We have hurt children more on this House floor in the last 2 years than I ever dreamed it here in the House, and I do not question their good will, but I noticed that most of them who are sincere liberals of principle, classic liberals, are also against this partial birth.

So I will put in the cardinal's letter, Mr. Speaker, and then read it slowly tomorrow from today's RECORD.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT,

*Washington, DC, April 16, 1996.*

President WILLIAM CLINTON,
*The White House,*
*Washington, DC.*

DEAR PRESIDENT CLINTON: It is with deep sorrow and dismay that we respond to your April 10 veto of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act.

Your veto of this bill is beyond comprehension for those who hold human life sacred. It will ensure the continued use of the most heinous act to kill a tiny infant just seconds from taking his or her first breath outside the womb.

At the veto ceremony you told the American people that you ''had no choice but to veto the bill.'' Mr. President, you and you alone had the choice of whether or not to allow children, almost completely born, to be killed brutally in partial-birth abortions. Members of both Houses of Congress made their choice. They said No to partial-birth abortions. American women voters have made their choice. According to a February 1996 poll by Fairbank, Maslin, Aaullin & Associates, 78 percent of women voters said No to partial-birth abortions. Your choice was to say Yes and to allow this killing more akin to infanticide than abortion to continue.

During the veto ceremony you said you had asked Congress to change H.R. 1833 to allow partial-birth abortions to be done for ''serious adverse health consequences'' to the mother. You added that if Congress had included that exception, ''everyone in the world will know what we're talking about.

On the contrary, Mr. President, not everyone in the world would know that ''health,'' as the courts define it in the context of abortion, means virtually anything that has to do with a woman's overall ''well being.'' For example, most people have no idea that if a woman has an abortion because she is not married, the law considers that an abortion for a ''health'' reason.

Similarly, if a woman is ''too young'' or ''too old,'' if she is emotionally upset by pregnancy, or if pregnancy interferes with schooling or career, the law considers those situations as ''health'' reasons for abortion. In other words, as you know and we know, an exception for ''health'' means abortion on demand.

You say there is a difference between a ''health'' exception and an exception for ''serious adverse health consequences.'' Mr. President, what is the difference—legally—between a woman's being too young and being ''seriously'' too young? What is the difference—legally—between being emotionally upset and being ''seriously'' emotionally upset? From your study of this issue, Mr. President, you must know that most partial-birth abortions are done for reasons that are purely elective.

It was instructive that the veto ceremony included no physician able to explain how a woman's physical health is protected by almost fully delivering her living child, and then killing that child in the most inhumane manner imaginable before completing the delivery. As a matter of fact, a partial-birth abortion presents a health risk to the woman. Dr. Warren Hern, who wrote the most widely used textbook on how to perform abortions, has said of partial-birth abortions: ''I would dispute any statement that this is the safest procedure to use.''

Mr. President, all abortions are lethal for unborn children, and many are unsafe for their mothers. This is even more evident in the late-term, partial-birth abortion, in which children are killed cruelly, their mothers placed at risk, and the society that condones it brutalized in the process.

As Catholic bishops and as citizens of the United States, we strenuously oppose and condemn your veto of H.R. 1833 which will allow partial-birth abortions to continue.

In the coming weeks and months, each of us, as well as our bishops' conference, will do all we can to educate people about partial-birth abortions. We will inform them that partial-birth abortions will continue because you chose to veto H.R. 1833.

We will also urge Catholics and other people of good will—including the 65% of self-described ''pro-choice'' voters who oppose partial-birth abortions—to do all that they can to urge Congress to override this shameful veto.

Mr. President, your action on this matter takes our nation to a critical turning point in its treatment of helpless human beings inside and outside the womb. It moves our nation one step further toward acceptance of infanticide. Combined with the two recent federal appeals court decisions seeking to legitimize assisted suicide, it sounds the alarm that public officials are moving our society ever more rapidly to embrace a culture of death.

Writing this response to you in unison is, on our part, virtually unprecedented. It will, we hope, underscore our resolve to be unremitting and unambiguous in our defense of human life.

