

unlimited amounts of their pollutants into the air for no cost whatsoever. And that is not only morally wrong; it's economically wrong, because when you have an asset, if somebody uses it up, they ought to pay for that; right? And there ought to be some limit on it. But right now when a utility burns coal and they dump the CO₂ in our atmosphere, an atmosphere we have in common, it's like a city park. And we would not allow a utility to back their dump truck into the city park and dump their trash in the city park. We would not allow some refinery putting CO₂ into the atmosphere to drive up to the city park and dump their sludge in the city park. But that's what we are doing right now by allowing unlimited amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. And that has to stop. We have to develop a limit on the amount of carbon dioxide that goes into the atmosphere. And a cap-and-trade system does that. When we develop a cap, we will put and guarantee Americans that only a certain amount of carbon dioxide can go into the atmosphere every year. It's common sense. We can't continue to put this into the atmosphere without very devastating ramifications. And we need to charge for that as well.

Europe made a big mistake. When they did this, they just handed these permits out, and the utilities took them and then took a huge windfall profit by charging rate payers for an asset that was just given to them. We can't do that. We need to have an auction of those permits to create a price for carbon and to use the market to determine who really needs them and what they will pay for that scarce resource.

And this is a resource owned by the taxpayers. The taxpayers own the atmosphere, not the corporations. The citizens of America own the air we breathe, not the utilities. The Congress has a responsibility to our citizens to take care of that asset, and we are not doing it yet. And when somebody uses that asset, they need to pay for using that asset.

So what we would propose to do is have an auction and let the market determine what the cost of those permits are for polluting industries. And the sooner we do that, the better; the more powerful impact we will have in driving investment to these new technologies, and the sooner that taxpayers will get a break getting paid by something that they own mutually. And that money can then be used for further research and development into these technologies. It can be used to help lower-income folks with their heating and cooling expenses. And it can be used as part of the clean energy revolution. And we need to increase that R and D. We are spending 25 times more in Iraq today than we are spending on trying to solve this energy problem. We spent seven times more on the original Apollo Project than we are spending today on this energy problem.

We have got to ramp up our Federal R and D as the private sector does as well.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that if people come to know the people I have known during the last year; the folks who are developing solar thermal; the folks who are developing clean coal; the folks who are developing advanced forms of cellulosic ethanol and advanced forms of biodiesel; the folks who are developing wind and tidal power; the people who are developing what's called the SIPs industry, the structural integrated panels, where they have built these panels now that you can build a house with them and you can reduce your usage by 40 percent at no additional cost; the people who are developing the plug-in hybrid car, these are the Americans that we need to listen to and have confidence in that they are going to solve this problem. And that is why in the next few weeks in this Chamber I hope we will pass an energy bill that is as bold and as visionary and as optimistic as Kennedy's original Apollo Project. And America deserves nothing less than that because we are just as capable, we are just as smart, and we are just as technologically ambitious as we were in the 1960s. And if we do that, America will produce. It is our destiny. The New Apollo Energy Act will solve these problems and grow our economy at the same time.

□ 2315

FOOD SAFETY AND PRODUCT RECALL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for the remainder of the time until midnight.

Mr. BURGESS. This evening I come to the floor to talk about a growing and disturbing trend of food and consumer product safety recalls, and this danger is very real. The danger has been widely documented and discussed in the media. It's been widely documented and discussed in committee hearings, in our committee, the Committee on Energy and Commerce, discussed around the water cooler at work, kitchen tables around the country, and almost nightly on the "Lou Dobbs Show."

And what does this mean, recall after recall after recall all summer long? What does this mean for average Americans? It means that parents are afraid that their children are playing with lead-contaminated train sets. It means that parents are afraid that magnets or toys and charms may cause internal damage if their child accidentally swallows them. It means that families are afraid that the food they feed their pets may actually have plastic in it. It means that people are afraid that their toothpaste may contain antifreeze. It means that people are afraid that the

fish they serve to their families may contain dangerous levels of antibiotics.

It is seemingly without end, and people are afraid about the source of their products and the dangers, and rightfully so.

People are afraid. They're afraid of the defective products being imported into our country. And, Mr. Speaker, it seems like almost all of the trouble focuses around a single country, the People's Republic of China.

