite the same premium on the environment would have. The gentleman has also provided leadership in pushing back on the notion of abandoning the roadless rule, where we had, what, almost 2 million comments in support of this important protection.

Mr. INSLEE. Just one more comment, if I may, and I thank the gentleman for his compliments, I always accept those, but 96 percent of the Americans who commented on this

wanted a strong roadless area bill to protect our pristine area, yet what did the President of the United States do? He ignored them.

Now he is trying to back up on this rule to allow clear-cutting and roadless area rules. We are going to fight this. We feel very strongly about it.

And I thank the gentleman.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentleman's leadership.

One of the areas we have been focusing on in dealing with Superfund needs to be in the area of hard rock mining. Frankly, there are a number of us who are concerned about the situation that is occurring in our Nation's wilderness areas that have basically been given away to mining interests with virtually no change since that law was enacted in 1872, basically the same as when it was enacted and signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant.

There are those that argue that hard rock mining is the Nation's number one polluter. They are currently responsible for approximately 70 Superfund sites. Of the 33 sites around the country that the administration sadly is talking about eliminating funding for, two of them were contaminated by hard rock mining companies in Montana. Yet, until recently, there were no requirements that the mining companies pay for the notion of cleaning up after themselves.

That is how companies like W.R. Grace, who have been in the news for years with its notorious activities, were able to walk away from the site without being held responsible. Yet, last month, the administration issued a rule that would make filling our waterways with waste from hard rock mining mountaintop removal legal.

Now, think about this for a moment: giving a grant of authority from the administration to the mining industry to legalize this notion of where they are just stripping away mountaintops and shoving it into streams to gain access to seams of coal.

As if the Superfund law and the Clean Air Act were not enough, we have here a direct opportunity on the part of the administration to overturn important provisions of the Clean Water Act, all of this to protect an extraordinarily destructive mining practice. These companies have already buried over 800 miles of rivers and streams in West Virginia and Kentucky, all with the permission of the Army Corps of Engineers. But until this rule change goes through, it is still illegal for the Corps to allow waste from mining to be dumped in our Nation's waterways.

Why? Why would the administration, instead of changing the Corps' practice to make them obey the law, why have they decided instead to change the law to make these actions legal? Think about the types of harmful fill we are talking about dumping into wildlife habitat and communities' drinking supplies. Hard rock mining waste includes construction and demolition debris. People have found coal ash waste,

old tires, car parts, and discarded appliances. They also often contain particularly dangerous toxic chemicals, such as cyanide, arsenic, and sulfuric acid.

Mr. Speaker, this is serious business. We are approaching the 130th anniversary of the mining law of 1872, as I mentioned, signed into effect by President Ulysses S. Grant, essentially unchanged. We should be talking about how to make this outdated law stronger. We should not be taking an opportunity to roll back provisions of the Clean Water Act that are here to protect public health and the environment.

We are already giving the mining industry public lands and minerals for 19th century recording prices. We are not requiring that these corporations, often foreign-owned, that are extracting this mineral wealth, give a portion of it back in the form of a tax or royalty to American taxpayers to put in our Treasury. And now we are allowing them to blow off the tops of mountains, bulldoze them away to bury rivers and streams.

I would strongly suggest that instead of facilitating this type of behavior, it is important that we provide more corporate responsibility, provide more environmental protection, and we make sure that we are protecting the heritage that God has given this country.

It is frustrating that we have not been able to give people the type of understanding of what is at stake. Remember, as I mentioned earlier, one in four Americans lives within 4 miles of a Superfund site. Now, these sites are hazardous waste, often abandoned warehouses, landfills and mines, and 85 percent of all Superfund sites have contaminated groundwater. Research suggests that there is a markedly increased risk for birth defects when women live close to Superfund sites early in pregnancy.

A few of the hazardous chemicals that people are discovering on these sites include arsenic. We had a great deal of debate earlier in this Congress as the administration proposed rolling back protections on arsenic in the drinking water. Well, that frankly blew up, and the administration did retreat because the public knows arsenic in the drinking water is not a positive development. It is known to cause cancer of the lungs, bladder, and skin. It is also linked to cancer of the liver, kidney, colon, even nasal passages; and to a variety of noncancerous health effects, including heart disease, diabetes, adverse effects to the immune system, lungs, gastrointestinal tract, and thickening and discoloration of the skin.

Lead is another serious area of pollution that can damage almost every organ and system in the human body, especially the immune and reproductive system, and can cause heart disease and kidney damage. It is particularly damaging to the central nervous system, especially for children, where

it is well-known and accepted now that children suffering from exposure to lead can have serious brain damage, decreased IQ scores, slow growth, and cause hearing problems in infants or young children.

We have serious problems with mercury on these Superfund sites that can cause brain and kidney damage and pose a high risk for adverse neurological development of fetuses. These are some of the hazards that we face with over 1,200 toxic waste sites on the Superfund national priority list.

