that would begin to close loopholes that have too often resulted in guns getting into the wrong hands by allowing vendors at gun shows and flea markets to sell firearms without conducting background checks. The Senate is to be applauded for this action. The Senate had the courage to pass a bill that dealt with the issue of juvenile justice and gun violence in a sensible and thoughtful manner.

In the House, that same courage appeared to be lacking in too many of our colleagues. As a mother of five and grandmother of thirteen, I empathize with the families who lost children in Littleton, Colorado and with the thousands of other families across this nation who have seen violent crime rob them of their loved ones. These are losses that can never be forgotten and that leave a lasting void no one can fill.

Unfortunately, the American people were the big losers in the debate on the House floor over gun safety last month. Hours of floor debate over three days and nights produced nothing that can comfort those who have already lost a family member to gun violence and provided no real meaningful measures to ensure the future safety of our children.

The fight for sensible gun control is not over. Those of us who believe in closing gun loopholes will continue our efforts. Three months ago, I spoke to many members of Family and Friends of Murder Victims assembled in Rose Hills Memorial Park to honor their slain loved ones during Victims Rights Week. I pledged to them that I would work to ensure we establish laws and programs that help prevent the additional loss of innocent lives and to strengthen victims' rights. I intend to keep that pledge.

Let us look at the facts: In the five years that the Brady Bill has been in effect, requiring a three business-day waiting period for a gun purchase, more than 400,000 illegal gun sales, two-thirds of which involved either convicted felons or people with a current felony indictment, were blocked. This is clear evidence that this law works and that we are on the right path.

However, we still have far to go. Studies show that one in four gun murders are committed by people aged 18 to 20. Furthermore, about two-thirds of all homicides involve the use of a gun. Also consider that domestic violence often turns into homicide in many instances where guns are readily available, and that law enforcement officials support gun safety because it saves police officers' lives.

These facts demand our immediate attention. It is no wonder that a recent Pew Research survey found that 65% of the nation believes gun control is more important than the right to bear arms. Similarly, a Gallup Poll shows that 79% of Americans support mandatory registration of all firearms.

I wholeheartedly support a rational gun safety policy to close loopholes that have allowed too many individuals to skirt laws designed to prevent guns from getting into the wrong hands—often the hands of felons or minors.

We should strengthen the Brady law and fight for new gun safety measures that include: a three business-day waiting period to complete background checks on people buying guns at gun shows and flea markets—just like sales at retail outlets; banning the import of large-capacity ammunitions clips; raising the national age of handgun ownership from 18 to 21; gun safety locks to accompany all new firearm sales; and preventing serious juvenile felons from ever owning guns.

We can achieve all of this if the members of the House have the will and the American people make it clear to their representatives that they demand action on gun safety. Let us stop the delay. Let us pass meaningful gun safety legislation.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on my Special Order this evening.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

THE REPUBLICAN AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TANCREDO). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the recognition for this hour that I reserve on behalf of the Republican majority. And, specifically, for those Members of the Theme Team and any Member of the Republican Conference that has anything to discuss this evening, I invite them to come down to the floor now and join me in the next hour in discussing topics relative to our majority agenda on the House floor.

That agenda, of course, includes an effort to save and secure a retirement security system through Social Security and Medicare. It also involves our efforts to reduce the tax burden on the American people. The third item is to build the strongest national defense in the country, in the world, one that allows for complete security for our Nation and for our children, and the third effort is to try to create the best education system on the planet.

□ 2245

Those are three goals towards which we are working vigorously, and hoping to accomplish and achieve.

I want to start out by talking about a fifth topic, one that is important to my constituents and one that is fresh on my mind just coming back from a weekend of visiting with constituents. The topic back home was the Endangered Species Act.

The Committee on Resources has a special task force that visited Colorado and held a hearing in the town of Greeley. We had a great hearing. One of our colleagues, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. UDALL), was able to come up to Greeley and join us, as well as one of the members of the Senate, Senator CAMPBELL. Also, the fourth member of that group was the chairman, the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO).

We had a great hearing. We heard from many, many people involved in agriculture in Colorado, and those who are in the business of wildlife management and the science of trying to preserve and protect endangered species, and prevent certain species from becoming listed on that list.

