

Environmental policy has a lasting effect on succeeding generations. The risk of causing irreparable damage is high. These policies must be developed with the goal of balancing the interests of labor, industry, and the environment, not with the goal of increasing timber sales.

It is amazing that the greatest conservation President in the history of our country was a Republican, President Theodore Roosevelt, while we are now seeing the greatest anti-environmental President in another Republican, George Bush.

Mr. Speaker, the former poet laureate of Colorado and singer/songwriter John Denver said, "To the mountains I confess there; to the rivers I will be strong; to the forests, I find peace there; to the wild country I belong."

NO ACCOUNTING FOR WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE IN GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, as we begin our debate in our committees on reforming Medicare, one of the issues that will be highlighted is the waste, fraud and abuse that has plagued this program for decades. But this Federally-mandated managed program is not the only source of wasteful spending in waste, fraud and abuse. Frankly, the entire government endures this rampant problem also.

In March of this year, GAO submitted its report on the United States government's consolidated financial statement for fiscal year 2001 and 2002. Not surprisingly, GAO could not express its opinion on these statements due to "material weaknesses in internal control and in accounting and reporting."

It is the accounting and reporting that particularly appalls me. In the past 2 years, we have seen what happens with poor accounting and reporting in the corporate world, but it appears that the accounting irregularities continue to run rampant in the Federal Government as well. These irregularities and lack of internal controls result in "hampering the Federal Government's ability to accurately report assets, liabilities and costs."

In addition, such problems prevent accurate reporting of the cost and performance of certain Federal programs. That is, we cannot even determine what our government owns, what it accurately spends each year. GAO goes so far as to state that as a result of these material deficiencies, that the amounts reported in the consolidated financial statements "may not be reliable."

So if a person wanted to see what the consolidated financial statements of a particular agency that reported, they might as well take a scientific wild

guess, because the agency charged with examining the accounting statements of the Federal Government cannot even express an opinion because record-keeping and controls are so shoddy. Yet, we ask the private sector to keep accurate records, and if they do not, they are held accountable.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot even accurately state how much waste, fraud and abuse occurs in this Federal Government. Conservative estimates range at 20 billion plus. The government penalizes private companies for poor accounting, but when a Federal agency cannot account for billions that it has spent, what do we do? We give them an increased appropriations for the following year. We should not do this without strict accounting of these Federal agencies.

The President issued his Management Agenda designed to emphasize that clean financial records are key to a "well managed organization." I applaud the President's efforts in this area as it is a daunting task to reform such a bureaucratic beast. The government requires its citizens every year to pay an ever-increasing burden in Federal taxes and users fees for expanding Federal programs. The least we could do is to accurately report how the money is spent.

We must do this in Congress, put in place accounting procedures so we can determine what the government owns, what it spends; and then and only then can we determine where the waste, fraud and abuse is and save, ultimately, the hard-earned money of the taxpayers.

AMERICA IS WAITING FOR AN ANSWER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a letter by the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) to Condoleezza Rice, the Security Advisor to the President, because it contains some questions I think are important.

The other night I was on Crossfire, and Robert Novak asked me whether I thought it would be a good thing or a bad thing if weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq. The show moved on before I could answer, but it was an interesting question. I think what he was getting at is whether I would feel better if I knew the President were right all along and that there were huge stockpiles of anthrax and nerve gas and missiles armed with bioweapons ready to be launched 45 minutes and a latterday Manhattan Project hidden under a stadium somewhere.

He was really asking if I would feel better knowing that I had not been misled or if I were rather nothing were

found so I could gloat over having been right when I said in September that I thought indeed the President would mislead the American people on the way to Iraq.

Of course, the answer is that I hope that no weapons are there to be found. I hope we are never in danger and that we were not in danger and that our troops were never in danger, and that Saddam Hussein, despite his aspirations, was not on his way of becoming the Saladin of the 21st century. Who would not prefer a world with fewer weapons in the hands of dictators? And if there were weapons, all Americans want them found and destroyed.

The President himself seems to have retreated from the claim that the U.S. was in imminent danger from the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Now he is speaking of existence of a weapons program, not of armed missiles and gallons of nerve gas.

Mr. Speaker, 11 young Americans have died in Iraq in the past 15 days. Fifty have died since the President declared the war over. A total of 180 Americans and 45 coalition troops have died. What does it mean that 180 young Americans have died in Iraq? Did they die to bring democracy to someone else's country or to stop Saddam Hussein's terrible human rights abuses?

Mr. Speaker, I am glad that Hussein is gone, and I believe that nearly all Iraqis are glad that he's gone. But I do not think that the young Americans who died in Iraq signed up to fight against tyranny in general. They signed up to protect this country and our country, their own country.

In light of this where do we go? If this were still the Clinton administration, there would be a highly publicized investigation coming out of every committee in this House, including Small Business and Agriculture. There would be calls for special prosecutors, for resignation, for impeachment.