Consumer health and well-being are endangered on two fronts: the food we eat, the goods we use.

I want to use some of my time to discuss both fronts and what we in Congress are doing and should be doing to protect American families from harmful products.

First, considering the issue of consumer product safety recalls, it seems like the Nation has turned its attention on to this issue. Every time you turn on the TV, you open a newspaper, you learn about yet another consumer product safety recall.

People are generally concerned about the issue of recalls; and many people, myself included, are concerned about the source of the recalls since it appears that the majority of the recalls are coming from the People's Republic of China.

Just last night, nine new recalls alone were announced, including recalled products that had lead-contaminated paint on their toys. As a parent, as a physician, one recall was extremely disturbing. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, an e-mail notification that I received last night read: "Spin Master Recalls Aqua Dots—Children Became Unconscious After Swallowing the Beads." It's a pretty innocent looking toy, and if my kids were little, I'm sure they would have loved this toy. It looks innocent. But this product is truly a wolf in sheep's clothing. And the recall notification, I encourage everyone to sign up for the notification at www.cpsc.gov, the Web site listed the injuries caused by these beads. And I quote: "The Consumer Product Safety Commission has received two reports over the last several days of children swallowing Aqua Dots. A 20-month-old child swallowed several dozen beads, he became dizzy, vomited several times before slipping into a comatose state for a period of time, was hospitalized, and has since recovered. A second child also vomited and slipped into a comatose state and was hospitalized for 5 days."

This morning it was reported in the Dallas Morning News, my local newspaper, and other news outlets, that Aqua Dots were linked to rohypnol. Now, you may have heard of rohypnol in the past. Rohypnol gained some notoriety as the "date rape" drug. And according to ABC news, scientists say a chemical coating on the beads, when ingested, metabolizes rohypnol, the so-called date rape drug, gamma hydroxy butyrate, GHB. When eaten, the compound made from common and easily

available ingredients can induce unconsciousness, seizures, drowsiness, coma and death.

While it is not yet clear how this chemical wound up in a child's product, it is clear where it was made: in the People's Republic of China. In fact, eight out of the nine recalled products announced just last night were from China. The other recalled product was from Mexico.

Mr. Speaker, Christmas is coming. Christmas lights, Christmas sounds, Christmas music, Christmas shopping. I cannot help but think there would be a huge market for a "Made in America" label on the toys and goods parents and consumers are out looking for this Christmas season. I encourage retailers to stock as many "Made in America" products as they can. You might even make it in Texas and put a little Texas flag on there. I bet that would be a big seller.

The majority of the products that are being recalled this year were made in China. And, Mr. Speaker, quite honestly, I've made a decision. I'm treating that "Made in China" label as a warning label, and I've made a personal decision to try not to buy anything made in China, although it's extremely hard given the penetration that Chinese goods have in our consumer markets. Given all the circumstances, it seems like the right thing to do, the safe thing to do for my family. I feel certain that other American families have made similar decisions. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I bet the Lou Dobbs family is one of those families.

Now, this concern about imported products is real and has been substantiated with real data. The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, which is tasked with the job of trying to safeguard our society from unreasonable risk of injury and death associated with consumer products, informed me that in fiscal year 2007, a record-breaking 472 consumer products were recalled for safety reasons. Of the 472 recalls, 60 percent were manufactured in the People's Republic of China. Mr. Speaker, 60 percent of all recalled products this past year were imported from China.

Furthermore, of the 472 total consumer product recalls, 61 of those recalls affected our children, our most innocent and vulnerable members of society. Sixty-one consumer products were toys. And how many of those products were manufactured in the Republic of China, you might ask? Well, I'm glad you asked, Mr. Speaker, because that figure is even more staggering. The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated that over 90 percent of the toy recalls were made in China. So I guess we really shouldn't have been too surprised last night when eight out of the nine listed recalls were manufactured in China. This is now clearly becoming a common business practice, part of the business model for Chinese toys.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm just a simple country doctor, and I don't pretend to

understand everything that goes on up here in Washington; but I am asking what we in Washington can do to help Americans protect themselves and their families. Let's look at just a few of the product recalls from the month of October.

