the home to our Nation's space shuttle, and I think it would be unwise for us to cut additional dollars out of the space shuttle program at this time.

I believe that there are other areas within the NASA budget, such as the Mission of Planet Earth Program that I believe last year had over $1 billion of unexpended resources, and the year before that, $600 million of unexpended resources, a program that does not have critical safety issues associated with it.

Specifically, we are not talking about human space flight here, we are talking about unmanned vehicles, unmanned satellites, studying the environment. A worthwhile program; nonetheless, a program that has clearly shown that it has extra money in it and a place where we could get the funds that we need to keep this program a success.

So again, I call on the Vice President to rise to the occasion and do the right thing and preserve our Nation's space station program.

AMERICA'S TECHNOLOGICAL EDGE IS IN DANGER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRABACHER] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday of next week on this floor will be a debate which will actually end in a decisive vote for the future of the United States of America. Unfortunately, the vast majority of all Americans have no idea that there is even a piece of legislation like that which will be debated in one week on this floor even working its way through the system.

There has been a blanket, overall coverup on this issue in what would be called the traditional media of the United States of America. The networks and the major newspapers have not touched this issue because they do not want the American people to know that a major decision affecting their way of life, the standard of living of their children, America's competitiveness, and the economic well-being and the national security of our country will be at stake with one vote. That is because this issue is relatively hard to understand, yet it is so vital that if the vote goes the other way, I believe this will be the first step on an escalator down for the people of the United States of America, because it will be ending and eliminating the greatest advantage that we have had as a country, and that is our technological edge over our competitors.

The American people enjoy a high standard of living, not because we work harder than other people. People all over the world, many of them work longer hours; they are hard-working people, but yet they live in poverty. They have standards of living that we would never accept in the United States of America for even our poorest person.

What gives us as Americans the edge? What ensures us the fact that we have wealth that is created in our country that can uplift the standard of the average person? It has been the technology that our citizens have developed and produced and invented over the history of our country.

America has been a nation of yes, hard-working people, but there are hard-working people everywhere. Most importantly, we have been a nation of technology which has permitted our people to increase their standard of living, to live high and above the rest of the people of the world. Even at a time when there is international competition with countries where the people earn far less wages, we can out-compete them and we can look forward to a bright future, if we have the technological edge.

But what is happening here next Thursday is a vote on the fundamental protections of law for American innovators, for American inventors, and for the owners and developers of new technology.

We have had basically the same law in the United States of America for 200 years. Again, most people do not fully comprehend that this has been a protection granted to Americans that is different in other countries that has enabled our country to produce this higher standard of living and this great opportunity for the average person. They do not recognize that because it is little known that written into our Constitution by our Founding Fathers is a patent office and protection for inventors. That is why the inventors were in the United States of America. That is why the great creators of that technology that produced all of the wealth that enabled us to live better, that is why they were Americans.

People came here from all over the world. Americans do not have any special trait. We just have freedom and opportunity and a legal system set down by our Founding Fathers that understood the necessity of individual freedom and individual rights being respected in order for the whole of the American people to progress.

□ 1430

And now we are changing the fundamental law in a very hushed manner so very few people know about it, the fundamental law that directs and protects the development of technology in the United States of America.

Next Thursday, on this floor, on April 17, will be a vote in which two bills will come head to head, one bill H.R. 400 and the other H.R. 811. It is a combination of H.R. 811 and H.R. 812.

H.R. 400, which I call the Steal American Technologies Act, will, if passed, open up the United States to the greatest theft of our intellectual property and our technological achievements in the history of our Republic.

It will be the equivalent of sending a message to everyone in the world to come and get our technological secrets and use them against the American people. It is as bad as that. That is H.R. 400.

That bill, what does it do? No. 1, and hold on to your seats for those of my colleagues who do not understand what is going to happen on this floor in 1 week, this is a bill that will mandate that every inventor in the United States who applies for a patent will have his or her patent published for the world to see after 18 months even if that patent has not been issued.

