

hearing on the implementation of the law that required the sewage treatment plant to be built cooperatively with Mexico.

This hearing will be scheduled for this Wednesday, December 12. I hope that the administration spokesman, Mr. Ramirez, his employer, the State Department, the Office of Management and Budget will explain why a law that was passed by Congress a year ago has not been implemented.

This law is environmentally sound. It is good for the taxpayers of this Nation. It solves a problem that has been with us for 50 years. What Mr. Ramirez wants to do is treat half the problem, do it more expensively and in an environmentally insensitive way. I do not understand that at all, and I am glad the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) agrees with me that he should explain this to Congress.

So we will have this oversight hearing which is the role of Congress to have. It is about time the International Boundary and Water Commission followed the will of this Congress.

CHANGING THE PRESCRIPTION COPAY FOR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMONS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take a few moments this evening to explain something that is happening to veterans that I think many Members of this House may not be aware of and would like to correct.

Currently, a veteran who receives prescription medications as an outpatient for a service-connected disability is charged a \$2 copay per prescription, and the Veterans Administration is contemplating increasing that copay from \$2 per prescription to \$7 per prescription, a 250 percent increase in one fell swoop.

Why are we doing this? I have checked with the Chillicothe, Ohio, Veterans Hospital and talked with their CEO. He tells me that, at that hospital, the average veteran who gets prescription medications takes, on average, at least 10 prescriptions per month. If we take \$7 per prescription and multiply it by 10, that is \$70 a month; and then many veterans get their prescriptions for 3 months at a time. So 70 times 3 finally starts adding up to a sizeable amount of money, especially for a veteran with a service-connected disability who is trying to live on a fixed income.

It is unconscionable to me that at this time in our Nation's history, when we are paying honor to those who are fighting for us and for those who have fought for us, that we would increase the costs of prescription medications; and we are doing it at a time, quite frankly, when we are making huge, multibillion dollar tax breaks available to wealthy corporations.

Who do we care about in this House? Wealthy corporations or the men and women who have served this country honorably and who are sick and in need of medication and who oftentimes cannot afford that medication, even with a \$2 copay?

I have introduced H.R. 2820, and it is a simple bill. It just simply says that the Secretary of the Veterans Administration cannot increase this copay amount beyond the \$2 for the next 5 years. Surely, surely, we can find the resources to do this good thing. I am calling upon my colleagues, and I am doing this on behalf of those who have served our country, the men and women who have paid the price, given of their time, given of their bodies and been willing to give of their very lives to make sure that those of us who serve in this Chamber can do so in freedom.

So I call upon my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring H.R. 2820. It is the least we can do for those who have done so much for us.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

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

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I do not plan on taking the full 5 minutes. But we have just gotten through with the defense bill and the Select Committee on Intelligence has just passed its conference report, and our Nation is at war, and above the regular amount the President has seen fit to give a \$40 billion supplemental to try not only to help people in New York, people at the Pentagon, but this Nation heal itself.

Post-September 11 has seen over 700,000 jobs lost, and yet we still have 99 percent of the American people that have their jobs, but if someone is one of those of that 1 percent that has lost their job, it is critical to them. Many of the people in my own district that has happened to.

We tried to protect those jobs, and I think that we need to do more. We also need to help people temporarily. But even more important than that, Mr. Speaker, we need to stimulate the growth of the new and the old jobs through different measures, economic measures.

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Seventy-five percent of the jobs created are created by small business in this country, and I believe that tax relief for businesses will act as a stimulus that will enable those businesses to hire more people, to hire back some of those 700,000 that have lost their jobs.

We all know that a company does not just fire people because it wants to; it is because they are working with a margin. And when they start losing money, either because they are over-

taxed or because of the system or something like September 11 happens, they are forced to let people go. I have people in the hotel industry that only have about a 25 percent occupancy right now. That is devastating to those industries, and this has happened across the board.

So the things we can do to stimulate the economy is, one, tax relief for those businesses. That is important in an economic stimulus package, as well as direct pay to some of those folks that need the help immediately.

Secondly, there has been a lot of debate on trade in this House, and I think very positively, both those for and opposed. But I believe whether you are a union worker or come from the private sector, our workers in this country are second to none. Given fair trade and given an equal chance, they can compete with any nation.

Some people debate and look at the trade deference. Well, ask anybody, they would rather be from a country that has higher pay, that has higher quality, that has higher technology than a country that has low pay, low technology, but yet is able to flood the markets. It just stands to reason. It is common sense.

Trade is also important to my State, California. The number one commodity in California is agriculture. Those that say they are friendly to agriculture should have no second thought on the vote that is coming to us tomorrow or the next day on the trade bill sent down by the President. The bill tomorrow will improve existing and future trade agreements. Not necessarily new trade agreements, but it will enable the President to shore up problems that many of my colleagues on the other side have brought forward, and I think in some cases rightfully so.

Mr. Carville, who used to work for President Clinton, once said, "It's the economy, stupid." If we can give tax relief to businesses and stimulate jobs, if we can pass trade agreements that will help benefit our workers and shore up existing problems, I think that will help.

My constituents want three kinds of security: they want personal security; they want to be safe in their schools and on their streets; they want to be able to open up a piece of mail that does not have anthrax in it; they want economic security, to know they are not going to lose their job; and they want national security. For those things, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support both the economic package, the stimulus package that was passed out of this House, and to support the trade agreement that will be brought forward this week.

SUPPORT H.R. 1343, LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HATE CRIMES PREVENTION ACT

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

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to call attention to the dramatic rise of hate crimes and voice my support of H.R. 1343, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

Last Congress, we came closer to enacting legislation that would have reaffirmed our commitment to prosecuting those who commit hate crimes. The Senate passed the hate crimes amendment on the defense appropriations act. The House subsequently passed a motion, which the majority of us supported, to instruct the conferees to retain the language contained in the Senate version of the defense authorization bill. Unfortunately, the conference committee ignored the will of the House and the Senate and chose not to retain the hate crime provisions in the final conference report.

