

well. Regional trade has been declining as a result of the border closure in recent years and unofficial reports indicate that a reopening of the Turkey-Armenia border would lead to enhanced trade and enable Turkey to provide a larger portion of the nearly \$1 billion worth of goods that Armenia imports each year. Also, existing transportation routes preclude trade in certain products, including building stone, produce, flowers, and meats. Opening the border would open the possibility to a profitable trade in such goods. Placing a voltage adjuster near the border would allow the transfer of excess electricity generated in Armenia to the energy-poor regions of eastern Turkey.

This increased economic activity and the improved access to local markets would have a positive impact on the economic environment throughout the region, especially in Armenia and eastern Turkey. The full economic potential of the region is unlikely to be achieved until there is a normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan as well. The opening of that border would enable the reopening of the railroads from Armenia to Azerbaijan and the creation of an uninterrupted railroad link between Istanbul and Baku and the Mediterranean and Caspian Seas. This would lead to enhanced trade between Turkey and the Caspian and Central Asian regions.

The internal conditions in Armenia and throughout the region must be prepared to take full advantage of an open border. As stated in the World Bank's Trade, Transport and Telecommunications in the South Caucasus: Current Obstacles to Regional Cooperation, (attached) "In the long run a peace settlement will only generate widespread and sustainable benefits, if the institutional and physical milieu is sufficiently supportive. The realization of these potential benefits appears highly unlikely, at present, as the current institutional and physical milieu is anything but supportive and offers few incentives for new development." The World Bank report makes a very rough estimate of regional trade normalization, and therefore open borders with both Turkey and Azerbaijan. The report found that open borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan could result in significant increases in Armenia's exports (\$269-342 million) and GDP likely would rise up to 30-38 percent on a one-time basis. The percentage impact on Turkey's overall trade figures would be much less, but likely beneficial as well. It also bases its estimate on older trade figures (1999 or earlier).

The U.S. Government has budgeted approximately \$1.336 billion to fund assistance programs in Armenia, plus \$218 million in surplus Department of Defense and privately donated humanitarian commodities since Fiscal Year 1992. In Fiscal Year 2002, all U.S. Government agencies budgeted \$103 million for assistance programs in Armenia.

The Governments of Armenia and Turkey have stated that they are willing to pursue improved relations. The U.S. Government continues to press the Government of Turkey at every appropriate opportunity to open the border with Armenia. Most recently the issue was raised with Turkish officials during Secretary Powell's April 2 visit to Ankara. The U.S. Government also urges the Government of Armenia to continue to raise these issues with the Turkish government. U.S. officials brought up the subject during Foreign Minister Oskanian's visit to Washington in February. In its role as Co-Chairman of the OSCE's Minsk Group, the U.S. is actively engaged in the search for a peaceful, mutually-acceptable resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including the normalization of regional trade relations, which would stabilize the situation in the region and provide the basis for greater eco-

nomical growth in Armenia, Azerbaijan and eastern Turkey.

On the diplomatic front, in 2002 the Armenian Government increased diplomatic contact with the Government of Turkey. It encouraged working-, mid-, and senior-level diplomatic contacts with Turkey and accepted a Turkish proposal for trilateral ministerial consultations. Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian held three rounds of discussions with Turkish Foreign Minister Cem, including one that also included Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Guliev. Following the change in government in Turkey last summer, the Armenian Foreign Minister also met once with the Foreign Minister of the interim Turkish Government. The Government of Turkey altered its stance on Armenia's WTO accession last year, helping to pave the way for Armenia's accession in December 2002. Turkish President Sezer sent President Kocharian a letter congratulating him on his March 5 re-election.

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CALIFORNIA AUTISM REPORT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, for some time I have been coming to the floor on a regular basis talking about the problem of the epidemic of autism. Just a few short years ago, 1 in 10,000 children were autistic. Today it is closer to 1 in 200. Think about that. We have had a 50-fold increase in the number of children who are autistic, and yet we have not had any real attention paid to the problem.

I wrote a letter to President Bush and to his administration, asking that there be a national conference called with leading scientists and experts from around the country and around the world to get together to try to find out why we are having such a terrible problem with this epidemic of autism, and this epidemic is one that is going to be with us for many, many, many years. These children who become autistic are going to grow up, live to be 65, 70 years old, but they are not going to be able in many cases to take care of themselves; so they are going to be dependent upon the taxpayers, upon society to take care of them, and so it is extremely important that we address this situation right now.

