

do what was best for our State. The North Carolina Senate Republican leader Phil Berger once said that Ham "harkened back to another age in the Senate, an age when there was debate that focused greatly on the merits of the issues rather than politics and personality." Likewise, the editorial page of the Winston Salem Journal wrote, "If only America could have more political leaders like Ham Horton. Smart, talented, intellectual, yet in touch with every man. A staunch conservative who saw liberals as his opponents, not his enemies. A man who understood that politics is the art of working with others . . . In an era of politicians who rage with anger, questioning the morality, patriotism, and goodness of those with whom they disagree, Horton never had a disagreeable thing to say to anyone. He just took their arguments apart the way a chef carves a turkey."

At Ham's funeral at Calvary Moravian Church last week, the Reverend Lane A. Sapp noted that Ham acknowledged his Lord with a life of unselfish service, whether he was "serving as someone's lawyer, representing his constituents in Raleigh, serving on a church board or agency, or helping someone in need." Ham cared about helping others more than he cared about helping himself. Despite his difficult fight with cancer, he recently asked his daughter Rosalie to drive him to Raleigh for a Senate committee meeting. When asked why he did not stay home and rest, Ham responded, "I took an oath to serve my constituents and I must fulfill it."

Reverend Sapp put it eloquently when he said, Ham Horton was a man who took to heart Jesus' parable of the talents, using the blessings given by God, not hiding or squandering them for his own use, but using his gifts in service to others, whether it was caring for his wife Evelyn and daughter Rosalie; serving his beloved Moravian Church, his Nation, or the State of North Carolina. Ham Horton was a good steward of all he had been given, and he never became too important that he forgot the call to humble service. In this he emulated his Master, who once told his quarreling disciples that "whoever would be great among you must be your servant," Matthew 20:26.

As I said, Ham was my mentor and someone for whom I had the utmost respect. Anytime I had the privilege to be with him, I went away as a better person because of him. He was a great calming influence on me, and I will miss his wise counsel more than I have words to express.

Mr. Speaker, my thoughts and prayers are with Ham's wife Evelyn, and daughter Rosalie and his extended family. May God bless them and comfort them during this difficult time. The State of North Carolina is fortunate to have been served by Senator Hamilton Horton. He was truly a blessing to everyone whose life he touched, and there

were many. Ham Horton will be sorely missed.

FOLIC ACID AWARENESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CAMPBELL of California). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, every year in the United States, thousands of babies are born with serious, preventable birth defects of the brain and spine.

Spina bifida, the most common neural tube defect, is the leading cause of childhood paralysis. Anencephaly, a neural tube defect of the brain, is always fatal.

To bring attention to this preventable tragedy, we highlighted National Folic Acid Awareness Week as part of January's National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Since we were not in session at the time, I will take this opportunity to focus on the public health significance of folic acid and the important role it plays in the prevention of these devastating neural tube birth defects.

The value of folic acid became clear in 1991 when absolute scientific evidence showed that a daily supplement of synthetic folic acid could prevent spina bifida and anencephaly in most pregnancies. In 1992, the finding led the United States Public Health Service to recommend that women, beginning at puberty and continuing through their childbearing years, take a daily dose of 400 micrograms of folic acid.

It was in response to the Public Health Service recommendation that I authored the Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act. This act authorized the CDC to develop programs to educate health professionals and the public about the importance of folic acid consumption. I am very pleased that this bill became law as part of the Children's Health Act of 2000.

The Food and Drug Administration also responded to the need to increase consumption in the general population by requiring the addition of folic acid to enriched grain products like bread and cereal. It is important to note, however, that new evidence has found that the current fortification level of grains is not adequate for full protection against birth defects. Nevertheless, over the past 10 years, our efforts have succeeded in increasing the consumption of folic acid. This has resulted in a considerable decline in the rate of spina bifida and anencephaly.

The fact remains, however, that last year approximately 3,000 babies in the United States were born with preventable neural tube defects. Recent studies show that despite our efforts, only 40 percent of women ages 18 to 45 take a daily vitamin with the recommended level of folic acid. And Latino women, who have almost double the likelihood of delivering a baby with a neural tube

defect, have the lowest reported folic acid consumption of any racial or ethnic group.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt we have considerable work ahead of us in order to adequately protect our newborn babies from preventable neural tube birth defects. It is therefore our duty and our obligation to, first, increase our efforts to inform all women of childbearing age of the essential role folic acid plays in protecting their babies from spina bifida and anencephaly; second, to increase the required concentration of folic acid in enriched grain products as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the CDC, and the March of Dimes.

And, finally, it is our duty and our obligation to encourage manufacturers to fortify cornmeal products with amounts of folic acid that meet the FDA requirements. This recommendation is especially critical to our Latino communities, which consume large amounts of the unfortified corn flour sold in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, we have the knowledge and the ability to prevent the majority of neural tube defects in this country. It will be a tragedy if we choose to ignore this compelling public health challenge.

I urge my colleagues to work with me in the 109th Congress to support policies that enrich our foods with sufficient folic acid and to strengthen CDC's national folic acid education campaign. By working together, we can and will save thousands of babies and families from the suffering and the pain of neural tube defects.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S EPA BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise because I believe that working Americans deserve a Federal budget which is compassionate, decent, hopeful, and accountable to their needs. Yet the budget shortchanges many environmental programs designed to protect public health and improve our communities' quality of life. It cuts funding for environmental justice programs by 28 percent and cuts funding for clean water infrastructure by \$199 million. It also fails to address the more than \$300 billion gap in drinking water infrastructure, funds for brownfields cleanup and redevelopment at less than 20 percent of what Congress has authorized, and zeroes out funding to bring more green space to our communities.