For the safety of our families, we've got to get to the bottom of the cause behind all of these recalls. I am on the Commerce Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over this issue; and our committee is investigating and working on the problem. And over the next several weeks, we're going to be working on additional legislation on the issue. We have passed several bills recently dealing with specific issues of consumer product safety. We passed a bill dealing with the safety of swimming pools, and a bill that I was actually able to amend to include ornamental pools, since an ornamental pool had claimed four lives in one of my home cities in Fort Worth, Texas.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee introduced bipartisan legislation last week that will strengthen the consumer product safety system in this country, H.R. 4040. For those keeping score at home, H.R. 4040, the Consumer Product Safety Modernization Act, along with 50 Members, original cosponsors of this legislation. The legislation was introduced in the Commerce Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee, and we had a hearing on the bill. And we have been promised that it will go through regular order, and all Members will have an opportunity to actually comment and amend the bill as it goes through subcommittee process and the full committee process. This is the way, Mr. Speaker, it should always be, the way that we formulate and work on legislation. I certainly thank the leadership of the House Energy and Commerce Committee for being committed to the legislative process. How refreshing after the donnybrook we saw with the State Children's Health Insurance Program this summer.

The House version is a bipartisan effort, and I commend Chairman DINGELL and I commend Ranking Member BARTON for their leadership in getting this bill through the committee. I would also like to commend the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Commissioner, Chairwoman Nancy Nord, for her honest assistance for the bill. We asked for technical assistance and constructive criticism, and it was provided to us. The other Chamber asked for the same assistance with their bill, and she provided the same honesty. And for going to the trouble of providing that same honesty, she was, I think, unjustly criticized. The difference was that some of the Members of that Chamber and of our own Chamber didn't like her answers, so they called for her resignation.

Unlike those Members, I appreciate and I welcome the candor of the chairwoman. Because Chairwoman Nord

wasn't afraid to speak the truth about her own agency's needs, the House has been able to do what the Senate was not, craft legislation that will give the commissioner real tools needed to keep Americans safe from unreasonable dangers and consumer products.

Now, a week ago, the Speaker of the House held a press conference and called for the resignation of Chairwoman Nord simply for speaking her mind, exercising her free speech rights. In my opinion, this criticism was a disgrace to this body and an embarrassment to the legislative process. I often feel that an imperial speakership that likes to govern by edict really has no place in this House. But Chairwoman Nord withstood the criticism and stood in the eye of the storm.

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair once said the art of leadership is sometimes saying no. It's easy to say yes, and sometimes you just have to say no. Chairwoman Nord was a true leader and was able to say no to legislation that she knew would be harmful to the country. There are times we need leaders like that.

Now, turning back to H.R. 4040, the Consumer Product Safety Modernization Act, there are a lot of topics, there are a lot of issues on the table, including enhancing the commissioner's recall authority. And I firmly believe we've got to improve the U.S. Product Safety Commission's ability to notify consumers about dangerous products more quickly and on a broader scope.

I'm concerned that there is a large universe of people and associations that are not receiving the information about product recalls in a timely manner. As we all know, products are recalled because they have been found to have an element of danger, otherwise the recall wouldn't take place. The danger is to the consumer, and they need to be immediately discarded. Now, nonprofits, like Salvation Army, Good Will, Christian Community Action, located in my home county of Denton County, they provide invaluable resources to the communities that they serve. And often these nonprofits run secondhand retail shops to additionally help some of the neediest members of society. But I have been informed, when I've questioned the nonprofits in my area, that, through no fault of their own, they're unaware of many of the recalls when they occur. Therefore, the fear is that they may inadvertently sell recalled products to families and individuals. So I'm currently working with the Consumer Product Safety Commission to try to close that gap.

I'm also working with the Consumer Product Safety Commission on another idea, and we'll talk in more detail in just a little bit, but I introduced legislation dealing with food imports that will give the Food and Drug Administration a big red button to push to be able to stop dangerous foods from entering the country.

At our hearing this week, I asked Chairwoman Nord if she had the same

authority that my bill would give the FDA, did she have the same authority for the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the answer was no. So over the next couple of weeks I'm going to be working with the commission and the commissioner to incorporate that idea into the bill as it goes through the regular committee process.