I have on this lectern beside me pictures of children from across the country who are autistic, and I and the parents of these children believe that many of them, maybe most of them, became autistic because of mercury that was in vaccines put in by the pharmaceutical companies under the title of thimerosal. Thimerosal is a preservative that was put in children's vaccines and other vaccines for a long time, since the 1940s, and now that we give children 25 to 30 vaccines before they start kindergarten, the cumu-

lative effect of all that mercury going into their system and into their brain is an epidemic of autism, and yet nothing is being done about it.

We passed a Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund that was supposed to provide a nonadversarial approach to helping solve these problems of these autistic children and their families because of the huge amount of money that they have to lay out to take care of their children, and yet it has not worked. We have been trying to correct that, but we have not received the kind of cooperation from the other body that we need to get that job done.

Today we have got a new report from California, the Department of Developmental Services, and it says that in the past 4 years the amount of autistic children that have been found has doubled, in 4 years. That is in the State of California alone, and this has been going on all across the country. In some parts of the country, the number of children that are born and becoming autistic is much greater than 1 in 200. It is down to 150 in parts of New Jersey and Georgia and elsewhere in this country, and we must pay attention to it. We must get to the bottom of it, and we must provide a mechanism for these parents and these children to be taken care of before it is too late.

As I said before, it was 1 in 10,000 children were autistic. Now it is 1 in about 200. There has been almost a 300 percent increase in autism in 11 years, from 1987 to 1998, and in California they said that their report has led to numerous subsequent epidemiological studies in autism throughout the United States as well as the global health community, and yet we have not as a Nation addressed this problem.

It has been said in this study that in just a short period of time in California, autism will be more prevalent than cancer in children, than diabetes in children, Down Syndrome in children, and within 3 to 4 years will surpass in total number of cases both cerebral palsy and epilepsy in California. That is just California alone.

This is a silent epidemic, and most people in America who are not conversant with what autism is do not even realize it, and many of my colleagues unfortunately do not understand the gravity of this situation. So tonight and every night I am going to be coming down here. Tonight I am talking about the study that was done in California, but I am going to be coming down here reading letters from autistic families, from parents of autistic children who have noplacement to turn and nowhere to go, because when they go to the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund for support and help, they are turned down without any review of their situation. We are trying to open that up.

There is about \$2 billion in that fund right now, and we need to make it nonadversarial. If children are damaged by vaccines, if they are damaged by the mercury in vaccines, then those parents ought to be having access to that

program as quickly as possible. It has been closed to them so far, many of them. We need to open it up with a 2-year look-back provision so that they can get in and have their case reviewed, because to have their child in that situation, to have them not be able to look at them, talk to them, running around flapping their arms, having chronic diarrhea and constipation is something that parents must not live with, and this Government needs to address this problem.

California has talked about it in this report, and the Congress of the United States and the White House need to come to grips with this problem right away.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S ECONOMIC POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the latest economic news is out, and it is not good. The trade deficit for March was announced today. It hit the second highest level in history, \$43.5 billion more imports coming into our country than exports going out. What we are exporting are more U.S. jobs.

Why do we have such a high trade deficit? Rising oil prices and continued deterioration in our trade accounts because of NAFTA, especially Mexico as well as Canada. The March trade deficit with Mexico alone was a record \$3.9 billion. The deficit with Canada was the highest since 2 years ago, January 2001.

NAFTA is not working for the United States. NAFTA is the great sucking sound. We are exporting our jobs, not our goods, and we are importing more goods from Mexico than ever in our history.

Unemployment in America has hit a 6 percent high with almost 9 million people out of work now. Just today the Bureau of Labor Statistics put out detailed information on joblessness in America. Where is Ground Zero in the Bush recession? It is the Visalia-Tulare-Porterville area in California with 18.1 percent unemployment. Of metropolitan areas with populations over a million people, the highest unemployment was found in Portland, Oregon, and San Jose, California, 8.4 percent each. I just returned from the San Jose area.

Indeed, of the 272 metropolitan areas for which year-to-year comparisons can be made, the largest declines in employment were found in San Diego, followed by Tulsa, Oklahoma; Flint, Michigan; and my home community of Toledo, Ohio. Ohio is first in our Nation in lost jobs as a percentage of our workforce since George Bush came into office in 2001. No State has suffered more than Ohio from the Bush administration's failed economic policies.