Congress should not be undercutting the polluter-pays principle and walking away from its financial responsibility. Some of these sites have been on the list for more than a decade. Last year, in a report requested by Congress, Resources for the Future calculated that implementing the Superfund program for the current decade is going to cost us from \$14 billion to \$16.5 billion. Now is not the time to walk away from the financing.

I mentioned that it was, I felt, unfortunate that Congress allowed the corporate tax that funded the Superfund to expire in 1995 and that the administration has no plans to work with us to reinstate this tax. It has been that combination of funding that enabled us to clean up more than 800 toxic waste sites in communities across the country. During the last 5 years, we were averaging about 87 sites per year. Last year, in its first year, the Bush administration found that the pace of clean-up was down 45 percent. In 2 years, the administration expects to reduce the pace of cleanups by more than 50 percent more, along with shifting the responsibility for the cleanup.

Now, we have seen, as a consequence, that the administration has gone to the General Fund for \$634 million in 2001. It is proposing \$700 million this next year. When we had the Superfund in place that was funded by the tax, the General Fund only assumed about 18 percent of the program costs. Next year, if the President's proposals are adopted, they will be paying 54 percent of the associated costs, and soon, in the next year or two, the entire cost.

Mr. Speaker, I find that to be unacceptable. We need to not be abandoning the principle of polluter-pays. We ought not to be putting more pressure on the beleaguered General Fund. We ought not to be cutting the pace of Superfund cleanup. After more than 20 years, if anything, we should be redoubling our efforts in providing this revitalization. We have, today, opportunity after opportunity to take a step back and to do what the American public wants us to do, which is more investment in areas that is going to protect the environment.

Another critical area that we are having a great deal of discussion about on the floor of this Congress and in our committees deals with the situation we see in forest fires that have been raging across the West. In recent days, we have had 22 large fires in seven States.

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We have had over 300 million acres already burned this year. For comparison purposes, that is more than twice what we have had over the last 10 years on average, and we are only halfway through this fire season. There are approximately 10,000 men and women currently fighting the fires throughout the West. It has been important enough for the President and a number of governors to be involved with touring. We have been watching homes being lost. To date we have had nearly 1,500 homes across the West and over 35,000 residents have been evacuated. I would hope that this would be another area where we might be able to assess what has happened and draw the appropriate environmental conclusions and lessons, particularly since we are facing what is likely to be the worst fire season in memory.

It is important that these catastrophic fires serve as a wake-up call, not senseless recrimination, attacking. In some cases we have even seen people trying to blame this on environmentalists, incredible as it sounds. This is an opportunity for us to reflect on the transformation of our natural systems of forest and even astrospheric chemistry dealing with global warming. We need to have a cultural shift to a more conservative approach, respecting the fragility of these systems and our dependence upon them. We need to stop this curious blame game.

It is not, by any stretch of the imagination, the environmentalists who caused the drought. It is not the environmentalists who have had a policy for the last 50 years of instantly suppressing any fire anywhere so that what we have done is we have stopped the periodic fires that have swept through the forests of the West. We have seen the number of trees and other flammable material expand dramatically, and it has been actually compounded by logging practices that have opened up many of these forests and removed the most mature trees, trees that are the most fire resistant, and leave the tinder behind. And it was interesting 2 years ago when we went through this cycle, we found that the areas that had been the most heavily logged were the ones that had the worst forest fires.

This current fire season will be the worst in the past half century, and I am hopeful that we will be able as a Congress, we will be able as a country to take a step back and face the hard questions about current forest management policies, funding for various wild-fire management programs, and look at the Federal role in protecting State, Federal, and private land and, yes, take a hard look at the land uses that we are permitting and encouraging in this area.

We need to return to ecology 101. Small ground fires that once regulated the vegetation in our great western woods need to be returned to the ecosystem. The brush and small trees that

would burn while older larger trees survive were part of a natural process that made the forest healthier. We need to recognize that a century of aggressive fire suppression has rendered western forests susceptible to these massive conflagrations that cost us billions of dollars annually and that much of the cost and the agony can be attributed to structure protection for homes that are in the forested fringe.

There is a lot of talk these days about the wild land-urban interface. It is a serious question, Mr. Speaker, because we have in this interface between the developed areas on formerly undeveloped forest land, it is putting people in direct contact with what earlier had been a healthy natural phenomenon of wildfires that have just rushed through. We found that people have a difficult time accepting the reality. A recent survey in the Arizona Republic showed that people in this wild land-urban interface have an attitude that, well, they know that it is risky, but I think I will take my chances because it is not that risky. Of course it is not just their chance. They will not bear the costs alone when the worst scenario plays out. Since 1985, wildfires have burned over 10,000 homes.