□ 2330

While we continue to try to close the gap through legislation, I strongly encourage Members of Congress to sign up for product recall alerts.

Mr. Speaker, I know we don't address the C Span audience directly in their living rooms but if I could address the C Span audience in their living room I would encourage them to go to the Consumer Product Safety Commission website and sign up for the product recall alerts. It is free. It is easy. And it can save lives. If you have access to an e-mail account and to the Internet, all you have to do is simply go to the website, go to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's home page, which is www.cpsc.gov, Consumer Product Safety Commission, go to their website and they will direct you how to sign up for free recall and safety news. The website again, www.cpsc.gov.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission also has a Neighborhood Safety Network which is for organizations, civic-minded individuals, to help disseminate information about recalls and posters to members of society who may not be aware of the recalls.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what? This type of education can save lives. Unfortunately, though, certain groups of Americans, the elderly, urban and rural low-income families, some minority groups often don't hear about the safety messages from the government. So some additional outreach is needed. And it is critical, because when people go to yard sales, when people go to garage sales, when people go to Internet resellers, they need the ability to have this information and discern whether or not a product is on the recall list and is in fact unsafe for them to bring in their homes.

So, Mr. Speaker, although rules of the House do not permit me to address people directly, but if I could, I would ask that they help make their community safer by getting the word out, getting the word out about recalls. I am a member of the Neighborhood Safety Network, and we will disseminate information about the recalls via my website, www.house.gov/burgess.

Let's talk a little bit, in the time remaining, about food safety because that is an issue that is critical. And again it is in the news. Has there been any attention at all paid by the United States Congress to the food we eat? Well, again, I am glad you asked because there has been a lot of attention paid in Congress regarding the safety of the food we eat. On the Energy and Commerce Committee, we are pursuing

an aggressive investigation, and then we will move on to subsequent legislation, to try to correct this problem. As a member of the Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee, we have taken an active role in investigating the safety of our Nation's food supply. In August, a bipartisan team of investigators was sent by our committee to China to see, first-hand if they could delineate some of the causes of the problem. In the committee staff report, the investigators came to the following conclusions about their trip and their investigation thus far. Quoting directly from the staff report, "Number one, it would appear that the Chinese food supply chain does not meet international safety standards. In fact, it is responsible for very serious domestic Chinese food poisoning outbreaks.

"Number 2, the Chinese Government appears determined to avoid embarrassing food safety outbreaks in exports markets due to the damaging and potentially lasting effect this would have upon their 'Made in China' branding."

It seems like that has happened any way.

"Number 3, the lack of meaningful internal regulation of farming and food processing in China, the advanced development of the document counterfeiting industry, and the willingness of some entrepreneurs in both China and the United States to smuggle foodstuffs that do not meet quality standards, necessitates a much more vigorous program of inspection and laboratory testing in China and in this country and at the U.S. ports of entry than the Food and Drug Administration has been able or willing to pursue to date."

Now, Mr. Speaker, these are important conclusions, and yes we must not simply watch the problem worsen. We must be willing to handle the problem head on and transform the Food and Drug Administration into an agency that can fully cope with the importation problems of the 21st century. The Energy and Commerce Committee is doing their part to do just that. In addition to the staff trips to China, we are in the middle of a series of five hearings to discuss the topic, can the FDA, can the Food and Drug Administration assure the safety and security of our Nation's food supply?

What have we learned so far? Well, let's recapitulate. At the hearing on July 17, 2007, on this very topic, former FDA Associate Commissioner William Hubbard testified that in 1999, the Food and Drug Administration drafted a legislative proposal which would have given the Food and Drug Administration the authority to require foreign countries to take more responsibility for the food that they send to the United States. The agency's proposal would have allowed the Food and Drug Administration to embargo a given food from a given country if there were repeated instances of food being found contaminated when it arrived in the

United States. Well, that seems pretty simple, to embargo a given food from a given country if there were repeated instances of that food being found contaminated when it arrived in our country, when it arrived in the United States.

Countries that sent safe food have no reason to be concerned. They would be unaffected. But countries that demonstrated a pattern of disregard for United States law and safety standards are going to have to increase their oversight of food exported from their country.

