Several weeks ago we had a resolution before the House at the time, which passed this House, which said to the President that he should not be committing our troops to Bosnia or that the peace process should not be based on the assumption that we would promise to send ground troops to Bosnia. That passed this House by a significant majority.

Shortly thereafter, several days or a week later, we had a second resolution expressing our concern that we should not deploy troops to Bosnia without the President coming before the Congress and making that appropriate request. Neither of these resolutions have been adhered to by our President.

As we stand here this evening, we know that troops have already been deployed, and, in my opinion, we have put the cart before the horse. We have sent troops to Bosnia, ground troops, without having established the compelling interests and the necessary reasons why we should be deploying troops to that area of conflict of the world.

My great concerns primarily rest with the fact that it seems to me that the real reason why we have troops in that area of the world at this moment is because of a relatively casual offhand promise made by our President over a year ago which, in fact, committed that if a peace accord were subsequently to be reached, that he, in fact, would enforce that peace accord with the use of American troops, risking putting our troops in harm's way. The problem with such a policy on such a serious issue is that the promise was made before a peace accord was reached. The promise was made without the benefits of knowing the full extent of that peace accord, without knowing the serious risks involved with deploying troops in that area, because the peace accord had not yet been formulated and without knowing how sincere the parties were to actually going forth with these peace missions.

The problem with such a policy is obvious to me and certainly obvious, I believe, to the American people, as it should be. Never should we risk or commit our troops by way of a promise by our President or any President to anyplace in the world before, in fact, we know the full extent of the peace accord reached or any other accord on which we are basing the deployment of troops. It is foolhardy, in my opinion.

Such foreign policy must be avoided in the future, and we must, therefore, today stress our strong stand in opposition to the deployment of ground troops to Bosnia. It is not enough, in my opinion, to say there is a compelling American interest. That does not make a compelling American interest so. We have not heard, in my opinion, at least, the real reasons why there is a need to deploy troops to that very dangerous area.

I would like to just relate to what has occurred by way of some 40 or so years of history in the region of the world. I have little doubt, and I certainly am hopeful that with the deployment of troops in that area, there will come some stability amongst the fighting factions in that area. We can certainly look at the recent history to see that that will probably be the case.

In recent years, under communist rule, we have not had the civil discord and the fighting and warring factions that have occurred in the last 3½ years. That is not by way of coincidence. It took the presence of force, military force, and a forceful hand to maintain stability in that area. Similarly, I think the introduction of American troops into that area for this limited time may very well create an atmosphere of some civility for the time the troops are there.

The policy is already that these troops will be removed in a year. We are hearing now the President even saying perhaps these troops can be removed and brought home in 7 months. It suggests to me the real reason that these troops were deployed there was simply to do face-saving based upon a political promise or a promise that was made we would use our troops. I do not believe our President had any alternative once that promise was made, and it is unfortunate, because I think our troops are really being deployed there as a face-saving technique to the world to justify the promise that was made over a year ago, and that to me is the weakest of reasons why we should have troops in harm's way.

Let me also say that the arguments advanced by the White House a week ago sounded very similar to arguments advanced in the early stages of the Vietnam War. The arguments advanced in the early stages of the Vietnam War were that we had a commitment to try to preserve civility in the area of Vietnam, that we had a commitment at that time to protect that area. This argument certainly falls short even today.

In closing, let me just say, finally, there is no national interest, and I would support our troops enough, Mr. Speaker, that we do everything possible to bring them home as soon as we can.

CONFRONTING OUR NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maine [Mr. LONGLEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LONGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I come before the House this evening to inform the House that as of this afternoon at 3 o'clock, the bureau of public debt has reported our national debt is now $4,988,766,009,862.29. Interestingly enough, it is actually a decrease from yesterday to today of about $125,665,000.