President Bush puts great store in personal responsibility, and I believe the time is long past for the President to take responsibility and level with the American people. Did the President believe that Iraq was so likely to pose a danger in the future that it was okay to play fast and loose with the Congress, the U.N. and the American people to get approval to go to war?

Was the President misled by bad intelligence? Was he misled by advisors who had prejudged the facts, or was there solid, credible intelligence that just unaccountably turned up to be accurate? We need to know.

If the President's information was bad, we need to know what steps are being taken to dismiss those who provided and vouched for it. If the President decided that future dangers were so great that misleading us about the present danger was warranted, we need him to take responsibility for that decision. We need the President to explain to us and to the world why 180 young Americans are dead and why U.S. credibility is eroding all over the

world. I am waiting to hear from the President, the Congress is waiting, and 180 American families are waiting to hear.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC, June 10, 2003.

Hon. CONDOLEEZA RICE,
Assistant to the President for National Security
Affairs, the White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR DR. RICE: Since March 17, 2003, I have been trying without success to get a direct answer to one simple question: Why did President Bush cite forged evidence about Iraq's nuclear capabilities in his State of the Union address?

Although you addressed this issue on Sunday on both Meet the Press and This Week with George Stephanopoulos, your comments did nothing to clarify this issue. In fact, your responses contradicted other known facts and raised a host of new questions.

During your interviews, you said the Bush Administration, welcomes inquiries into this matter. Yesterday, the Washington Post also reported that Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet has agreed to provide "full documentation" of the intelligence information "in regards to Secretary Powell's comments, the president's comments and anybody else's comments." Consistent with these sentiments, I am writing to seek further information about this important matter.

The forged documents in question describe efforts by Iraq to obtain uranium from an African country, Niger. During your interviews over the weekend, you asserted that no doubts or suspicions about these efforts or the underlying documents were communicated to senior officials in the Bush Administration before the President's State of the Union address. For example, when you were asked about this issue on Meet the Press, you made the following statement:

"We did not know at the time—no one knew at the time, in our circles—maybe someone knew down in the bowels of the agency, but no one in our circles knew that there were doubts and suspicions that this might be a forgery. Of course, it was information that was mistaken."

Similarly, when you appeared on This Week, you repeated this statement, claiming that you made multiple inquiries of the intelligence agencies regarding the allegation that Iraq sought to obtain uranium from an African country. You stated:

"George, somebody, somebody down may have known. But I will tell you that when this issue was raised with the intelligence community . . . the intelligence community did not know at that time, or at levels that got to us, that this, that there were serious questions about this report."

Your claims, however, are directly contradicted by other evidence. Contrary to your assertion, senior Administration officials had serious doubts about the forged evidence well before the President's State of the Union address. For example, Greg Thielmann, Director of the Office of Strategic, Proliferation, and Military Issues in the State Department, told Newsweek last week that the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) had concluded the documents were "garbage." As you surely know, INR is part of what you call "the intelligence community." It is headed by an Assistant Secretary of State, Carl Ford; it reports directly to the Secretary of State; and it was a full participant in the debate over Iraq's nuclear capabilities. According to Newsweek.

"What I saw that, it really blew me away," Thielmann told Newsweek. Thielmann knew about the source of the allegation. The CIA

had come up with some documents purporting to show Saddam had attempted to buy up to 500 tons of uranium oxide from the African country of Niger. INR had concluded that the purchases were implausible—and made that point clear to Powell's office. As Thielmann read that the president had relied on these documents to report to the nation, he thought, "Not that stupid piece of garbage. My thought was, how did that get into the speech?"

Moreover, New York Times columnist Nicholas D. Kristof has reported that the Vice President's office was aware of the fraudulent nature of the evidence as early as February 2002—nearly a year before the President gave his State of the Union address. In his column, Mr. Kristof reported:

"I'm told by a person involved in the Niger caper that more than a year ago the vice president's office asked for an investigation of the uranium deal, so a former U.S. ambassador to Africa was dispatched to Niger. In February 2002, according to someone present at the meetings, that envoy reported to the C.I.A. and State Department that the information was unequivocally wrong and that the documents had been forged. The envoy reported, for example, that a Niger minister whose signature was on one of the documents had in fact been out of office for more than a decade. . . . The envoy's debunking of the forgery was passed around the administration and seemed to be accepted—except that President Bush and the State Department kept citing it anyway. "It's disingenuous for the State Department people to say they were bamboozled because they knew about this for a year," one insider said."

When you were asked about Mr. Kristof's account, you did not deny his reporting. Instead, you conceded that "the Vice President's office may have asked for that report."