The dollar is hitting new lows in part due to impolitic comments made by

our Treasury Secretary John Snow on Sunday talk shows. Is the Bush administration committed to a strong dollar? They say they are, but many experts are questioning the commitment in light of Secretary Snow's comment on Sunday that a falling dollar should help exporters. In fact, it is hard to make any sense of the Bush administration's economic policy. The administration seems bound and determined to start and hold a losing hand. All they can talk about are tax breaks for the wealthy.

But it is the consumer that is keeping our economy out of a depression. It is the middle-class consumer that made America great. It is the great middle class that fights our wars, makes our goods, delivers our services, and keeps our country strong. But the Bush administration wants to cut taxes for the super-rich, even though we know that that policy will lead to recession and more job losses.

In fact, look at what happened in our country after the first Bush set of tax breaks to the wealthy back in 2001: More and more job losses, over 2 million of them. They talked to us about jobless recovery. What is a jobless recovery? That is all we seem to have are jobless recoveries. Every time this group gets in office, they give us more unemployment. And, indeed, if the Members look back to 1981 when, under the Reagan administration, our Vice President, DICK CHENEY, was the head of the Republican Policy Committee here in the House, they did the same thing. They called it the Economic Tax Recovery Act of July 29, 1981, and do the Members know what happened back then? The minute the same kind of tax program was enacted, guess what happened? More and more and more job losses.

I came here in January 1983 to try to help dig America out of a hole, a job-loss hole as well as a deficit hole. It took us almost 15 years, and now we are back to the same mess we had back then. I say if it is strike one, strike two, and now strike three, they ought to be out.

The Republicans in this kind of trickle-down tax program are really going to gouge the middle class again. So I would say, Mr. Speaker, just take a look at the record. It is the same old story. And what do we get? More job losses, an administration that does not want to extend unemployment benefits to those who have been out of work. They say go find a job somewhere, except for one thing: More and more jobs are being lost every day. And the Buckeye State rings in number one in terms of job losses.

Mr. Speaker, America should do better, and America will do better a year from now when we elect a new President.

THE HIGH PRICE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS IN THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor of the House again tonight to talk about something that needs to be resolved, and we in Congress need to get serious about it, and that is the high price that Americans pay for prescription drugs relative to the rest of the world. And we see this chart here, and again I do not ask people to take my word for this. I would ask them to do their own research, but the interesting thing is millions of Americans are doing that research for themselves, and they are coming to exactly the same conclusion, and that is Americans pay far more than anyone else in the industrialized world for the same drugs.

Let us look at this chart. These numbers are average numbers, and they are from the year 2002. The source is the Life Extension Foundation, but there are other groups doing the same kind of research, getting essentially the same results.

Let us look at some of the drugs that we buy in large quantities in the United States. Cipro, we all know about Cipro after the anthrax scare. It is a very effective antibiotic. It is made by a German company called Bayer. We in the United States usually call it Bayer, Bayer Aspirin, for example. In the United States, the average price for a 30-day supply is about \$88. That same drug can be bought in Canada for \$53.55, but in Germany where they make the drug, they sell it for \$40.75.

Going on down the list, here is another very important drug. It is a miracle drug for many people suffering with diabetes called Glucophage. In the United States, according to Life Extension Foundation, the average price for a 30-day supply is \$124.65. That same drug can be bought in Canada in the same dosage for \$26.47, and in Germany they can buy it for \$22.

Let us look at Norvasc, another very popular drug here in the United States; \$67 here, \$46 in Canada and only \$33 in Europe.

Mr. Speaker, I am not here to say shame on the pharmaceutical industry, and perhaps I should, but the truth of the matter is it is shame on us. We are requiring Americans to pay anywhere from 30 to 300 percent more.

Last week I had down on the floor a little box of some drugs, a very powerful and wonderful drug. It is called to tamoxifen. Tamoxifen is perhaps the best anti-breast cancer drug ever discovered, but let me share this. In the United States, and we checked it out at the local pharmacy here in Washington, for 100 tablets, 20 milligrams, the price was \$360. We can buy that same package of drugs in Munich, Germany for \$59.05; \$60 there, \$360 here, six times more that Americans are required to pay for this life-saving drug.