But I point this out again to call attention to the fact that the preeminent issue now confronting this Congress is that for the first time in 60 years we are seriously questioning our need to address the elimination of the deficits which have led to the debt, which is now approaching $5 trillion. One of the reasons that I am appearing on the House floor this evening, and I intend to continue to try to appear each day until we can come to some consensus on a 7-year balanced budget, is because I think we have lost sight of the problem we are seeking to solve, and I want to call on the combined efforts of all of us, Republicans and Democrats, to find a way to bridge the gap between us on the issue of how we once and for all balance the Federal budget.

It is interesting to me that, and again Members of Congress are known for sending out news releases, and certainly I am no exception, but, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that I have a policy in my office where I really try not to send a release out to the news media unless we actually have something concrete to say. When we began several days ago obtaining the national debt figure every afternoon, I began a program, using the fax machine, to inform the media in my district. It is interesting, and I think it says a lot about the difficult challenge that we face in dealing with the public, that there is an opinion column today in one of the newspapers in my district that actually questions my informing the public about the national debt, in fact, suggests it is a waste of Government money and a waste of my time.

I want to read from the opinion piece. He said, ''I got a new twist on,'' in his words, ''the tax waste watch this week when Congressman Longley sent us a single-page fax proclaiming the daily debt watch.'' He says, ''Golly, I hope he watches more than that each day.''

I would suggest to the news media that this is probably the single most important thing we need to watch every day is that we have got to finally, once and for all, put an end to the national deficits that have built up almost to a $5 trillion debt.

Again, to put this debt into perspective, with Federal spending under any of the plans being debated in this Congress, ranging between $12 trillion and $13 trillion over the next 7 years, $5 trillion are existing debt, money which has already been spent for programs, is almost 40 percent of the total amount of money that the Federal Government will spend in the next 7 years.

Furthermore, when you look at our annual interest payments alone, of almost $250 billion, that amount of money dwarfs the difference in spending priorities between the Republicans and the Democrats in the House. Or, if you will, if you say there is about a $15 billion or $20 billion difference in what we propose for spending in fiscal year 1996, $250 billion in interest payments, minus the $20 billion difference means that we could preserve every nickel that we are currently spending on every program in Washington and have a $230 billion surplus on top of that. This ought to bring to the attention of

the public, particularly the news media that questions the need for me to call attention to this deficit and the debt, the fact that we would be far healthier fiscally if we had dealt with this problem before today.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, I have to comment on this afternoon's veto by the President of the budget. I can respect the fact that the President may disagree very strongly, very deeply with our priorities versus what his priorities would be for spending. But I would submit that it is a disservice to the electorate and to the Congress and to the Government of the United States for the President not to tell us how he would balance the budget. We have given him a budget. We have tried to tell him how we would do it. Frankly, as a Member of Congress, I would welcome the opportunity to see his version of how he would balance the budget in 7 years.

I think that if he would present us his alternatives, if he would stand on principle and tell us what does he really believe in the terms of his spending priorities over the next 7 years, then I think, for starters, we could start to have a healthy debate in this body over exactly what we need to do to balance the budget in the next 7 years.

□ 1945

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ENSIGN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. HINCHEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people here this evening who are concerned about the environment, and I will speak out in a special order concerning environmental issues. I want to address my remarks to the Clean Water Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Clean Water Act was one of the great victories of the past 25 years—a bipartisan success. It is often said it was enacted after the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland caught fire and the country saw how far the quality of our waterways had fallen. But smell also played a part. Waterfront property was no longer considered a plus in many cities: Rivers were open sewers. Parks were abandoned and beaches were closed. Lakes and rivers—like Lake Erie—were declared dead: pollution killed nearly all the fish.

The Safe Drinking Water Act was another bipartisan victory. The idea was simple: that everyone would be able to trust the quality of municipal water, and would not have to fear that their health would be threatened if they moved to a different community. No public health law was more important than protecting water safety. People recognized that Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act were also some of the best property rights protection laws around. No one wants the value of their property to decline because of someone else's unhealthy or unattractive pollution.

This year, both laws are under attack. We're told the Clean Water Act is too strict, that it makes our lakes and rivers too clean. We are told that the Safe Drinking Water Act makes our water too healthy. Can we not all live with weaker standards, dirtier water?