It is also clear that CIA officials doubted the evidence. The Washington Post reported on March 22 that CIA officials "communicated significant doubts to the administration about the evidence." The Los Angeles Times reported on March 15 that "the CIA first heard allegations that Iraq was seeking uranium from Niger in late 2001," when "the existence of the documents was reported to [the CIA] second- or third-hand." The Los Angeles Times quoted a CIA official as saying: "We included that in some of our reporting, although it was all caveated because we had concerns about the accuracy of that information."

With all respect, this is not a situation like the pre-9/11 evidence that al-Qaeda was planning to hijack planes and crash them into buildings. When you were asked about his on May 17, 2002, you said:

"As you might imagine . . . a lot of things are prepared within agencies. They're distributed internally, they're worked internally. It's unusual that anything like that would get to the president. He doesn't recall seeing anything. I don't recall seeing anything of this kind."

That answer may be given more deference when the evidence in question is known only by a field agent in an FBI bureau in Phoenix, Arizona, whose suspicions are not adequately understood by officials in Washington. But it is simply not credible here. Contrary to your public statements, senior officials in the intelligence community in Washington knew the forged evidence was unreliable before the President used the evidence in the State of the Union address.

In addition to denying that senior officials were aware that the President was citing forged evidence, you also claimed (1) "there were also other sources that said that there were, the Iraqis were seeking yellowcake—uranium oxide—from Africa" and (2) "there

were other attempts to get yellowcake from Africa."

This answer does not explain the President's statement in the State of the Union address. In his State of the Union address, the President referred specifically to the evidence from the British. He stated: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." Presumably, the President would use the best available evidence in his State of the Union address to Congress and the nation. It would make no sense for him to cite forged evidence obtained from the British if, in fact, the United States had other reliable evidence that he could have cited.

Moreover, contrary to your assertion, there does not appear to be any other specific and credible evidence that Iraq sought to obtain uranium from an African country. The Administration has not provided any such evidence to me or my staff despite our repeated requests. To the contrary, the State Department wrote me that the "other source" of this claim was another Western European ally. But as the State Department acknowledged in its letter, "the second Western European government had based its assessment on the evidence already available to the U.S. that was subsequently discredited."

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) also found no other evidence indicating that Iraq sought to obtain uranium from Niger. The evidence in U.S. possession that Iraq had sought to obtain uranium from Niger was transmitted to the IAEA. After reviewing all the evidence provided by the United States, the IAEA reported: "We have to date found no evidence or plausible indication of the revival of a nuclear weapons programme in Iraq." Ultimately, the IAEA concluded: "These specific allegations are unfounded."

As the discussion above indicates, your answers on the Sunday talk shows conflict with other reports and raise many new issues. To help address these issues, I request answers to the following questions:

1. On Meet the Press, you said that "maybe someone knew down in the bowels of the agency" that the evidence cited by the President about Iraq's attempts to obtain uranium from Africa was suspect. Please identify the individual or individuals in the Administration who, prior to the President's State of the Union address, had expressed doubts about the validity of the evidence or the credibility of the claim.

2. Please identify any individuals in the Administration who, prior to the President's State of the Union address, were briefed or otherwise made aware that an individual or individuals in the Administration had expressed doubts about the validity of the evidence or the credibility of the claim.

3. On This Week, you said there was other evidence besides the forged evidence that Iraq was trying to obtain uranium from Africa. Please provide this other evidence.

4. When you were asked about reports that Vice President Cheney sent a former ambassador to Niger to investigate the evidence, you stated "the Vice President's office may have asked for that report." In light of this comment, please address: (a) Whether Vice President Cheney or his office requested an investigation into claims that Iraq may have attempted to obtain nuclear material from Africa, and when any such request was made; (b) Whether a current or former U.S. ambassador to Africa, or any other current or former government official or agent, traveled to Niger or otherwise investigated claims that Iraq may have attempted to obtain nuclear material from Niger; and (c) What conclusions or findings, if any, were reported to the Vice President, his office, or

other U.S. officials as a result of the investigation, and when any such conclusions or findings were reported.

On Sunday, you stated that "there is now a lot of revisionism that says, there was disagreement on this data point, or disagreement on that data point." I disagree strongly with this characterization. I am not raising questions about the validity of an isolated "data point," and the issue is not whether the war in Iraq was justified or not.

What I want to know is the answer to a simple question: Why did the President use forged evidence in the State of the Union address? This is a question that bears directly on the credibility of the United States, and it should be answered in a prompt and forthright manner, with full disclosure of all the relevant facts.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

HENRY A. WAXMAN,
Ranking Minority Member.

MEDICARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, both houses of Congress are continuing the difficult task of drafting comprehensive Medicare reform legislation this week.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to keep moving forward in the spirit of compromise on this extremely important issue.

Mr. Speaker, as time passes, the expectations of our constituencies continue to grow. We cannot return to our respective districts on the Fourth of July without some news of progress in the halls of Congress on a prescription drug plan for our seniors through Medicare.