I see my good friend Mr. TANCREDO from Colorado in the Chamber. My understanding is that there will be a million people in the foreseeable future in Colorado who will be located under current policies in areas that are heavily forested, putting them in harm's way and giving us a very difficult choice about allowing the fires to burn on, risking people's homes and lives, or making some changes to deal with a more rational approach. It is not appropriate for us to continue to put thousands of men and women in harm's way needlessly, and in some cases there are bizarre situations that are a result of human activity on formerly wild forest areas.

We had in Fort Windgate, New Mexico, firefighters having to stay away from certain areas because there were explosions of unexploded ordnance beneath the surface of the public land in areas that had been used for target practice. We had this a couple of years ago in Storm King State Park in New York where firefighters were out fighting a blaze and all of a sudden explosions started to occur. This was a result of shelling from cadets from West Point.

Well, it is not just these unusual situations that deal with unexploded ordnance in military activities. We have to have a comprehensive approach to how we are going to permit activities into the forest land, who is going to bear the risk, what we can do to minimize that in terms of if we are not going to prohibit it outright, to regulate where it is, building materials, what is happening in terms of landscaping. In too much of the West, people have just turned their back on their responsibility, creating serious, serious problems.

Since 1970, over 2.8 million housing units have been constructed along this forest fringe and out into the forest land. The total now is over 5 million dwelling units. If population growth continues at current rates, and we continue to have the ex-urban housing development and we have resort development, there will be an additional 2.4 million housing units in the next 30 years, approaching 9 million in all.

As staggering as these numbers are, they only represent primary residence. They do not include tens of thousands of residences that are second and seasonal and vacation homes, particularly near resort towns. We are seeing the consequences of unplanned growth and development. Some may call it sprawl or dumb growth when it occurs in and around suburban areas; but the facts are we are seeing it leak out in the countryside, and we are going to be penalizing the taxpayer, costing money to extend services, penalizing the taxpayer for fighting fires, for example, where it is going to be exceedingly expensive and difficult to solve in the future.

The final area of concern that I have that I wanted to talk about this evening deals with the way the global climate change has the potential of accelerating and compounding these difficulties. Now the unprecedented drought that we have seen in the West, we have seen in Wyoming, it is the worst in 100 years. We are seeing it throughout the eastern seaboard in places like metropolitan Atlanta where we are not used to thinking about drought conditions.

This is merely a preview of what we can expect if we are going to continue to have the effects of global climate change, as droughts are going to be contributing to concerns about wildfire vulnerability. Unusually dry winters and hot summers increase the likelihood, and we are going to make it more and more difficult to contend with multiple challenges across the country.

I find it ironic that the President will tour the fire sites in Arizona, but really does not have anything in the way of a plan for American leadership when it comes to mounting a plan to deal with global climate change which might forestall or minimize this very serious problem in the future.

It is research from our own federally funded studies that have shown that climate change is going to have a dramatic increase in the areas burned and the number of potentially catastrophic fires, in fact, more than doubling the losses in some regions. And the changes are going to occur despite deployment of fire suppression resources at the highest levels, implying that the change is going to precipitate an increase in both fire suppression costs and economic loss due to just wild fires alone.

And it is not just wild fires that are a concern dealing with the change in greenhouse gasses and global climate. Worldwide, the number of great weath-

er disasters, including fires, in the 1990s was more than five times the number of these disasters for the 1950s. And the damages, the costs that were incurred by governments, by insurance, were more than 10 times as high adjusted for inflation than in the 1950s.

We have seen in the last year of the previous decade 47 events, more than double the average for the 1980s. Well, the United States, with less than 5 percent of the world's population, is playing a huge role in greenhouse gas contributions. We produce approximately five times our per capita contribution.

We as Americans know that we can do better. I sincerely hope that the administration will work with concerned people on both sides of the aisle to not abandon the principle of "polluter pay" and make sure that Superfund cleanup is the priority that the American public wants, to deal with the abuse of the mining industry, hardrock mining in particular, to not make it easier for them to have assaults on the environment, to fill miles of streams and valleys in violation of current law, that instead encourage, indeed mandate, that the industry clean up after itself, that we deal with the current realities of this urban-rural interface that has created such a problem with forest fire protection. And last, but by no means least, that we deal with national leadership for global climate change.

Next month the United States will join with over 100 other nations in the environmental summit in Johannesburg. Mr. Speaker, this would be an excellent opportunity for the United States, if the administration cannot abide by the Kyoto Protocols, which ironically even some large businesses are stepping up and agreeing to meet those targets, at least we are obligated to have our plan, our approach, and it would be a perfect time for the administration to reverse its position, come forward with a leadership approach to make sure that these problems of global climate change, storm events, and wildfires, are not going to be worse as a result of our stewardship, but instead would be better.

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ITEMS OF CONCERN TO AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to bring to the attention of my colleagues a number of issues. I have listened, as I have been sitting here preparing my notes, to the previous speaker, and there are many concerns that he expresses that I certainly share.

Before I get into the main part of my comments, I do just want to make one statement regarding the issue of wildfires and their cause, the reason