To his wife, Marianne, to his children, to his family, his community, and his department and his brethren in law enforcement, our most heartfelt sympathies are offered. In his sacrifice, he was able to leave earth and join hands with God. And I know that his watchful, caring eyes will continue to watch over and protect the family, department, and community that he loved so much.

Mr. Speaker, may God bless Ashtabula Patrolman William D. Glover, Jr., and may God rest his soul.

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA IS TURNING AROUND

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

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this evening with some good news, and let me report it from a more objective observer. The Washington Times, in an editorial, said the following: The District is looking good. There is a $186 million surplus from fiscal 1997. People are buying homes in the District and businesses are expanding and setting up shop.

I know that everyone on both sides of the aisle greets this good news about our Nation's Capital in the same spirit I do. Yes, a surplus. The District is turning around. It has balanced its budget, more than balanced it now 2 years ahead of the congressionally mandated year. How has this been done? Through prudent budgeting, Mr. Speaker, through fiscal discipline, and through preserving the fruits of an excellent economy rather than spending that money.

The highlights are quite extraordinary, and I am sure to many Members, unexpected. Vendors are now being paid ahead of time rather than behind time. We have, Mr. Speaker, a clean opinion from an outside independent auditor, which means an unqualified opinion looking at the books and records of the District of Columbia, that the District is revitalizing itself financially.

We have a general fund surplus of almost $186 million. This is a city that was close to bankruptcy just a few years ago. And the District is reaping increased revenue from taxes, not because it has raised taxes, but because improved operations have allowed the city to collect taxes from those who should have been paying taxes all along.

Mr. Speaker, the District's problems have not been entirely self-inflicted, but the city's repair must be completely self-generated. I think that we now have evidence that that self-generation is occurring, and it is occurring for a combination of reasons. It is occurring because this Congress set up a Control Board. It is occurring because the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS), chair of the Subcommittee on the District of Columbia, and I, the ranking member, have worked collaboratively and in a bipartisan fashion on the District ever since the Control Board was set up 2 years ago.

It is occurring because of the work of the Control Board, and yes, Mr. Speaker, it is occurring because of the work of the mayor and the members of the city council. They deserve our congratulations, even as they have gotten the criticism of this body when they have deserved it. And I must say, sometimes even when they have not.

Mr. Speaker, the District's Government is now multilayered. The Congress seeks an efficient government from the District, but the fact is that the Congress has imposed a highly inefficient structure to do the job. The District needs better collaboration among its many layers until the Control Board sets and Congress will be hearing from me about streamlining its oversight as it requires the District to streamline its operations.

Mr. Speaker, I began with editorial comment praising the District from the Washington Times. The Washington Post said as much when this audit was reported: The District is not enjoying a $185.9 million general fund surplus and a clean fiscal year 1997 annual audit by accident. It took hard work and a stiff spine to bring unchecked and irresponsible spending under control.

That is exactly what has happened. I have been as impatient as many Members to see this day. Now it has come in spades, not little by little, but with a buildup of improvements that is now showing itself in a way that I think none of us anticipated seeing in this fashion.

The District, knowing that this is no time to sit down, that there is much work to be done. The District has revved itself up to work now on its services and operations. It knows that those services and operations must improve and improve quickly. And that is not, Mr. Speaker, because of what this body wants, although that is part of it.

First and foremost, it is because the residents of the District of Columbia, among the highest taxpaying citizens of the United States, deserve no less. My congratulations to the Control Board, to the chief financial officer, to the mayor, and to the city council for a job that is beginning to be well done.

□ 1800

IS THERE A MEDIA BIAS? ASK BOB ZELNICK

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

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, is there a liberal bias in the nation's media? Just ask a prominent member of that media.

Bob Zelnick had been a respected member of ABC's news division for 21 years. He was fired because he wanted to write a book on Vice President AL GORE. The head of ABC news had first granted him permission to write such a book, but then changed his mind when it became clear that Zelnick was not going to write a puff piece about Mr. GORE.

In my own experience, ABC News has a liberal bias. I recently traveled to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, to investigate whether the accusations of sweatshops and other labor abuses were true. At a reception hosted by the Governor of the CNMI, a member of my staff noticed that a film crew was spying on us from a clump of bushes. When the staff asked this film crew whom they represented, they would not identify themselves. Later, they admitted that they were from ABC News.

When someone is spying on you from a nearby bush, it's hard to believe that they will do a fair story. I tried to accommodate them in their story later on. For example, I made certain that they had a chance to follow me as I inspected various garment factories and workers housing units on the island of Saipan. But I have every expectation that the story will be unfair and unbalanced when it ultimately comes out next month.