Now, what does this mean? From the history of our country, from the very beginning of our history, when someone has applied for a patent, when an American has applied for a patent, he or she has had the right of confidentiality, knowing that none of that information would be disclosed unless that patent was issued; and when the patent is issued, that means that person, that individual owns that technology. That has been a right for every American.

And what is happening now? Next Thursday we will vote to discard that right, that no longer, after 225 years of American history, that right, which has been a force for good in our society, will be discarded by a vote here on the floor of the House of Representatives because H.R. 400 mandates the publication of all of our secrets.

There will be no more industrial espionage. You heard about that. You have heard about people coming into the United States in order to steal our secrets. There will be no more industrial espionage because after 18 months, every bit of secret information about the development of our new technology will be sent to our worst enemies, people who want to destroy our country, people who want to destroy the American way of life, people who care not one iota for the standard of living for our people but want to pull those millions and billions of dollars of wealth into their pockets rather than see the American people enjoy the fruits of our free society.

This is almost unbelievable. It is almost beyond belief, until you hear people stand up and argue this case as if, oh, this is going to be good because everybody will know what is being developed and then we can all work together. All work together.

There are people in this world who are intent on not working together and they will be very happy to steal everything that America develops.

The second provision on H.R. 400, which will be on this floor in a week, is called reexamination. The publication angle of H.R. 400 is enough, is enough for us to say get rid of this terrible threat to the American people. But that is a future threat, I might add. Publication only affects the future technologies.

What we have discovered when looking into H.R. 400, and I did not know

this until several weeks ago, there are small provisions in this bill which open up the door to reexamination, which is the No. 2 provision, reexamination.

What does reexamination mean? That means now, today, and all through our country's history, when you are issued your patent, it is your patent and there is almost nothing someone can do to challenge your right because it is your property. It has been decided upon and perhaps only one other criteria can be used to fight against it in court.

Instead, H.R. 400 opens up a panoply of options for not only our big corporations but foreign corporations and multinational corporations to go at and challenge every one of our existing patents, not only are future patents going to be published before they are even issued, so that thieves can take away our future technology, the current technology that we have that gives us billions of dollars in royalties that comes to the United States every year. These foreign corporations that are paying royalties now will have the option, instead of paying royalties, to file suit and to interfere and to act and to call for reexamination of current patents.

Finally, the last and perhaps another just as equally important provision of H.R. 400, the Steal American Technologies Act, which will be voted on in this body on the floor of the House in 1 week, is that it, again, hold on to your seats, it will obliterate the Patent Office.

That is right. The Patent Office is written into the U.S. Constitution, and it eliminates it as a Government entity and resurrects it. Resurrects it as what? A corporatized entity. Corporatized.

What does that mean? That means there will be some entity that used to be the Patent Office and now it will be corporatized, something like the Post Office, Government but not Government.

This bill mandates, for example, that this new corporate structure will have business leaders on its board of directors. Now, what does that mean? I thought the business leaders were the ones who were going to be dealing with the patents. We are going to put the people who actually make money dealing with patents on the commanding board of directors of this company?

The board is also enabled to borrow money and the taxpayers are still on the hook. Patent examiners have been shielded for 200 years from outside influences. Patent examiners have never had a scandal. These hardworking public servants, like judges, have such power in their hands to determine who owns billions of dollars of wealth, but they have been shielded up until now from outside influences. Will they be shielded? Will they be shielded from this new corporate entity?

Let me add, there is one other thing I forgot to mention; the new corporate entity, according to H.R. 400, will be permitted to accept gifts. Accept gifts from corporations? Accept gifts from foreign companies? Accept gifts when they are making determinations about who owns what wealth in the future? What kind of effect will this have on the decisionmaking at this new corporatized Patent Office?

Mr. Speaker, this is a formula for catastrophe. This is a formula for the destruction of the American way of life, and I cannot stress it too strongly here, it is going to be voted on and the American people do not know about it. It is coming next week. There has been a lid placed on coverage in the mass media. We do not have shows on the network or in our major newspapers. They are not doing stories about this threat to each and every one of us. It is not there.