Our colleagues in the other body have set the goal of reaching an agreement by the next recess, and I strongly urge my colleagues in this body to work on a bipartisan basis in order to reach a compromise.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan issue and we can not allow it to fail because of partisan differences.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN).

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Lincoln Echo Newspaper for 10 years of service to Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Last week, the Lincoln Echo celebrated its 10-year anniversary. It began with the mission of unifying Fort Smith's African-American community. When the paper was sold in 2001, its mission statement changed to reflect the changes in Fort Smith. Their new aim became to unify Fort Smith's diverse communities.

Their work has been noticed not only in Fort Smith but around the country, reaching over 25,000 readers in 29 different States. This paper has preached the importance of unity in our neighborhoods and continuously relays a positive message to all of its readers.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Napoleon Black, Allen Black, Jr., Cecil Greene, Jr., and everyone involved in the Echo's success. I look forward to many more years of success for the Lincoln Echo.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCHROCK).

Mr. SCHROCK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, the capital markets do not much care for indecision. When a company or industry is in regulatory flux, the industry is basically forced to be at a standstill. That is what is happening today with the telecommunications industry.

The Federal Communications Commission voted on February 20, 2003 to make changes to the way it regulates telecommunications carriers. Many of the changes were very significant, but the FCC is dragging its feet. These decisions will drive the short and long term future of the telecom industry. The industry, however, is stymied because the FCC, while having voted on the issue, has yet to issue the rules. This is quite unusual as texts of orders are issued usually within weeks or even days of the date that the item is voted on.

Here we are, almost 4 months later, and we still have no rules issued. It takes less time for a pig from time of conception to time of birth than it has taken the FCC to give birth to the written words embodying the agreements voted on in February.

The FCC needs to stop this nonsensical delay and issue its orders so the industry can get back to the business of building infrastructure and serving the telecommunications users of this Nation.

SAVE OUR FORESTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, the Bush administration is about to open up our national forests to a new phase of road building. Now, in preparation for commenting on this, I had my staff check because the last time I had checked with the Forest Service, they had an 8 billion, not million, \$8 billion backlog on maintenance on Federal forest roads. Hundreds of thousands of miles of road, crisscrossing the United States, the West, and yet they have an \$8 billion backlog.

Now, the Forest Service said yesterday said, no, no, no, the Congressman is wrong. It is not 8 billion. We just recalculated it. And I thought, well, this will be good news. It is \$10.5 billion. The Forest Service has a \$10.5 billion backlog on Forest Service roads. Of the 382,000 miles of roads, only 21 percent meet their maintenance standards; 50 percent are declared unsafe for driving; and 50,000 miles of roads are missing

from the data. They are unclassified. They might be there. They might not. They might be passable; they might not. They have not had a chance to go out and look lately. Yet they are proposing under the Bush administration to begin a new phase of road building. Well, how is that?

Well, we heard a couple of weeks ago they will uphold the Clinton Roadless Rule. And I had some folks in Oregon say to me, We cannot believe that the Bush administration will uphold the Clinton roadless rule. And I said, Well, there were an incredible number of comments on that rule, over 2.2 million, over 600 public meetings. It was hard fought, well constructed, well thought out, and it was very popular among most folks in the western United States. And yet, I said, it does seem unusual.

Well, it turns out, no, they are not really going to uphold the roadless rule. They will immediately put in place exceptions for the Chugach and the Tongass Forests in Alaska, 300,000 acres. Except 300,000 acres of timber harvest with roads in the Tongass Forest will affect well over a million acres of land with fragmentation and eroding and other problems, perhaps even more. And, of course, there is the expense that comes with that. And then in the Lower 48 they will have a national policy, sort of, except they will develop an exception process where Governors can ask for exceptions on Federal lands for the roadless rule.

What kind of national policy is this?

At the same time they are staring in the face of an over \$10 billion backlog, which they have no intention of dealing with because, of course, there is no money to deal with thinning or fire protection or even fighting forest fires, and particularly low on the totem pole is road construction. Every year the road maintenance unanimous money is stolen and used to fight fires, and they do not put the money back, and they never get around to it; and the backlog has grown by \$2 billion since this President has been in office.

The roads are unsafe. They are crumbling. They are causing all sorts of problems with erosion into pristine streams. They need culvert work. They will erode worse without the culvert work. And yet this administration wants to go on another road-building binge to fragment up the little bit of remaining roadless area in the United States. Just like Gale Norton recently said that all of the wilderness areas under study by the BLM would no longer be studied for wilderness value. The Forest Service, under the direction of this administration, wants to make certain they put in enough roads before this President leaves office, to fragment that up so those areas can never again be considered for roadless or wildness designation.

This is wrong-headed policy at the wrong time. This administration should do what it said it was going to do, uphold the roadless rule in all of