Now, unfortunately, Congress did not accept this recommendation in 1999. And the situation with imported foods has gone from bad to worse to simply awful. Congress now has a chance to examine the problem and consider recommendations on how to solve the problem. Mr. Speaker, the world was a different place in 1999. It was difficult to anticipate the acceleration of foreign products, how rapidly the acceleration of foreign products coming into our country would occur. Was the safety of food products from foreign countries not a priority for Congress back in 1999? Well, I am sure it was but not nearly as much as it should have been.

Why we have allowed this problem to persist when we know how much harm these unsafe products have the potential to cause? We may not be able to answer that question, but as I stand here tonight, I will tell you, it is absolutely a priority of mine, and I hope a priority of my committees that we intend to do something about it.

On October 11, the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held the third part of a five-part series of hearings on the Food and Drug Administration's ability to assure the safety and security of our Nation's food supply.

According to testimony given by Mr. David Nelson, the senior investigator for the Energy and Commerce Committee, currently the Food and Drug Administration does not go over and see if the products that are produced in China are done so under the same standards that we expect those products to be produced in the United States. These are the products that are produced in China and then sent over here for consumption, the products that Americans will be consuming, and they're not produced under American standards.

The ranking member of our subcommittee, ED WHITFIELD from Kentucky, asked Mr. NELSON that, if he were speaking to a group and a member of the audience raised their hand and asked how safe is it for consumers to consume the products produced in China, he said, "Well, you're taking your chances on any imported food from China."

Well, we can't act like that. America has to have the authority to prohibit these foods from coming into our country if they're not safe. We have to be able to stop those foods on which our

consumers would be taking a chance. It's not worth it.

Chairman DINGELL, the full committee chairman, asked Mr. NELSON whether or not the Food and Drug Administration can protect the United States citizen from unsafe imports with the resources that they currently have.

His answer: "That would be an emphatic no."

Not just "no" but an emphatic "no."

When I got my chance to question, I asked him while they were over in China, they were there for several days, perhaps a couple of weeks, did they have occasion to eat anything. And he smiled and said, yes, they did. I said, Were you worried at all? And he said, yes, he was.

Fortunately our committee staff weathered that, put themselves in harm's way and they weathered that trip okay, although I think some of them did get a little ill, no one got severely ill, which is actually fortunate.

We had a witness come before the committee and during my questioning of Mr. James Rice, the Vice President and Country Manager of Tyson Food in China, he was just talking about the problem, I said, Do you look for problems? In your policies and procedures while you're in country in China, does it cause you to look for problems from Chinese suppliers? And he said, of course it does. And I said, Do you ever find a problem with a Chinese supplier? He said, oh, yeah, we sure do.

So when you find a problem with a Chinese supplier, do you get on the phone and do you call other companies that are over there working in businesses like yours? Do you kind of send out a little e-mail alert, hey, watch out for this supplier, he has some really bad chicken wings coming your way?

And the answer was, no, we don't do that. He explained to me that because Tyson was using local Chinese suppliers and the products were mostly for the Chinese market, they didn't feel that it was necessary to do that. So in essence there would be no dialogue whatsoever.

Mr. Rice told me that if there were persistent problems from one supplier, no one would alert the others to this problematic supplier and, probably more frighteningly, they wouldn't pick up the phone and call the local Food and Drug Administration inspectors that were in country and were responsible for assuring the safety of products that are going to be shipped into this country. There is no system in place to let other suppliers or, indeed, the Food and Drug Administration itself know that someone is significantly misbehaving, that someone is behaving in a criminal manner.

That's a serious, serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, it was important that I introduce legislation that relates to this 1999 proposal and H.R. 3967, the Imported Food Safety Act, was introduced a few weeks ago. And I firmly believe, firmly believe that the FDA

needs the ability and the explicit authority to immediately stop dangerous foods and products from coming into this country.

It's a pretty simple concept. Think of it like this. You got all this stuff, all this food coming into this country on a big giant conveyor belt. And when the FDA finds a bad apple on that belt, they need to be able to push a big red button that says Stop on it and immediately stop that bad apple from continuing into the line of commerce in this country.