These cuts, Mr. Speaker, have very real implications on the quality of our health and our communities. Let us first consider the 28 percent cut in funding for environmental justice. For decades minority and low-income communities have lived in close proximity to industrial zones, power plants, toxic waste sites. These are the communities

nationwide whose health and quality of life are negatively impacted most by environmental injustices. For example, 5.5 million Latinos live within a 10-mile radius of a power plant, and 68 percent of all African Americans live within 30 miles, the range where health impacts are most severe. Over 70 percent of all African Americans and Latinos live in counties that violate the Federal air pollution standards, compared to 58 percent for nonminorities.

The administration is allegedly committed to protecting low-income and minority communities; yet the budget is just one of several actions taken recently which puts this commitment in doubt. Last year the Bush administration proposed removing race and income as considerations of environmental justice. Removing these considerations, in my opinion, would significantly disadvantage those communities which are already disproportionately affected by environmental toxins and the least able to defend and empower themselves.

Most recently the Bush administration proposed changing toxic reporting requirements to benefit polluting industries at the expense of the health of this Nation's communities. In California, the State I represent, this would include nearly 60 ZIP codes, over half of which have at least 45 percent minority residents and large proportions of people living well below the poverty line.

This budget also shortchanges our water infrastructure and water providers. It cuts funding for the Clean Water Revolving Fund by \$199 million and funds safe drinking water infrastructure at 10 percent below last year's level. Yet our water infrastructure needs at least \$300 billion invested just to maintain current services.

President Bush's budget fails to adequately address the more than 119,000 confirmed releases at underground storage tanks, like the more than 1,000 in my congressional district alone, and that is in Los Angeles. In the interim the onerous burden of shoring up our water infrastructure and protecting supplies falls on our cities, our States, and ultimately the water providers.

The budget fails the one in four Americans that live within 4 miles of a Superfund site, including 10 million children under the age of 12. There are three such sites in my own community. In fact, EPA itself admitted publicly the serious problems facing Superfund site cleanup. On December 2, 2004, then Assistant Administrator Thomas Dunne noted: "For the last 3 years, we haven't started cleanup at some new sites. If we assume that EPA's budget will remain flat for the foreseeable future, construction funding could be delayed at more and more sites. Within a few years, unfunded cleanup work could total several hundred million dollars."

Yet President Bush's budget is \$100 million less than the request which was

made in 2004 and \$20 million less than the fiscal year 2005 request.

Ultimately, the budget forces our country to continue to fall behind in its commitment to clean water, further disadvantages environmental justice communities like the one I live in, and passes the buck to our States. The Bush administration is putting its own policies above science, above the needs of public health, the environment, and our communities, and yet this administration is not being held accountable. Not once in the last 6 years has the Bush administration defended its budget in front of the Energy and Commerce Committee. Not once. It is well past time for this administration to defend its policies on environmental justice, water infrastructure, brownfields, and Superfund sites, where failures such as these will be even more costly for our country.

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

(Mr. EMANUEL 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 Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has agreed to a concurrent resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 80. Concurrent resolution relating to the enrollment of S. 1932.

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THE ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CAMPBELL of California). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from California

(Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I have taken out this Special Order this evening because in the past several weeks and months we have seen a wide range of public opinion polls, including one that came out just recently from ABC News and The Washington Post showing that an overwhelming majority of the American people believe that we have an economy that is, if not in recession, in deep, deep trouble. For some reason, there is a perception that the U.S. economy is in the tank.

Today, in the East Room of the White House, President Bush signed the budget reconciliation bill, the first time since 1997 the Congress tackled a measure to reduce by \$39 billion the so-called entitlement spending which goes on without interruption unless the Congress takes action, and we did so in this body. It took, unfortunately, only Republican votes in both the House and the Senate to do it, but we were able to rein in the spiraling increase in spending. More needs to be done, but we took that first step.

Today, in the East Room, as the President prepared to sign that measure, he began talking, Mr. Speaker, about the tremendous improvement that we have seen in our economy. We all know that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but no one is entitled to their own facts. So for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to offer some prepared remarks about the state of our economy, the challenges that lie ahead, and the work that we have done and the work that we need to continue to do.

It was just last Tuesday night, a week ago last night, that President Bush stood right behind where I am here and addressed a joint session of Congress, delivering his State of the Union address. Since 1934, Presidents have delivered such a speech following the first of every year.

In much that same way that we Americans take stock every new year, assessing the present and looking forward to the future, the President came here to this Chamber to describe where we stand as a Nation and where his leadership will be focused in the coming year. President Bush spoke about the strength of our Nation, our economy, our troops, our resolve. He also spoke about the challenges we face, the war on terror, maintaining our leadership in the global economy; but despite these challenges, we face a very promising future.

As President Bush said, and I quote: "And so we move forward, optimistic about our country, faithful to its cause, and confident of the victories to come."

During the speech, Mr. Speaker, I was reminded of the optimism of Ronald Reagan when his Presidency began exactly 25 years ago last month. As my colleagues surely remember, pessimism in January of 1981 would have been