

the heat that hits the equator, and the oceans have a current and they move that, that heat is moved to the northern latitudes and that moderates temperature so that it is not that cold. In the northern latitudes, the high latitudes, since the ocean currents move back the other way, some of that cold is moved down toward the equator, and it moderates the heat at the equator.

As a result of those ocean currents, the Earth, as we know it now, 21st century, has a heat balance that we are used to. But that heat balance throughout the geologic time has changed many, many, many times.

So what are the observations of the ocean? There is increased salinity as a result of some of the warming trends that the Earth has experienced in the last 100 years, and there has been a warming trend. There might be some dispute about how that warming trend has impacted, but there has been a warming trend.

We could look at some of the impact of the warming trend since in the last 50 years we have put more CO₂ back into the atmosphere than what it took nature millions of years to lock up in the form of CO₂ trapped in fossil fuel deep under the ground. If you looked at a map of the United States at night, you could see all the lights, you would see one long consistent trail, which actually is about 24 hours, from Florida to Maine of automobiles on Route 95. From Florida to Maine we would see this crease.

You will see it in all the major cities, whether it is Miami, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, et cetera, et cetera, and New York City certainly, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Houston, Dallas. We are spewing more CO₂ into the atmosphere than the Earth's ability to absorb that and process that so we have that same balance.

We have seen a change. This kind of change in the balance or the makeup of the atmosphere has not been seen on planet Earth based on scientific ice core analysis for 400,000 years. So we see a salinity change around the equator in the ocean currents. We see elevated evaporation rates around most of the oceans because of the warmth, warming trend. We see increasing freshening of the ocean water in the northern latitudes, consequently changing the direction of these currents. And through these observations, we find some interesting perspectives that need more research on climate change.

WASTE FOUND WITHIN THE PELL GRANT PROGRAM

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

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, as another member of the Washington Waste Watchers, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight just one example of what we are now learning to be

the vast amount of waste throughout our Federal Government. Unfortunately, no Federal agency is immune to this waste, even those that are implementing the Nation's most important Federal programs.

One particularly troubling example of waste is found within the Pell grant program. \$336 million in Pell grants were improperly dispersed to applicants that understated their income in 2001. Let me be clear, American taxpayers spent \$336 million in Pell grants for applicants that were not eligible.

Not only does this represent a terrible misuse of taxpayer dollars, the expenditure of these funds denies the legitimate financial assistance provided by Pell grants to the thousands of students who truly need and deserve this help.

Mr. Speaker, we belong to a Congress that has brought unprecedented increases in Federal funding to our schools. Yet the administrators in my district continue to ask why have I not seen that money. I should not have to report to the administrators, teachers, and parents in Minnesota that the money they need to provide the quality education our children deserve is not available because it has been wasted by an inattentive Federal bureaucracy.

We have got to put an end to this harmful waste. Unfortunately, some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle would prefer to ignore this waste and simply complain about, quote, lack of funding for Pell grants. Rather than crack down on the ineffective bureaucracy responsible for this waste, they would like to create more funds by raising taxes on hard-working American families.

My colleagues and I in the Washington Waste Watchers have a more responsible approach. It begins with eliminating the waste in government spending and creating more efficiency in Federal programs.

The budgets passed by the House Republicans both last year and this year make great progress toward our goal of eliminating waste. Last year's budget led to a report that highlighted between \$85 and \$100 billion of wasteful spending. This year's budget instructed committees to reduce or eliminate the most egregious examples of waste.

Mr. Speaker, American taxpayers deserve better than to have their hard-earned paychecks squandered by an irresponsible bureaucracy in Washington. I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to join us in creating a better Federal Government, not making it bigger through more tax increases, but helping us to expand services for those who truly need them by eliminating the waste.

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

(Mr. WYNN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG AND MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2003

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

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, Monday December 8, 2003, was truly a historic day for millions of Americans, especially our senior citizens. During the long anticipated and much planned for ceremony at the DAR Constitution Hall here in our Nation's capital, President Bush signed into law the conference report on H.R. 1, the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003.

This event, attended by lawmakers from both sides of the aisle, as well as from both Chambers here in this building, was a landmark moment in the history of the Medicare program. It marked the culmination of years of effort by Members from this Chamber, as well as by some of our colleagues in the other body.

Make no mistake, the revisions to the Medicare program will provide great benefits to the senior citizens of this country who need the help the most. By signing up now for the new prescription drug discount card, seniors will be eligible for at-the-register savings of between 10 and 25 percent today. Soon, 75 percent of the drug costs of up to \$2,250 will be covered by Medicare; and before long, catastrophic coverage of up to 95 percent will take effect for amounts over \$3,600.

This new plan includes incentives for employers to keep their current employees enrolled as well as retirees under their existing plans as well as employers who will be able to include new provisions of this Medicare plan, the expanse of which is in their new plans.

In my home State of Alabama, the Medicare program will assume responsibility for the prescription drug cost of nearly 140,000 seniors who are currently eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid coverage.

Mr. Speaker, the revisions to the Medicare program are more extensive than can be covered during the time we have this evening, but there is also one important fact to remember: this plan is purely voluntary. Many Americans may well be satisfied with the coverage that they currently have, and they do not have to do anything. They can stay where they are. Senior citizens have the right to choose whether or not they want to enroll in this important new program. Unfortunately, with all of the great news about this new program, many American seniors have failed to take action at this point largely because there is still confusion about the specifics of this program.