The legislation that I introduced would give the Food and Drug Administration a big red button to push that would stop the food from coming into this country. The idea is so simple that I don't understand why it hasn't been enacted previously.

If this is enacted, the Food and Drug Administration would have the authority to embargo a specific food from a specific country if there were episodes of repetitive violation of United States food safety standards or if the food was found to be contaminated. Quite frankly, we've got to be able to stop countries from sending harmful food products into the United States. So H.R. 3967 will allow us to finally take control of the food that is being sent to America. And, Mr. Speaker, it would send a pretty strong message to countries that in the past have sent harmful products to the United States: Solve the problem on your end because we mean business on our end.

After a summer of recall upon recall upon recall, it is time. It is time that Congress take this matter into its own hands. I for one am no longer going to tolerate hearing a different news story every night about a new and dangerous product coming into our country from the People's Republic of China.

The Health Subcommittee of which I am also a member had a legislative hearing on September 26 regarding Chairman DINGELL's bill, H.R. 3610. Having reviewed this legislation, I think the intentions are good and I look forward to working with the chairman on this issue. Clearly I don't support every provision but I do support the spirit of the proposed legislation. I believe we need to look toward how other Federal agencies have dealt with this issue and whether or not it would be appropriate to give the Food and Drug Administration similar authorities.

According to the Government Accountability Office, 15 Federal agencies collectively administer 30 different laws related to food safety. The Food and Drug Administration, which is part of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and the Food Safety and Inspection Service, which is part of the United States Department of Agriculture, together comprise the majority of both the total funding and the total staffing of the government's food safety regulatory system. However, food safety laws vary greatly from agency to agency and not all foods are treated equally.

For instance, the United States Department of Agriculture, which has jurisdiction over meat, poultry and eggs, has an established equivalency determination standard for those foods.

What is equivalency, you might ask? I'm glad you did ask.

On October 11 at the third Oversight and Investigation hearing on the FDA's ability to assure the safety and security of our Nation's food supply, the Undersecretary for Food Safety at the United States Department of Agriculture, Dr. Richard Raymond, gave the following definition:

"Equivalency is the foundation of our system of imports. It recognizes that an exporting country can provide an appropriate level of food safety, even if those measures are different from those applied here at home. The Food Safety and Inspection Service has always required an assessment of foreign inspection systems before those nations can export their products to the United States. This prior review is mandated by our laws, which originally required that a foreign system be 'equal to' our system before the foreign product can be admitted."

□ 2345

He further went on to state, "An exporting country has the burden of proving that its system is equivalent to our system if that country wishes to export that product to the United States."

Now I understand, I understand that applying this system of equivalency that is currently employed by the United States Department of Agriculture, implying that more stringent requirement to the Food and Drug Administration, which, in fairness, has about an 80 percent jurisdiction of all food compared to the roughly 20 percent of the United States Department of Agriculture, that is going to be hard. That is going to be difficult.

Currently, only 33 countries are eligible to ship meat and/or poultry products to the United States. If the exact standard that the United States Department of Agriculture employs was used by the Food and Drug Administration, it would drastically change and some people would even say it would cripple the food import system if, if there were not enough resources to support it. That's why the resource aspect, the staffing aspect becomes so critical.

Mr. Speaker, former Speaker Newt Gingrich in his book on Transformation lists as his second principle of transformation: Real change requires real change. This is a time for real change. This system should be drastically altered. Consider this: In 2005, 15 percent of the overall volume of U.S. food consumption was imported. Between 1996 and 2006, the amount of U.S. imports of agriculture and seafood products from all countries increased by 42 percent. In the last decade, the volume of FDA regulated imports has tripled. Chinese imports to the United States have increased more rapidly

than the global average, and between the years of 1996 to 2006 the volume of import of Chinese agriculture and seafood products increased by 346 percent. China is now the third largest exporter of agriculture and seafood products to the United States, only behind our neighbor to the north and our neighbor to the south.

So perhaps our food import system should, should undergo real change. It should undergo significant change. The Food and Drug Administration was created in a time when we were still domestically growing the majority of our foods here in this country. We have got real issues here at home to deal with regarding our food regulatory system, but at least we have a regulatory system here in this country to deal with the problem.