We also heard from a number of individuals from environmental groups. But the consensus clearly was that the Endangered Species Act is broken and needs to be fixed; that the act needs to be addressed in wholesale fashion and dramatically reformed.

It is very clear that the notion of protecting and preserving endangered species is a good one, and one that ought to be maintained. It is a noble goal, a worthwhile goal. It is a public goal.

The unfortunate consequence, however, of the Endangered Species Act is that the individual who happens to find one of these species on his or her property bears the almost exclusive burden in shouldering the cost of protecting and preserving and achieving this public goal of species recovery. That is the unfortunate part of it. It is the unfair part of the Endangered Species Act.

Once again, I want to suggest that those we heard from in Colorado, from the farming and ranching community, from the homebuilders in Colorado, those who represent municipalities, as well, we heard from a county commissioner, a State legislator, all of these people really and truly believe that we ought to do everything we can to protect and preserve species, and we certainly do not want to see them go extinct as a result of any human activity.

But they also understand the importance of a local perspective in achieving a strategy to secure these public goals of species recovery and protection of species.

We heard from a county commissioner, for example, Kathay Reynolds, the county commissioner in Lambert County, who was disappointed that the Fish and Wildlife Service did not reach out enough to her and her constituency in devising the rules to protect a mouse, a mouse called the Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse. This is a mouse that looks just like the Western Jumping Mouse that is a more hardy variety in Colorado.

The mouse has been listed. Let me say that the mouse seems to like water. It hangs out around rivers and streams and irrigation ditches, which in the West is critical in a semi-arid region such as ours when it comes to agriculture. So the mouse likes to be around the water and in the tall grass around the water.

If you happen to find a mouse, one of these Prebles Meadow Jumping Mice in and around your property, your life is about to change, because under the proposed rules by the Fish and Wildlife Service, that means that you can no longer maintain your irrigation canals and ditches. It means that, in many cases, you may have to divert your

water and use it in a way that is not conducive to sound agricultural practices.

It also means that again, in an area where water rights, where we fight very hard for water rights, that this has the ability to disrupt the allocation of such a scarce resource.

We heard from many other individuals, but the hearing was a very good one, one that is very, very important to the West. We heard about other species, the mountain plover, the blacktailed prairie dog, and other species that are proposed to be listed in Colorado.

I want to thank the Committee on Resources, its leadership under the chairman, the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG), as well as the chairman of the task force, the gentleman from California, for coming out to Colorado and focusing so much national attention on a big problem in our part of the country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Montana (Mr. HILL).

Mr. HILL of Montana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Colorado for yielding to me.

While he and I both serve on the Committee on Resources, I was unable to join the gentleman in Colorado over the weekends. But there is no question that the Endangered Species Act is having a very dramatic and in some instances, a devastating impact on our rural communities.

Obviously, it impacts rural areas because rural areas is where habitat involving endangered species exists. But what we know now is that it operates in an unfair fashion, particularly with private property owners. But even the impact that it has on the management of public lands, it is unfair, and it is also ineffective.

We know now that has been having an adverse impact on what the objective is, which is of course to protect species, because the incentives in the Endangered Species Act certainly are such that if one discovers a species on one's property, it is best not to do that. So the incentive is for people to change habitat.

Also one of the huge issues associated with the Endangered Species Act is the fact that the States have had responsibility for managing wildlife. That has been the tradition in this country. In the Endangered Species Act, the Federal Government has taken the dominant role, overriding the authority of the States.

What we see happening is that we are managing for a single species, which is having an adverse impact on other species. In other words, the Endangered Species Act focuses all the resources on a single species, and the broad ecology is secondary to the protection of that species.

So there are a number of reforms we need to make. One is to restore the responsibility and authority of the States, to allow for agreements with private property owners in managing their property for broad species protection, and also to make sure that people who lose the use of their property are appropriately compensated for it.

While I missed this meeting, I certainly agree that we need to reform the Endangered Species Act.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Farmers and ranchers are really having a tough go of it right now, not only because of various regulatory policies, the Endangered Species Act, as implemented by the Fish and Wildlife Service, being among them, but several other matters, tax-related policies and trade issues, also.

But the topic of private property ownership in America is so central and essential to our way of life and our culture. It really is rural America, which in, my opinion, is where we find the real soul of America. These are the same folks, the same spirit and mentality and motivation that in fact founded the country and have sustained our great Republic to this time.