I have a piece of legislation, and the gentleman from California, DUNCAN HUNTER has a companion piece of legislation, H.R. 811 and 812, that go in exactly the opposite direction from the bill, from H.R. 400, the one I just described.

H.R. 811 is the Patent Term Restoration Act, which I have authored. Basically it restores a guaranteed patent term to the American people. If no one understands why we have to restore a guaranteed patent term, I hate to inform them, but we have already lost our right that has been with us since the founding of our country.

Our people have always had a right when they apply for a patent, no matter how long it takes for that patent to be issued, that there is still a guaranteed time period, 17 years, when someone would reap the benefit from that invention, either the investor or inventor, whoever owns that patent. That was taken away. That was eliminated by a provision that was snuck, and I repeat, snuck, into the GATT implementation legislation.

GATT 3 years ago did not require us to change our patent laws, but someone put that provision into GATT, and thus the Congress was faced with voting against the entire world trading system or agreeing to this fundamental change in patent law. This was a betrayal of the American people in the worst way. My bill restores the guaranteed patent term. So no matter how long it takes to issue your patent, no matter who is against you, once that patent is issued the American has a right to a guaranteed patent term of 17 years.

By the way, it was replaced with something that sounds pretty innocuous, like many of the things in these bills sound innocuous. The provision that replaced our patent term guarantee was a provision that said you are going to have patent protection from 20 years from the date that you filed. However, however, 20 years, all it really means is the clock is ticking against the inventor. If it takes 10 to 15 years to get an invention patented, for the patent to issue, that patent applicant basically has lost all of that time. All of that time.

No, we do not need the clock ticking against the inventor, we need a guaranteed patent term, which has been our right. That is what my bill does. The companion bill, H.R. 812, bolsters and strengthens and makes more productive and reforms the Patent Office and strengthens our Patent Office, instead of obliterating it like they do and corporatizing it, in H.R. 400.

These bills will come to a direct head-on-head vote. My bill will be offered as a substitute. H.R. 811, strengthening the patent system, will come right up against it and there will be one vote.

Right now there is an army of lobbyists going through this town contacting Members of Congress because they are interested in how they are going to vote. Unless the American people, unless the American people contact their representative, the major influence on how this vote will turn out will be lobbyists that are paid for by huge multinational corporations, foreign corporations, and yes, even some, many, of our major domestic corporations who are in league with these multinationals.

Mr. Speaker, we can turn this around if the American people do contact their elected representatives. That will make the difference.

By the way, interestingly enough, how do we communicate if we cannot get the news media to cover the story? I have tried everything. I give these speeches. I even have a web site, www.house.gov/rohrabacher/. That is www.house.gov/rohrabacher/. I had to go to the web site. I have gone to talk radio. Thank goodness we have democracy on the air. Thank goodness we have Rush Limbaugh and Michael Reagan and others, because the regular media will not cover this story that is so vital to the future of our country.

What coverage we have been able to get through these speeches on the floor, we have received letters, I have received letters and Members of Congress have received letters from all over the United States, from small inventors, people who are afraid.

The two most recent letters my office received, one was from a gentleman who is conducting research into breast cancer. He has made some breakthroughs but he is afraid to try to patent his discoveries. He is afraid of that because with the new H.R. 400, that would mean it would be published for the whole world to see, and he would reap no benefit from it. He is afraid, whether he should disclose what he has invented.

Another person who wrote my office is a person who has developed a new system of killing bugs. That may sound rather minimal to people, killing bugs. It is not minimal. We are pouring tons of pesticides into our environment every year, and this man has invented a new process that requires no chemicals, a new method of dealing with infestations of bugs in homes and in fields that would prevent us from being poisoned.

But he is worried. He has spent a lot of money in trying to develop this new process. He does not know if he wants to make it public through the patent system, because if he applies for the patent they will disclose this, if H.R. 400 is passed, even before he gets his patent and people will steal his process.