In a survey conducted in my district just recently, residents were asked how they felt about the new Medicare prescription drug plan. Sixty percent of those questioned said that they actually approved of the measure, although many did have additional questions

and reservations about specific parts of the plan. Nearly 30 percent were not sure how they felt or had no opinion at all.

In a series of town hall meetings I recently had in my district in south Alabama, I received more questions regarding this plan and how it would impact the seniors in my district and their families. These questions and the survey results are not surprising. Such sweeping changes in a program as important as Medicare, which has basically remained consistent since its inception since the 1960s, undoubtedly has caused some confusion.

In an effort to help answer some of these questions and help clear up some of the clouds of confusion that exist, I will be hosting two senior citizen seminars on Monday, June 7, in my district in south Alabama. The primary focus of these events is to focus the attention on the Medicare bill.

I am pleased that representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services will be in attendance to help answer questions, as well as my friend and our colleague, the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY), who will also be on hand to discuss this important issue. Before beginning his outstanding service here in the Congress, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) was a practicing physician. And he is well qualified not only as a legislator but also as someone who has participated in the medical profession for so many years of his life.

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Moreover, I have representatives from the Social Security Administration as well as the Department of Veterans Affairs to answer other questions that are pertinent to our senior citizens at this twilight of their lives.

My hope is that these two seminars, the first in Fairhope, Alabama, and the second in Mobile, will do much to provide useful information to help answer questions that are so important and so timely.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage my colleagues on both sides of the political aisle to do likewise in their district, to try to reach out and help explain some of the questions that still exist with this new law. The assistance this program is providing is desperately needed by our senior citizens.

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

(Mr. KIND addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. TERRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Ms. CARSON of Indiana addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING OUR CONGRESSIONAL PAGES

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

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, it is my sincerest pleasure that I rise to recognize and compliment the congressional pages that will be ending their term of service this week.

The House pages have made up the critically important staff that has kept the House floor running smoothly for over 200 years. This 2003-2004 school year pages were selected from hundreds of applicants following an incredibly competitive process that scrutinizes their individual achievements in academics, leadership, and complement to social and civic service.

Page duties include delivering all types of correspondence and legislative materials throughout the Capitol and House office buildings, answering phones in the Members cloak room, relaying messages, flying flags over the Capitol, and preparing the House floor for session and many other duties.

These pages have spent their entire junior year of high school in Washington, D.C. living, taking classes, and working for the House. The typical day of a page begins very early at 5:45 a.m. or 6 a.m. to eat breakfast prior to attending classes for school at 6:45 a.m. At 10 a.m. their legislative work day begins and lasts until the House adjourns in the evening and sometimes into the wee early morning hours. These individuals, I think, Mr. Speaker, have demonstrated their true commitment to playing an important role in our Nation's future by learning and working here in the Nation's Capitol.

We honor those pages that have shown the same generosity of spirit and depth of intelligence and capacity for human service that is so important of our leaders. These exceptional students have consistently displayed their dedication, intelligence, and concern throughout their time as a page in Congress. They stand out among their peers not only because of their many achievements but also the disciplined manner in which they meet all challenges.

I compliment the administration and those that have guided these pages. And although these pages have already accomplished a great deal, these young people possess unlimited potential. The House pages are young men and women of character, ambition and initiative who have made a significant contribution to the United States House of Representatives and have learned well the

value of hard work and commitment. Their efforts and dedication are very much appreciated and our very best wishes bestowed upon them in all of their future endeavors that I am sure for some will include elected office, including Congress. I suspect all will be leaders in their community.

On behalf of the United States House of Representatives, we extend our thanks and our highest praise and congratulations to each congressional page.

AMERICA NEEDS AN ENERGY POLICY

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

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to ask the question, How long can America afford to not have an energy policy in place?

For many years we had cheap energy in this country. We had oil for over a decade at about \$10 a barrel and natural gas around \$2 a thousand, but that has all changed.

Today we have oil constantly popping past the \$40-per-barrel mark. The natural gas that we were putting in the ground today for next winter's heating \$6.47 a thousand. Last year the world was shocked when we put it in the ground at \$4.60 a thousand for the next heating season during the winter.

The question I ask again and again is when will we put an energy policy on the President's desk so he can sign it? He is the first President to continually ask Congress for an energy policy, an energy plan. Other Presidents ignored it. We have an education policy, but no energy policy. We have a defense policy, but no energy policy. We have an ag policy, but no energy policy. A transportation policy, an environmental policy, trade policies, but no energy policy.

I live within 5 miles in Pennsylvania of Drake's Well, the first oil well which was drilled in 1859; and when oil was discovered, it changed the world. It brought about the industrial revolution and the modernization of our society, and today the world consumes 80 million barrels daily. We use about one fourth, 20 million barrels; and our use continues to rise.

The alarming fact is that China and India are now growing faster in energy use than us and competing with us for foreign oil. And as the world economy begins to really grow, and it is, the demand continues to rise. Our problem is 50 percent of our oil comes from unstable parts of the world. We have no control over oil prices. We have no control over energy costs. And coupling that problem with the natural gas issue, which is new, just a few years ago it was \$2 a thousand. Today, they continue to sky rocket. Four years ago, it was less than 3, usually 2-something. Last year, we were putting in the ground at \$4.70 at this time of the year.