The effect of this particular regulatory action, the Endangered Species Act, is one that restricts and constrains to a tremendous degree the ability not only to enjoy property rights and the use of one's private property, but also the production of our food supply, which is something that, of course, is vital to the long-term solvency of our Nation and the success of our Republic, and the strength of emerging economies throughout the rest of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH).

Mr. HAYWORTH. I thank my friend from Colorado and my friend, the gentleman from Montana.

Mr. Speaker, as I listened to their words, I could not help but think of the irony of the current administration, who campaigned in 1992 under a slogan of putting people first. How ironic that is, in the wake of decisions by the administration that would seek to dilute what the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution says in its final clause.

I would ask my colleagues and those who join us to listen closely. The final clause of the Fifth Amendment to our Constitution says, ''Nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.'' And the irony of the assertion that the Clinton-Gore gang plan to put people first is exceeded only by the boastfulness of the current president in the inter regnum between his election and swearing in when he said that he would offer the most ethical administration in history.

The irony fairly drips from those words when today, Mr. Speaker, we came to this floor to debate the trade status of the People's Republic of China, mindful of the fact that Chinese shell corporations, technically with American charters, had given money to the Clinton-Gore campaign in 1996; mindful also of the fact that for those of us from the West, from Colorado, Montana, and Arizona, it has been said that this administration has declared war on the West, on resource-based industries, on small family farms and ranches, on a way of life that is rapidly vanishing, hastened by the bureaucratic decisions of those who would seek to short-circuit this document.

Mr. Speaker, one is reminded of the weak assertion by our current Vice President, the same Vice President who last weekend presided over an unparalleled waste of natural resources in the millions of dollars, in the millions of gallons of water, for what is now being called the new Watergate, for what some cynics call Tipper Canoe; for what other cynics call the new Row vs. Wade; a Vice President of the United States, Mr. Speaker, who had the audacity to stand in front of the assembled press and say to America, through the Press Corps, ''My legal counsel informs me that there is no controlling legal authority.''

Mr. Speaker, it is a fair question to ask, how low can an administration go, from the boastful claims of putting people first, from the boastful claims of having the most ethical administration in history, to the reality of taking contributions from Chinese front corporations, to having a Vice President who, in violation of existing Federal law, sought campaign donations from his Executive Office Building location, not from the Democrat National Committee, and still had the audacity to claim that his legal counsel informed him that there is no controlling legal authority.

Mr. Speaker, I will say again for the Record, to my colleagues and those who would join us beyond these walls, there is a controlling legal authority. It is called the Constitution of the United States, which provides oversight capacity to the legislative branch of government, but moreover, Mr. Speaker, which provides a remedy every 4 years for the executive branch, every 2 years for those who would serve in the Congress of the United States, where we stand at the bar of public opinion and are accountable to the people who sent us here.

That should give pause to this Vice President, even though the current president apparently has no concerns about it.

Mr. SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, this topic of corruption in the executive branch of government and in administration is one that the Committee on Resources again had a chance to look into a little further, and the gentleman from Montana (Mr. HILL) was there.

I would like to ask him to comment, if he would, for a moment on the hearing we had just a few days ago.

Mr. HILL. As my colleague, the gentleman from Colorado, knows, we are considering a number of bills associated with putting perhaps more of the offshore receipts, revenue from offshore oil and gas development, into habitat and providing that money to the State.

So as part of that, the Committee on Resources asked the General Accounting Office to do an examination of the

accounting in the use of these funds. We had one of the most startling reports that I think that I have ever read as a Member of Congress. What we have discovered is that at the very top of this administration, there has been a looting of hunters' and fishermen's funds. People who hunt and fish in the United States pay an excise tax into a fund, the Pittman Robertson fund, and a fisheries fund to provide for habitat to help sustain hunting and provide habitat for hunting.