The advocates of weaker laws are confident their rights will still be protected. They can afford better quality waterfront property. They can afford to vacation in the best places. They can afford bottled water for their children. And they do not want to pay to protect the common good, to protect the drinking water and the waterways that ordinary people, ordinary families will use.

We saw the Clean Water Act under attack in the amendments that the House approved in May that would weaken the law. Of course, the Senate has not acted on that bill, and we know that if it ever reached the President, it would face a veto. We saw the Safe Drinking Water Act under attack in the riders on the VA–HUD appropriations bill. The rider that would have prohibited EPA from tightening standards in lead in drinking water—so important to children's health—was the most egregious example. But that attempt was thwarted too.

Does that mean everything will be fine? No. Money is at the heart of this debate, and the strategy now to attack clean water and safe drinking water is to cut off their money supply. If the EPA does not have the money to enforce the Clean Water Act, it will start to die a slow death. It will bring back the open sewers and flammable streams of long ago.

Let us get down to specifics. The VA–HUD appropriations bill makes sharp cuts in funding for the EPA. It would cut funding for enforcement of public health standards—including clean water and safe drinking water—by 17 percent.

We hear these days about the importance of letting States do the job. Fine—but this bill would cut funding for State loans to improve drinking water quality by 45 percent.

Do you like to see sludge in your rivers and on your beaches? Then you will love to see these cuts. The bill would cut 30 percent from the request for funding for waste treatment plants. Once again, this is money that would go to the States. The bill will make it more difficult for them to help themselves and to help their people.

We have still got some of those notorious riders in here too. It is nice to know the bill no longer prohibits EPA from reducing lead levels in water. But it does prohibit EPA from setting a standard for radon in water—even though radon is linked to lung cancer. It does prohibit EPA from vetoing use of fill containing toxic waste in rivers and lakes.

The VA–HUD appropriations bill covers only 1 year. So it is easy to say these cuts merely delay action a little bit. But put these cuts in the context of the 7-year budget plans that are dominating the news these days. Would enforcement funding increase during the course of those 7 years? Would States get more money to address their water problems later in the course of those 7 years? No. The budget envisions 7 lean years for environmental cleanup and enforcement.

They say Marie Antoinette said of the ordinary people of her time :Let them eat cake'' if they cannot buy bread. The cuts in the EPA budget effectively say if they want clean water, let them drink Perrier.

Should we be willing to pay the relatively small amount extra to buy our constituents—all of our constituents, not just the Perrier drinkers—the safest water available? We should. Should we be willing to spend the small amount extra to keep making progress on cleaner rivers, lakes, and beaches? We should. I think the average family wants to know that the children will have safe, healthy water to drink, and clean beaches to play on. I think they expect their government to give them that assurance. I do not think they want to see these laws allowed to wither away for lack of funding. I do not think they want to make that sacrifice so that some people will have a little more money to spend on designer water or on airfare to a clean beach.

SENIOR CITIZENS RIGHT TO WORK ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FOX] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, a very historic act was passed this week with the bipartisan assistance of Members of both sides of the aisle, the Senior Citizens Right To Work Act, H.R. 2684. This legislation will address the problem that current tax laws impose harsh penalties on senior citizens, especially those who continue to work beyond the age of 65. After years of hard work and valuable contributions to our Nation, Mr. Speaker, working senior citizens should not be penalized. We should be encouraging, not discouraging, seniors to make a better life for themselves. That is what our great country is founded upon, pursuing the American dream. As Federal legislators we must be committed to helping seniors maintain their independence and quality of life. That is why I was proud to speak to help support with my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats alike, H.R. 2684.

What this will allow, Mr. Speaker, is current law says that those seniors under 70 that are currently making funds up to $11,280, there are no deductions from their Social Security, but if they make a dollar over, there is going to be a deduction. Under this new legislation a modern approach was taken. What will happen is seniors, over the