These are the letters coming to me: Breast cancer, things dealing with insecticides into our system. How is this going to affect our way of life? Can the Members not see just by those two examples? Who would have thought of those two examples before I said them? There are thousands of people all over this country who are inventing ways of making things better.

□ 1445

That is what Americans are all about. We are tinkerers. We are people who use our ingenuity. That is what Americans are all about. We are changing the fundamental law, and we are pulling the rug out from under them. We will make sure that the giant corporations in Japan and China and even our own giant corporations can steal from them. And when we do that, the American light of ingenuity will be put out. It will not go on. We have fostered, we have nurtured this creative genius among our people. If we change the rules in protecting their rights as individuals, that light will be put out and our standard of living will suffer.

Colleges and universities are getting the word. Throughout the United States of America we have been receiving letters from colleges and university people. People who are involved with research programs all over our country are writing and saying: You mean everything that I have been working for will be disclosed to America's enemies if we file for a patent?

Small inventors, small inventors throughout the country have joined together to try to fight this but they are an unorganized group of people, the most unorganizable group of people I have ever seen. That is what they are, they are individualists, men and women who come up with new ideas who are hard to organize. Thus the major corporations want to steal the profit of their genius. I will have more to say on this floor a week from now.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen venture capitalists, people who put money into the inventors. All of the great inventions happen here in the United States of America: the light bulb, the telephone, the reaper, the telegraph, the airplane. We have had the great inventors. We have had the great inventors because investors have known that they would have 17 years of a guaranteed patent term to reap the reward.

The Government did not finance the research into most of these great inventions. It was done by individual investors and individual inventors, and these were the people who made the great breakthroughs. But if we pull the rug out from under them and we make their inventions public even before the patent is issued, then what is going to happen? If we take away the guaranteed patent term, there will not be investment capital. They will come to people and say we have to tax you some more. We have to have a Government program to have research for our country because you cannot rely on the private sector. You cannot rely on the private sector because they change the rules of the game.

Do we really want the Government picking out who is going to get all the research money? They are going to pick their friends. Politics and bureaucracy are going to come into play, as it was not part of the process over these last 200 years. We will become what the Soviet Union was. Do we know what that is? We will have changed the rules of the game. We will become a society aimed at collectivism versus protecting individual rights. This has been recognized.

For example, the Long Island Association of Industries is a group of 1,000 industries on Long Island who got wind of what was going on, read the legislation and they are outraged. They are outraged that the big guys are setting up the little guys, and some of the big guys happen to be multinational and foreign corporations. Amgen, a biotech corporation out in California, large biotech corporation, has put billions of dollars into research. And then this is going to be made public before the patent is issued so that all over the world they could just take what has been discovered and use it?

A solar energy company was in my office when this was breezing through the committee. Yes, H.R. 400 has already gone through committee. The solar energy company executive said to me: ''Mr. Congressman, if they pass this legislation and they publish my patent applications before I get issued the patent, my Japanese competitors will be in production of the things that I have invested in and spent millions of dollars to produce and develop and discover. And the Japanese will be producing it. And they will be selling it on the market. And they will use the profit from selling my technology to defeat me in court, these huge corporations.''

Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense. H.R. 400 says, how are we going to protect these American inventors? You ask them, if you are going to publish it, their information, before they get the patent, how are they protected? And do you know what the answer is? Well, once the patent is issued, if someone is using their idea, they can sue them in court. We can imagine the Wright Brothers trying to sue Mitsubishi Corporation. So sue me. You can go over to Japan to try to sue some huge corporation or China or some of these other countries. Impossible. This is a formula for the theft of America's technology and the decline of our standard of living.

A pharmaceutical company, Allergan, pharmaceutical companies spend millions of dollars trying to develop new drugs in our country. What happens, it takes years to get through the process. If their patent is made public, they will not spend that money. No one will spend any money to develop new drugs anymore that will cure diseases for our people because they will all say why should you spend the money to develop it.