Bob Zelnick's experience with ABC News just further goes to show the true bias at that news division. I urge my colleagues to read this illuminating piece that appeared in the Wall Street Journal today, entitled ''ABC: Anyone but Conservatives.''

ABC: ANYONE BUT CONSERVATIVES

By Bob Zelnick

Last week I was forced to leave my position as a correspondent for ABC News. What happened to me illustrates something of what is wrong with TV news today.

In December 1996, following a dinner conversation with my publisher, Alfred Regnery, I agreed to undertake a biography of Vice President Al Gore. Early the following month I phoned Richard C. Wald, the ABC News executive who tends to the business of editorial standards, to describe the project and secure his permission to proceed.

Mr. Wald asked if I intended to write a ''straightforward'' biography or one with a distinct point of view. I replied that except for opinions I might develop during my research, the book would be reasonably straightforward. Mr. Wald then inquired what I thought of Mr. Gore. I replied that I knew the vice president only slightly, but had a generally favorable impression of him, shaped by his pro-defense views in the Senate and his critical support for the 1991 Gulf War resolution. I added that my sense was that his environmental views might be a bit extreme.

'YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION'

Late in the conversation, Mr. Wald remarked: ''If you write a book about him, you probably can't cover him for us.'' I told him I thought that writing a book on the vice president would enhance my credentials to cover him. ''Now that I think of it, you may be right,'' said Mr. Wald. ''We'll have to see. In any event, you have my permission.''

I conducted scores of interviews. I hired a researcher who performed more than four months of full-time work. I traveled to Harvard, where Mr. Gore went to school, and to Tennessee. I came up with fascinating, previously unpublished material on both Mr. Gore and his father, also a former Tennessee senator, and mined a rich lode of background material on Tennessee politics. My sense was that the project would prove helpful not only to my own career as a television correspondent but also to ABC's coverage of the 2000 presidential campaign.

But last September, just days before my contract with ABC was to expire, the network informed me that if I wished to sign a new one, I would have to break my contract with Regnery, return the advance and discontinue all work on the Gore book. ABC's new position was that there was an inherent conflict between writing a book on a subject and covering that subject.

In a written appeal to Roone Arledge and David Westin, respectively chairman and president of the news division, I objected to the ruling as unjust, contrary to ABC's own standards and procedures, and repugnant to the First Amendment values we all endorse. I pointed out that the decision was wildly excessive as regards any valid interest of ABC News, in that I was willing to submit the manuscript months before publication in order to address any editorial problems the company perceived. I noted that most news organizations encourage their correspondents to write books on subjects they cover, then point to them with pride as indicating staff depth, scholarship and authority. Examples from the print press are legion, but even in television, where a career spent writing 90-second spots can erode the ability to think and write in depth, correspondents such as Marvin Kalb, Bernard Kalb, Dan Rather, Sam Donaldson and I have published books on subjects close to our beats.

Nonetheless, Mr. Westin's written reply explained that ''we cannot have a Washington correspondent writing a book about one of our national leaders whom that correspondent will undoubtedly have to cover.'' Otherwise, we could be ''held up to ridicule that our reporting is influenced by views you/we have formed about the individual involved.''

I eventually decided to complete the book and to leave ABC News after 21 years. Mr. Wald, asked by a newspaper reporter why he had granted permission in the first place, concocted a tale that I was about to be fired when I approached him, and he didn't want to impede my earning a living by writing books. Thanks, Dick.

Would I have faced the same problem if I were an avowedly liberal journalist undertaking a book that made conservatives mildly uncomfortable rather than a moderately conservative one writing about a liberal icon? Had the proposed title been ''Gingrich: A Critical Look at the Man and His Climb to Power,'' would I have been forced to choose between my book and my career? I rather doubt it.

Nor does the double standard stop with books. My friend and former colleague Sam Donaldson is again covering the White House six days a week. On the seventh day he does not rest, but rather appears on ''This Week With Sam and Cokie,'' where he is free with his concededly liberal opinions. Sam is a gifted reporter, and in 21 years I have never seen evidence of deliberate bias in his work. I think ABC is wisely using his talents. But where is his conservative counterpart, licensed both to report and to ruminate?

My original sin may have been my earlier book, ''Backfire: A Reporter's Look at Affirmative Action,'' also published by Regnery. In 1996, when ''This Week'' decided to interview Gary Aldrich—author of yet another Regnery book, ''Unlimited Access: An FBI Agent Inside the Clinton White House''—and I was asked to prepare the setup piece, George Stephanopoulos, then a White House spinmeister (now an ABC commentator), blasted ABC News for anti-Clinton bias, specifically citing my limited involvement with the program. Months later, Jane Mayer, a New Yorker reporter, did the same. Is this what Mr. Westin had in mind when he said he feared ''ridicule''?