This is not the case for all the countries from which we receive food. It seems that it would be common sense that we would only import food from a country if they can prove that their products are as safe as ours. Yet, only the United States Department of Agriculture can require this.

Let's think about this for a minute: USDA, 20 percent; FDA, 80 percent stringent controls on the 20 percent far less stringent controls on the 80 percent. Kind of seems like an imbalance, Mr. Speaker. Now it seems to me to be very arbitrary that the system the United States Department of Agriculture can employ is so much tougher than what the Food and Drug Administration can employ.

At the end of the day the American consumer doesn't know whether that food has been checked and regulated by USDA or FDA. The final common pathway, the end target is the kitchen table. When it goes from farm to fork, people don't consider what regulatory agency has had jurisdiction over that food, especially if it came from another country. We don't discriminate as Americans about the food, where it comes from and which agency has the regulatory control over that food. You know, it's almost a little curious that Congress does. Congress set forth dual standards and Congress must have a candid conversation and discussion with itself on whether or not we need to make these two systems, the United States Department of Agriculture 20 percent, Food and Drug Administration, 80 percent, whether or not we need to make those two jurisdictions perhaps more comparable.

Now Chairman DINGELL's food safety bill is tentatively scheduled to be marked up at both the subcommittee level and the full committee level later this month. I don't know if we will have time. I hope we are able to do it before the end of the year, but the legislative year is rapidly passing us by with each successive day and I hope that we can get that work done because I think it is critically important. It's my goal to encourage this frank conversation at the committee level, and hopefully Members on both sides of

the dais will continue to have input on this critically important issue.

As we all know, this system, our system works best, and we have the most effective legislation if our bills are allowed to go through the normal process, if they are allowed to go through regular order. I implore the leadership, implore the leadership to allow this important piece of legislation to go through the normal process. Don't rush it through, don't jam it through. We saw what happened to the State Children's Health Insurance Program when that process was circumvented. Did we save any time delivering a State Children's Health Insurance Program to the children of America by jamming it through at the end of July and jamming it through in September and trying to jam it through in the early part of October? No. We didn't save any time. We are now 2 months passed the time that we should have reauthorized that legislation and, quite frankly, no resolution is in sight. That is no way to run an airline, that is no way to run the United States Congress.

I implore the leadership, let's stick to the regular legislative process and let this legislation work its way through the committee. Let it be improved by the committee. There's some of the best and brightest minds in the United States Congress that sit on both sides of the dais on the Energy and Commerce Committee. Some of the biggest brain firepower in this Congress sits on that committee. Don't circumvent the committee process, don't cut them out of the process. You don't serve the American peoples' interests when you do that, you don't serve congressional interests when you do that. Quite frankly, leadership does itself a huge disservice when it continues to do that. You're not scoring points politically and certainly not scoring points with the American people.

So let's not allow the issue of protecting our families from harmful and dangerous goods coming in from other countries to become a debate of one political party versus the other. It's something that I am certain holds resonance in the minds of us all. Realistically, we do our best work when we work together, and that is that the American people realistically sent us here to do. We need to work together effectively, solve this crisis now. It ought to be a priority for everyone in this body, regardless of their political party.

Just this week the President's working group on Import Safety presented their proposal to both the President and Congress. I wish the working group had been able to get their proposal together at a little bit earlier date, but better late than never. I do believe they have presented many sound policies, many sound ideas, and we should incorporate some of these ideas when we are formulating our own legislation.

I am still reviewing that group's findings. They are certainly voluminous, and have recently come to us. I was

pleased to read that they would also like to see a legislative proposal that could give the Food and Drug Administration additional authority for preventive controls for high risk foods from high risk countries. If you would like to read their proposal for yourself, I encourage you to visit their website at www.importsafety.gov.

Mr. Speaker, you might ask, is there a dark side, is there a downside to all of this that we have been talking about tonight? Of course, the answer to that is yes. We always, we always in this Congress, have to be cautious about crossing the line and approaching or pushing that ever-expanding reach and grasp of the Federal Government in places it doesn't belong. But, you know, that is one of the basic activities that Americans expect out of their Federal Government, and that is to ensure the safety of the food supply and ensure the safety of the products that come into this country from other countries.