This bill, I compared it yesterday to a bouquet of flowers. When you ask these people who are supporting this bill, who are pushing this bill through the system, why they could ever support, how could you ever support a piece of legislation that would be so destructive to America's interests, that would open us up to theft internationally, do you know what their answer is? Their answer is, there are a lot of good things in this bill.

Then they will go through a list of nice little things that keeps the money in the patent office. It helps facilitate hiring new patent employees, and they will go through a list. This is very similar to being handed a bouquet of flowers. If you are handed a bouquet of flowers and somebody says look at the flowers and then you realize the bouquet that he has handed you has a bunch of snakes in the bouquet, poisonous snakes. And you ask them, are these snakes poisonous? And if that person only wants to talk about the flowers but refuses to talk about the snakes, he does not like you. He is not giving you that bouquet because he thinks a lot about you. He wants to destroy you.

What is happening is that a bouquet of flowers has been handed to the American people. There are some nice little reforms in H.R. 400. They can talk about them all day, but we do not want to talk about the bouquet of flowers. We want to talk about the poisonous snakes that will destroy our country and poison our system and kill our families. That is what we want to talk about. But they will talk about how nice the rose looks. I want to talk about why we are publishing our information for everybody to steal. But look how nice the flower is. How about talking about the daisies. How beautiful. What about this idea that now you can have all of our patents attacked, the ones that are issued. Do not talk about that.

The bottom line is, the flowers are not what is important if the bouquet is filled with deadly snakes. H.R. 400 is filled with deadly snakes and we need to talk about it. Why would anyone want a bill like this? Why? Well, Bruce Lehman, head of our Patent Office, went to Japan 4 years ago. He signed an agreement with the Japanese, the counterpart of the Japanese head of the Japanese Patent Office. He signed an agreement to harmonize, harmonize America's patent law with Japan.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell my colleagues, I believe in foreign trade and international trade. Harmonizing our laws is a good thing. As long as we are

bringing the standards of America, maintaining those standards and bringing other people up to our standards, that is a good thing. Instead, their form of harmonization, Mr. Bruce Lehman, head of our Patent Office, agreed to make our system like Japan's. This is enough to shake anybody up.

Our Patent Office agreed to change our strong patent system, the strongest in the world, to make it exactly like the Japanese system. This is horrendous. This is incredible. This is something most Americans cannot believe is happening. There will be a vote on this issue. All the things I described in H.R. 400 are part of this agreement to harmonize our law. It is bringing down the level of protection in America to the level they have had in Japan. This 18-month publication, this no guaranteed patent term, this uncertain patent term, that is part of their system. And in Japan they do not invent anything. Their people are under the domination of a group of economic shoguns who beat individuals and beat the average person into submission if that person threatens the power elite in any way.

If we change our laws to be like Japan's, those economic shoguns, those economic gangsters that run that economy will be right here in the United States of America doing to our people what they do to their own people.

This law will pass, this harmonization will happen next week in a vote unless the people of this country call their Representative and say: H.R. 400, the Steal American Technologies Act, is horrible, vote against it. If the American people do not contact their Representative, these huge corporate interests internationally have hired lobbyists to contact your Representative.

Mr. Lehman, by the way, not only agreed to harmonize our law, but he was the same guy, head of our Patent Office, who not too long ago wanted to send our entire data base for our Patent Office, the whole data base, the home computer database, every bit of information he wanted to send it in disk form to the Red Chinese. That was his plan. Some of us went crazy and we stopped him. But what he said was he wanted to do it so they will know what not to steal, they will know what not to steal.

Unbelievable. Incredible. It is sending the worst thieves in the world the combination to your safe and saying this is so you will know what safes not to try to crack. I mean, after all, they will not have to be thieves anymore, they can come in any time they want. This is what is going on. This is the threat to our way of life.