Opponents of the hate crime measure have charged that it grants preferential treatment to certain groups. This is totally a false presumption. Heinous crimes that target victims solely on the basis of their race, their color, religion, national origin or sexual orientation deserve enhanced punishment. Because hate crimes are as diverse as the persons who commit them, we are all vulnerable to becoming victims. Hate crime legislation is a reaffirmation, not a denouncement of our Nation's commitment to civil rights and equal protection under the law for all Americans.

Furthermore, I reject the notion that a hate crimes bill would undermine one of the most important constitutional tenets, the freedom of speech. This could not be further from the truth. Racist groups and other extremists would have the constitutional right to preach and spread their propaganda. However, if those views translate into premeditated violence against a person or persons because of their ethnicity, their religion, or their sexual orientation, then those perpetrators should be held justly accountable for their acts.

The Texas legislature passed a hate crimes bill earlier this year after failing to do so during the previous legislative session. The bill was named to commemorate James Byrd, Junior, an African American man who was dragged to his death in Jasper, Texas, in 1998 by three white men solely because of the fact that he was black.

During the 1999 legislative session, the Texas House also passed a hate crimes bill. Unfortunately, opponents blocked consideration of the measure in the Texas Senate. Even more disappointing was that then-Governor George Bush was silent on the issue and refused to pledge his support for the bill. I am pleased that this year the legislature in Texas was able to remove the previous roadblocks and secure passage of the bill.

However, now that Texas has committed itself to hate crimes prevention, it needs the tools to facilitate the enforcement. For this reason, I am proud to be a cosponsor of H.R. 1343, the Local Law Enforcement Hate

Crimes Prevention Act, which has been introduced by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS). H.R. 1343 provides the technical, forensic, as well as prosecutorial tools local law enforcement needs to combat this type of violence.

H.R. 1343 has garnered the support of over 202 co-sponsors. Now more than ever we need the Federal hate crimes bill. Since September 11, hate crimes, especially those targeting Arab Americans and Muslim Americans have dramatically increased. This is unfortunate, and we need to make sure that this does not occur. While I am sure that we are all angry and frustrated, and have a great deal of anxiety as a result of what has transpired and what a lot of Americans are feeling, such feelings cannot ever, and I repeat, such feelings cannot ever justify senseless acts of violence against innocent people.

I ask my colleagues and the Republican leadership to speak out against these hate crimes and secure passage of H.R. 1343 as immediately as possible.

CONGRESS MUST PASS HATE CRIMES PREVENTION ACT

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

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, now is the time to pass the Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Congress must stand up and pass this legislation to send an important message to the American people and the world, that hate crimes will not be tolerated.

From the Justice Department demanding interviews from thousand of Arab-American men simply because of their heritage, to secretly detaining hundreds more, this country is sending the wrong message to its people and the world. Since September 11, we have seen a tendency in our citizens to strike out against those who they believe to be responsible. We continue to hear reports of harassment and discrimination against Arab Americans and Muslims. There has been a rise in all types of hate crimes. Congress must act now to send the right message. It must pass the Hate Crimes Prevention Act before we adjourn.

America is Christian, Jewish, Muslim, black, white, Hispanic, Asian American and Native American. We are gay and we are straight. We are one Nation. We are one people. We all must continue to live and work together to create one house, one family: the American house, the American family.

The President has preached a message of tolerance and respect and has urged all Americans to be sensitive in this difficult time. This country, as a whole, must heal and move forward together as one Nation. We can do that by embracing the idea, the concept of the beloved community, a community based on hope, compassion, and justice, a community at peace with itself. We

must renounce racism, we must renounce hate, we must renounce violence and embrace diversity. We must teach not just tolerance; we must teach acceptance and love. Only then can we achieve the concept of the beloved community, a community that is free of hate based on race, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation.

Passing the Hate Crimes Prevention Act is a step, a major step in the right direction, a step down a long road. It sends an important message. We must show the world the great Nation that we are, a Nation where all men and women are created equal. It is time to pass the Hate Crimes Prevention Act. So, Mr. Speaker, I call on all of my colleagues to lead by example and pass this bill before we leave.

IN OPPOSITION TO FAST TRACK

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

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I stand in opposition to the Fast Track legislation that is being proposed. Our country is at war. We must prioritize safety and security of the American people. There are lingering concerns of biological contamination. The American people continue to worry about anthrax, about new reports from the administration to be on high alert. Now is not the time to move forward on the Thomas Fast Track legislation.

The U.S. has officially entered an economic recession. Millions of workers are suffering: unemployed, no health coverage, and jobs lost. Terrorists have struck the American people in their pocketbooks. The holidays are approaching. Hundreds are fearful of imminent layoff. Do you know what it is like to be laid off, not being able to make your payments, not being able to put food on the table, feed your children, stand up with pride? It is very difficult for many Americans who are being laid off, who are now trying to figure out a way to pay their bills. Now is not the time to move forward with this Fast Track legislation. Expediting a trade negotiation is the last priority for the American people, the last priority for the American people in these trying times.

International trade directly affects the lives and the livelihood of increasing numbers of Americans. Congress cannot be confined to the back bench. We in Congress must be active and participate in all international trade negotiations. The Thomas bill would have us serve merely as consultants. That is not what we were elected to do. We were elected to voice and protect the interests not only of my district but of the American people in general. The Thomas Fast Track bill is an unfortunate manipulation of trade policy.

Since September 11, broad bipartisanship has been a top priority.

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This bill serves in dividing the line. This bill is driving a wedge between the