GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on special order of the 30th anniversary of title IX.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Hawaii?

There was no objection.

□ 1615

HOMELAND SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I apologize for missing my earlier time slot. We were meeting with President Uribe of Colombia, the President-elect of Colombia, and we were very encouraged with his words on how he plans to address terrorism inside Colombia, narcoterrorism funded by American drug consumption. I am pleased for his initiatives and his intention to increase the Colombian contribution to the military and antidrug efforts in Colombia to address some of the concerns this Congress has had as far as who is involved in their armed forces and to have it more democratically spread through their country and his determination and will to fight the narcoterrorists in Colombia.

As I had mentioned yesterday on this floor, our subcommittee on government reform as well as other subcommittees and tomorrow the full committee will be starting to address the Department of Homeland Security. I wanted to raise a few other issues this evening. One in particular has to do with visa clearance, as we have learned, that really the Department of Homeland Security is more aptly called the Department of Border Security for Catastrophic Security. In other words, it has predominantly to deal with the meeters and greeters, those people as they are coming through ports of entry, as they are coming in airports, as they are crossing borders, as they are making decisions to come to the United States, and the primary concern of this department is catastrophic terrorism, not day-to-day terrorism. If you look at it in that sense, that is why the President has chosen to put the agencies that he has inside the Department of Homeland Security.

But there are a number of things that we need to look at hard in Congress. In section 403, visa issuance, it says in the proposed legislation that exclusive authority to issue regulations with respect to, administer and enforce the provisions of this act and all other immigration and nationality laws relating to the functions of diplomatic and consular offices of the United States will be given to this department, but it says, through the Secretary of State.

One fundamental question is, why are the people who are making the visa decisions at the embassies not considered part of the homeland security since otherwise the people at the Border Patrol, the Customs, the INS and others who are making those decisions at the border are merely reacting to what has been cleared at the embassy? Secretary of State Powell has objected with several comments and I wanted to respond to those.

He says that the Secretary of State and the State Department no longer have command over employees at the embassy. Of course not. There are other people who work at our embassies abroad, DEA, for example, and other agencies of the United States Government, the Defense Department, who work through our embassies and are not the direct employees of the Secretary of State. They have different missions. In this case, visa clearance, in my opinion, is a homeland security question predominantly and secondarily a foreign affairs question. And where it is a foreign affairs question in the case of China, the Secretary of State should be weighing in; but where it is a homeland security question, that person ought to be a line person in the Department of Homeland Security.

He says there would be conflicting information and guidelines for visa adjudication policy. No, there are currently conflicting things. Both the Justice Department and the State Department input and quite frankly homeland security ought to be the preeminent concern and then other political interests should be a concern.

He says the Secretary of State's ability to set foreign policy would be limited, only limited based on terrorism. The next question would be, Would this diminish the role of American ambassadors? No more than having DEA and other Defense Department personnel and other Commerce Department personnel in the embassy. We all recognize the importance of each ambassador being the American voice in those countries. No matter who works in that embassy, no matter who visits as a Member of Congress, our job is to back up the American voice in that country and not to cause cognitive dissonance in those countries. I do not believe it undermines the ambassador, I do not believe it undermines the Secretary of State, but if we are serious that this is at least the Department of Border Security, then we need to make sure that visa clearance comes under the Department of Homeland Security.

I also wanted to address a few questions related to Customs and illustrate a few points and challenges we have there. Clearly Customs is patrolling the border. This picture is one that I took along the Canadian border east of Blaine, Washington. This is Cascades National Park coming up on this side, which is further to the east. You can see the Canadian border running along here, a ditch that you could maybe sprain your ankle if you were running fast, but basically it is a completely unprotected border. Furthermore when you go in through the mountains, it is even less protected. As we tighten the borders at the crossings, we have to address the broader questions of how we are going to deal with the border; and if we overtighten at the crossing which will also restrict commerce, not only will we push it to the east in some cases, to the west in others and in the mountains and into the water, we also will have slowed down commerce. So it is important to understand that while the primary mission of the customs department in homeland security will be security, it is also important that they keep the trade moving.

We will continue to discuss this in committee and on the floor because it is very important we maintain the balance in Customs and Coast Guard in addition to homeland security for trade and other missions that they have.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, for the next hour I plan to visit with the Members of the United States House of Representatives, and other Members will be joining me throughout this hour, to talk about the need to truly modernize Medicare, to include medicine for our seniors. This is something that both parties have talked a lot about. They have talked about it for years. Yet we continue to live in a society where today's Medicare, if you really stop and think about it, is designed for yesterday's medical care. What I mean by that is I recently encountered an elderly woman in Glenwood, Arkansas, in my congressional district who is a retired pharmacist who just happened to have been a relief pharmacist at the pharmacy that my family used in Prescott, Arkansas, when I was a small child growing up there. She talked about how if she filled a prescription and it cost more than $5, she would go ahead and fill the next prescription while she tried to build up enough courage and confidence to go out and tell the patient that their medicine was going to cost $5. My, my, how times have changed. How times have changed and indeed today's Medicare really is designed for yesterday's medical care.

I have stepped across the aisle and voted with my Republican Members probably as many times as any Democrat in this Chamber. So I think I can say with some credibility and with some respect that when it comes to the need to provide our seniors with a prescription drug benefit, in my opinion the Republicans are dead wrong on this issue. This is coming from a conservative Democrat from south Arkansas, one who has crossed over that aisle and