Basically we have had a group of patent examiners who are now facing a major change in their way of life. They are going to see it right away. They are all opposed to this bill. All the small inventors, people and researchers in our colleges and universities across America, Amgen, the biotech company and Allergan, the pharmaceutical company. These are people who understand what is going on. The small inventors of course, they all oppose H.R. 400; but they cannot get the word out. They are looking for allies among the American people who understand the importance of the issue that we will be deciding.

There are an army of lobbyists and they are working this issue. But the American people can win. We have won these fights before. But it takes all of us to step forward and be active.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that next week we have got a good chance of winning but we also have a good chance of losing. It can go either way, but it will be a vote. It will be one of those crucial votes that go by that no one will ever understand exactly what happened to them 20 or 30 years down the road if we go the wrong way. This is Pearl Harbor in slow motion.

This is our Government giving away our seed corn to foreigners. This is a situation where, if the Wright Brothers would have had their discovery stolen from them by Mitsubishi Corp. because our Government publicized all of their secrets, the aerospace industry would have been developed in Japan and not the United States. And all of the Americans now who have quality high-paying jobs in that industry, they would be going, they would not have those jobs. They would say, gee, did not America used to be the No. 1 leader? The American people a generation from now will never know what hit them if we go the wrong way next Thursday.

So I would hope that my colleagues will join with me in defeating H.R. 400, the Steal American Technologies Act. Join with me in voting for the Rohrabacher substitute, which is H.R. 811 and 812.

THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. COBURN] is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. Speaker, I do agree with the position of the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRABACHER] and will be supporting his position on the House floor.

I wanted to take a minute to address those in our country who are interested in our budget. If in fact they do not believe that a balanced budget is important, then they should not pay attention to anything that I am about to say. But if in fact they think we ought to live within our means, then I think consideration of some of the information that I am about to relate to them they will find interesting.

In 1972, our entire budget was $241 billion. This year we will spend $17 billion more than that on interest on the national debt alone. So what we are really faced with in our country is a threat. The threat is not very popular to talk about. The threat is not easy to focus on.

□ 1500

But, nevertheless, the threat is great, and the threat is this: If the people who work and vote in this body fail to recognize the importance of not balancing the budget, what in fact they have done is ruined the future for our children and our grandchildren.

To the seniors who would be listening who suffered through the Great Depression, who were the valiant men and women who allowed us to win World War II, they are the ones who hold this debate in their hands, the fate of a balanced budget.

For what will really happen to our children as they pay out the $200,000 each that they now owe, both in terms of debt and interest, which does not begin to recognize the internal debt that we owe the Social Security System, from which we borrowed, actually stole, $69 billion last year to run the Government, their living standard will be nowhere close to what we experience today. Their opportunity to have an education, to own a home, will vanish in the midst of our irresponsibility.

How big is the threat? The threat is the largest threat we have faced since the end of World War II. It is a very subtle threat. It is one that is hard for people to get excited about, yet it will undermine the essence and the greatness of the American dream.

What do we have to do to win this battle? The first thing we have to do is recognize that career politicians from both parties are not necessarily interested in doing the right thing. Martin Luther King said in his last speech, his last major speech before he was assassinated, that cowardice asks the question: Is it expedient? And vanity asks the question: Is it popular? But conscience asks the question: Is it right? Washington has a way of avoiding the last question and running to the first two: Is it expedient? Is it popular?

It will not be popular to balance the budget. It will not be expedient to balance the budget. But it is right to balance the budget.

What is the psychology of the rationalization that we have in our country today that says we will balance the budget sometime in the future? How did we get to the psychology of saying we do not have enough money to pay our bills and it is fine to jeopardize and mortgage the future of our children because we do not have the courage to make the hard decisions that are required to eliminate that threat for our children?

What I would ask my fellow Americans to do is to think, as a grandparent or a parent, what are the most important things in their lives, and usually we will answer, our children or our grandchildren. I have an 18-month-old grandchild, and as I look at her, I look to see what possible future can she have if we fail to do the right thing, the thing that our conscience would