floor on any given subject, but no other Member has that right? Which Member says that publicly? Now, which Member of Congress said a year ago, ''If you are innocent, why not appoint an Independent Counsel and clear your name?''

Well, our Speaker said that a year ago in regard to the Whitewater investigation. But he does not want it applied to him. I think that all laws, all rules, should apply to all Members equally, and that what is good for the goose should be good for the gander, and I am asking that the Committee on Ethics proceed with appointing an independent counsel to remove this cloud of darkness that permeates this House, and do it right away.

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

[Mr. WELDON of Florida addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

PROBLEMS WITH COMMON SENSE LEGAL REFORM ACT

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

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, the reason that I am opposing what is billed as the Common Sense Legal Reform Act or Tort Reform Act is not because I am opposed to all tort reform. I am not. I think what most people want is they want to see the courts that are clogged have that ended. They want to discourage frivolous lawsuits. In some cases they want to limit what they see as unfair recoveries and perhaps unfair attorney fees. They want to see the end to the occasional sensational judgment you read about.

The fact of the matter is this legislation this Congress has been considering does not do any of that, and it will not guarantee to any working West Virginian, any middle or low-income West Virginian, any lower insurance rate. It will not guarantee any better health care. It will not do that.

But what it will do besides is, it is going to say to the average West Virginian that you are not going to get any lower insurance rates, you are not going to get any lower health care rates, but you are going to have a lot harder time going to court when you have a legitimate grievance you need to litigate.

I wanted to be able to support the product liability, the securities limitation, and even in some cases the attorney's accountability act. but I cannot do it, for instance, when they completely change the way that there is compensation for the victim. I cannot do it, for instance, when they overrule 200 years of common law in this country to say that now the loser will pay. That has never been a concept in our society. Instead of a contingency fee, the loser pays.

I cannot do it, for instance, when punitive damages are limited so strictly that that working family that is hit by a drunk driver on Route 9 in the eastern panhandle is sharply limited in the punitive damages they can recover, or the victim who has had their lives ruined by a sexual predator is limited strictly in the amount of punitive damages that they can recover.

What happened to the States rights that are so important, and indeed we hear so much about in this body today? What happened to that concept of States rights, when the Federal Government now moves in and says the State of West Virginia does not have the right to protect its citizens the same way it used to? And perhaps the State of West Virginia differs from Tennessee, California, or whatever. This litigation does nothing to stop frivolous lawsuits. This litigation does nothing to stop that attorney that many people worry about maybe filing suit after suit after suit in hopes of hitting the litigation lottery. In fact, there are existing sanctions you can already use on attorneys in the Rules of Civil Procedure. Indeed, there are means by which you can file counterclaims for attorneys fees if you think the other side is acting improperly. But this legislation does not do this.

There is no evidence that this legislation will lower anybody's insurance rates. In fact, there was an amendment defeated that would have made it possible for people to go and find out exactly what the impact of this legislation would be on insurance.

This legislation even added an amendment that limits pain and suffering, so-called noneconomic damages, to $250,000 total. That may sound like a lot, unless you are the 20-year-old who is made a quadriplegic and live out the next 40 or 50 years with pain and suffering, for which you are going to receive an average of about $5,000 or $10,000 a year.

This legislation does not help accountants. That is one of the groups I was hoping in the securities litigation it would help. In fact, the bill that passed was even worse than last year's bill, which was a compromise version.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am going to wait until the Senate acts. This legislation goes to the Senate. I believe it will be tempered there. It is my hope it will be, it will come back, and then we will evaluate again. This is a case of reaching too far. There was a chance to get significant liability reform, product liability reform, but that did not happen.

I want to talk for just a second about the loser-pays provision. What that means is for the average West Virginia couple, the average West Virginian low- or middle-income person who has a serious litigation claim, whether it is personal injury, product liability, whatever it is, when they go to court, when they go to see their lawyer, the lawyer will say, ''I have to tell you even if you have a meritorious case, there is an excellent chance if a jury comes back against you, just by the thinnest of margins, you are going to end up paying the fees of the other side.'' You are going to end up paying the fees of the insurance company that is defending against you. That is quite a deterrent.

I want to speak for just a second about the securities litigation bill. That is one I thought I could vote for, but it, too, had the loser-pays provision in there. That is anathema to any serious tort reform. It also requires the plaintiff, the person filing the suit, the person alleging being defrauded, that they have to show intent by the securities firm. Not just recklessness, they have to show intent, which is an impossible standard. It does not separate accountants, as indeed we hoped it would, and indeed it keeps the loser pays.

Mr. Speaker, for all of those reasons, I oppose this legislation.

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

[Mr. KINGSTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

THE SYSTEMATIC ASSAULT ON CHILDREN

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

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, earlier this morning in the 1-minutes, several Members of the Republican Party came down and asked why Democrats were saying they are so harsh on children and why this would be true when in fact they have not hurt children at all in the rescissions and the budget cuts that they have already made and in the welfare bills and the nutrition bills that are coming to this House in the next couple of weeks.

The fact is when we analyze the Republicans' welfare bill, the Republicans' rescission bill, the Republicans' nutrition and school lunch bill, the Republicans' child care bill, and what we see is a systematic assault on children, and especially poor children in this Nation.

In the rescission bill that will be coming to the floor of the House next week, $25 million has been cut by the Republicans for the Women, Infants and Children Program. This means about 100,000 pregnant women and newborn infants will not be served this fiscal year.

These are women and newborn infants who have been medically certified to be at high risk of having a pregnancy that is not normal or pregnancy that might not be carried to term or the birth of an infant that will be low birth weight and run a much,