Like others at ABC News, I committed my life, my fortune and my sacred honor to the furtherance of the First Amendment and the pursuit of truth. Along with a brave and resourceful crew, I was thrown into a Moscow prison for refusing to stop interviewing a dissident on her way to court. I accompanied soldiers who came under fire in South Lebanon and Somalia. In these times I was conscious of the far greater physical dangers that other correspondents had faced in times and places as different as Gettysburg, Normandy, Khe Sanh and Srebrenica.

But the principal dangers that threaten television journalists today are not those of an errant bullet, or even a well-aimed one. Rather, they spring on the one hand from the merciless demands of the news cycle, the dumbing down of public affairs programming and the belief in viewers' shrinking attention span. The end results of these dangers are poorly sourced, factually insubstantial, overly sensational stories that, in the end, harm our credibility and make us easy targets for political demagogues.

IDEOLOGICAL ORTHODOXY

The other danger—the one that led to my departure from the industry—involves ideological orthodoxy, political correctness and complete lack of self-confidence regarding the management of a news organization, partly because so many of those at the top have little or no background as working journalists.

For most of my career I felt honored to serve as a correspondent for ABC News. But the ABC News I served did not practice prior restraint.

The ABC News I served did not demand that its reporters shatter their integrity by breaching contracts.

The ABC News I served did not look for a rock to crawl under when the Jane Mayers of the world attacked.

The ABC News I served did not seek to destroy correspondents who had performed for the company over two decades with dignity, integrity and excellence.

The ABC News I served did not break its word, ignore its standards or brazenly lie to explain its actions.

Sad to say, the ABC News I served is not the ABC News I left.

ASTHMA AND AIR POLLUTION

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

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, in a week-long special series in New York this week, the New York Daily News is documenting what we in the South Bronx district that I represent have been saying for years: The concentration of waste treatment facilities and their fleets of diesel trucks are killing our children, our families, our older folks with asthma and respiratory illness.

One-half million New Yorkers suffer from asthma. Six percent of the population. The worst rate in the country. New York City's asthma hospitalization rate is three times the national average. More than 35,000 residents are treated at city hospitals for severe asthma attacks each year, a 24 percent rise over the last decade. Deaths accountable to asthma are up 50 percent since 1980. 284 died of asthma in 1995.

The asthma epidemic hits children the hardest. More than 10 percent of New York City's one million students, 130,000, suffer from asthma. 15,000 are admitted to the hospital each year, which is twice the national average. The hardest hit of all the children are those with families in the Hunts Point area of the South Bronx in my district and East Harlem in the district of my colleague (Mr. RANGEL).

New York City's asthma admission rates are highest in the Bronx, along with Harlem. Almost 13 percent of Bronx children under the age of 17 were estimated to suffer from asthma several years ago. Children in poor New York City neighborhoods are five times more likely to be hospitalized than their better-off neighbors.

Lincoln Hospital, the primary medical center in the South Bronx, recorded 14,300 asthma emergency room visits last year; 4,500 of these involved children. Lincoln Hospital now operates two, 24-hour emergency rooms devoted exclusively to dealing with the problem of asthma, one for children and one for adults. Eleven died there last year, more than double the usual number. The youngest was only 5 years old.

Now, listen to this fact. There is a school in my congressional district where 30 percent of the children in Public School 48 in Hunts Point have asthma. Asthma threatens our children's chance of success as well. Asthma has become the leading cause of children who are absent among New York City schoolchildren.

Now, while researchers debate the root causes of asthma and New York public health officials focus on every theory other than pollution, our communities continue to breathe foul air and continue to sicken and die from respiratory illness.

Like neighborhood residents who spend their time dealing with these issues, take, for instance, a woman by the name of Lora Lucks, who is the principal at Public School 48 in the Hunts Point area of the Bronx. She blames the area's poor air quality. She says her students get sicker and sicker every year and that the air sometimes smells bad enough to make you sick to your stomach.

Now, what is really interesting here is that 200 of Public School 48's 800 students required emergency treatment last year at the same Lincoln Hospital.

And perhaps the best test that something is terribly wrong with the air quality in that community is the fact that teachers that come from outside the South Bronx neighborhood, upon spending the 8 months or whatever time they spend in the school during the year, not counting weekends, they complain that the condition under which they live, their inability to breathe properly, the tearing of the eyes, the sick stomach, all the asthmatic conditions that prevail, happen not when they are living during the summer months outside the South Bronx area but only when they come into the South Bronx.

Now, where could the problem be? Well, the South Bronx area of the