The last thing we want is for the Federal Government to control every little aspect of things that we pick up off our grocers' and stores' shelves, but it is a balancing act, as always, and we have to be always vigilant and be always cognizant of that fact.

We also must be vigilant in restoring safety and trust back into the foods we eat and the products we use. I believe that H.R. 3967, the Food Import and Safety Improvement Act of 2007, will further that goal, will further that purpose, as will the enhanced recall authority for the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission that we talked about a little earlier tonight.

Compromising the safety of the foods that we put on our tables must not ever be an option for this Congress. Compromising the consumer products that we buy for our families must never be an option, must never be an optional activity, for this Congress. Compromising the security of Americans cannot be an option. Compromising cannot be an option because we simply lack the power or lack the political will to exercise that power.

Remember the big red stop button. H.R. 3967 gives us the power to protect Americans by stopping things before they get into this country. We can no longer sit back and continue to allow harmful products to reach our homes. All Americans, all Americans, and I include myself, have the choice to take a stance individually and simply not buy products that come from a country that serially violates our safety standards. And we have talked about that country several times tonight, the People's Republic of China, because they have not proven that their products are safe, and, over and over again, we hear and see the news reports that their products are not safe.

But we have got to go further than that. Stricter rules are necessary. It is up to this Congress, it is up to this Congress, to step up, take the necessary legislative activities under their

control, and do what is right for the American people.

Mr. Speaker, you have been very indulgent, and I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of business in the State.

Ms. GIFFORDS (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today and November 9 on account of personal business.

Mr. LEVIN (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today after 11:30 a.m.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. McDERMOTT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFazio, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HOLT, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. FOXX) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, November 14 and 15.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, November 14 and 15.

Mr. GINGREY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas, for 5 minutes, November 13.

Ms. FOXX, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania, for 5 minutes, today.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Ms. Lorraine C. Miller, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 2602. An act to name the Department of Veterans Affairs medical facility in Iron Mountain, Michigan, as the "Oscar G. John-

son Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility".

H.R. 3043. An act making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

A BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Lorraine C. Miller, Clerk of the House reports that on November 6, 2007 she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill.

H.R. 2546. To designate the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Asheville, North Carolina, as the "Charles George Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center".

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 56 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, November 9, 2007, at 9 a.m.

EXPENDITURE REPORTS CONCERNING OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL

Reports concerning the foreign currencies and U.S. dollars utilized for Speaker-Authorized Official Travel during the third quarter of 2007, pursuant to Public Law 95-384 are as follows:

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, LUCY HEENAN, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN AUG. 12 AND AUG. 23, 2007

Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem ¹		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²
Lucy Heenan	8/12	8/14	Morocco		722.74		(³)				
	8/14	8/16	Ghana		538.00		(³)				
	8/16	8/16	Liberia				(³)				
	8/16	8/18	Ghana		538.00		(³)				
	8/18	8/21	Uganda		1,029.00		(³)				
	8/21	8/22	Kenya		318.00		(³)				
	8/22	8/23	Spain		465.64		(³)				
Committee total					3,611.38			4,293.35			

¹ Per diem constitutes lodging and meals.

² If foreign currency is used, enter U.S. dollar equivalent; if U.S. currency is used, enter amount expended.

³ Military air transportation.

⁴ Miscellaneous embassy costs.

LUCY HEENAN, Oct. 31, 2007.

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN JULY 1 AND SEPT. 30, 2007

Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem ¹		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²
Hon. Charles W. Boustany, Jr.	8/27	8/29	Kuwait		818.49		9,029.05				9,847.54
Hon. Adrian Smith	8/27	8/29	Sudan (Chad)		872.14						
	8/29	8/30	Tunisia		289.00						
	8/30	8/30	Algeria		149.00						
	8/31	9/1	Ethiopia		300.00						
Keith Jones	9/1	9/3	Dubai		1,419.00		13,495.97				16,525.11
	9/20	9/21	Canada		341.66		435.61				777.27
Committee total					4,189.29		22,960.63				27,149.92

¹ Per diem constitutes lodging and meals.

² If foreign currency is used, enter U.S. dollar equivalent; if U.S. currency is used, enter amount expended.

COLLIN C. PETERSON, Chairman, Nov. 1, 2007.