What we have discovered is that the Fish and Wildlife Service has been looting this account.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2465, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

Mr. DIAZ-BALART, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106–268) on the resolution (H. Res. 262) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2465) making appropriations for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closure for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2606, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT FINANCING, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

Mr. DIAZ-BALART, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106–269) on the resolution (H. Res. 263) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2606) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

ADJOURNMENT TO THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1999

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 10 a.m. on Thursday, July 29, 1999.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TANCREDO). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

□ 2300

They set up special secret accounts. Out of these accounts, they paid for expenses that are inappropriate, illegal. There is not adequate accounting for these funds. If I can make this last point, they even pressured one of their employees to approve a funding request by an anti-hunting group, using funds paid in by hunting and fishing men and women, to use those funds to fund an organization fund for the animals in an anti-hunting campaign.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr Speaker, will the gentleman from Montana (Mr. HILL) repeat his assertions, because I think, given the culture of the present day, given the media proclivities here on Capitol Hill and beyond, sometimes, quite often, these stories are missed for whatever reason. Could the gentleman repeat what he has found in the Committee on Resources.

Mr. HILL of Montana. Mr. Speaker, what this general accounting report, and this is a preliminary report, we have asked them to do a more thorough examination, but they have created several administrative accounts, one that the chairman has even labeled a mystery administration account, and used the funds in those accounts to fund projects that would not normally meet the criteria.

They have looted those funds, tried to direct those funds into anti-hunting efforts. In some instances, there is evidence that they used those funds to pay for expenses that are not authorized by Congress. In other instances, they have failed to account for those funds. They have failed to establish any criteria for the approval or the granting of those funds. This is at the very highest levels of the administration.

Now, the person that revealed this information to our committee was fired for failing to go along and has recently entered into a settlement with the Fish and Wildlife Service. But, interestingly, that settlement has a confidential clause, a gag order attached to it. So at our hearing, that employee was unable to give us all the details that he wanted to give us.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, if I could ask the gentleman from Montana, is it his impression that this administration was using those different entities, those different people to campaign for a certain point of view, using these people in a way in a campaign that would be unlawful?

Mr. HILL of Montana. Mr. Speaker, this is certainly consistent with the agenda of this administration, which is to restrict the public use of lands. I long suspected that part of that effort is to reduce access by hunters and people who fish and use the public lands for that purpose. This is consistent with that pattern of activity and that agenda.

But in this instance, this is not a small sum of money. This is $550 million a year that goes into this trust fund, and they were peeling off between 6 and 8 percent of this fund, which is $40 million a year for this purpose. What we also discovered is they took money. Understand, this is a trust fund for habitat, and they were taking this money to backfill the other parts of their budget because they were running short of money in different areas. So they took money from this account for that purpose.

So there are extremely serious allegations here. We are going to continue to have more hearings on it. I am advocating for the committee and the Fish and Wildlife Service to find a way to lift the gag order on this former employee so this person can tell us the whole truth. There were questions that I asked at the hearing that this person was unable to answer because of the confidentiality agreement that had been entered into. But these are very serious matters.

But I know it is troubling to the sportsmen and women in Montana who, through the purchase of guns and ammunition and sporting goods and fishing gear, are paying an excise tax into this fund for habitat purpose, to have this administration using that money or trying to use that money, meeting with, conspiring with anti-hunting groups to try to undermine the very people who are paying the tax.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing is we probably would not have discovered this scandal were it not for a handful of conscientious employees and others who work with the Interior Department on management of this fund who found the courage to stand up and represent and think about the taxpayers and what is morally proper and risk their jobs and perhaps their future careers as well. They came forward to Congress and explained what was going on, which it allowed us to have the hearing and move forward. This is a scandal of major proportions.

The gentleman touched on a point that I want to move into next, and that is he said that there is a pattern in the administration when it comes to public use of public lands. That is also true of private lands. There is a deeply held belief in this administration that human beings are a problem, that human beings should not be enjoying our national parks, our national wilderness areas, our National Forests, and so on; that these should be off limits for human activity, whether it is hunting or recreation or even when it comes to private property when it comes to responsible land use.

We talked earlier about the Endangered Species Act and the impact that that has on the ability of an individual private property owner to use his or her land as they see fit.

I want to use an example for my colleagues briefly, and that is one of this apple, just to dramatize the importance of these public lands-private lands use issues when it comes to agriculture.

If this apple represents the surface area of the globe, we have to keep in mind that approximately three-fourths of the Earth is covered with water. So if I cut this apple into quarters, we have represented here the available use of land mass that exists on the earth.

Now, keeping in mind that also of this land mass, approximately half is