Sincerely yours,

1 Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago; Cardinal James Hickey, Archbishop of Washington; Cardinal Bernard Law, Archbishop of Boston; Cardinal Adam Maida, Archbishop of Detroit; Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, Archbishop of Philadelphia; Cardinal William Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore; Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles; Cardinal John O'Connor, Archbishop of New York; Most Rev. Anthony Pilla, President, National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

## MILITARY AIRCRAFT SAFETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. HUNTER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I convened a panel of the procurement subcommittee of the Committee on National Security to investigate the series of tragic mishaps with respect to F–14 crashed and Aviate B Harrier Marine Corps fighter aircraft crashes that have occurred since the beginning of the year, and, Mr. Speaker, it is very clear to us and to my friend, Mr. DORNAN. who has quite a bit of time in an Air Force cockpit, and my good friend, Mr. CUNNINGHAM, my seatmate from San Diego, that it is dangerous to be a pilot in the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Marine Corps; it is more dangerous to be a pilot when you have a government that will not pay the money that has to be paid to make that aircraft as safe as it can possibly be made.

The testimony from the U.S. Marine Corps yesterday was that Harriers are tough aircraft to fly. Almost one-third of the entire Harrier air inventory, aircraft inventory, has crashed since its inception, and we have had three tragic crashes this year of these Harrier Jumpjets. The Marine Corps told us yesterday that we could make that plane 50 percent more safe than it is right now, and we do that by remanufacturing the aircraft and adding safety features. They told us that the Clinton administration has decided not to make 24 of those aircraft as safe as they can be, and when we asked why, we were told because of budgetary constraints.

So, Mr. Speaker, for the first time, we are seeing the Clinton defense budget come apart at the seams. We are seeing a defense budget which is costing us; it has been cut so drastically. by 72 percent in the area of modernization, that we are not able to make these aircraft, these Harrier aircraft, as safe as they can be for Marine pilots.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Republicans are coming to their rescue. I have talked with the chairman of the full committee, our good friend, FLOYD SPENCE, and he concurs that we will fix all 24 of those aircraft that right now the Clinton administration does not plan to upgrade with safety upgrades so that the pilots will be more secure than they are flying the aircraft right now.

So I want to announce, as the chairman of the procurement subcommittee, that the Republican markup will reflect upgrades, it will cost about $26 million per plane for all 24 of the Harrier aircraft that the Clinton administration has decided, in their infinite wisdom, not to fund.

Additionally, on the F–14, and an F–14 crashed today, the Republicans are going to be adding about $83 million for several items that will make that aircraft safer. We are going to come up with a digital flight control system; we are going to install that. We are also going to come up with a system that indicates when the engine is getting overloaded and will advise people in the cockpit that they have to take action fairly quickly. Those are two safety upgrades that we will be funding in the procurement subcommittee for the F–14.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Republicans are riding to the rescue in national defense, and Mr. Perry, Secretary Perry, has come down to the House Armed Services Committee and told us that everything is fine with defense. These massive cuts that the Clinton administration has been making according to Dr. Perry have not harmed national defense at all.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Clinton defense budget is coming apart at the seams, and these recent crashes and

the lack of initiative on the part of the Clinton administration to make these planes as safe as they can be is only the tip of the iceberg, but the Republicans are going to fix these aircraft. We are going to be making these Harriers as safe as they can possibly be, and we will be funding upgrades to the F–14's to make them as safe as they can be.

I am happy to yield to my friend.

Mr. DORNAN. I flew the Harrier for the fourth time last August 8. Outstanding pilots down at Cherry Point and also at Yuma. It is a unique aircraft. It has stolen the show at every air show for over 2½ decades. But it is a difficult airplane to fly. And I will join in this fight, and I can guarantee you we will prevail.

I did not know an F–14 crashed today. Where did that happen?

Mr. HUNTER. That happened on the East Coast, I think at Oceana.

Mr. DORNAN. Right. Well, we will do the best we can.

Mr. HUNTER. That was an F–14B model crashed today.

Mr. DORNAN. Right. If we were in Israel, there would be no question that their first line of defense would get what they needed to be safe.

□ 1800

## ADVANCES BROUGHT ABOUT BY REPUBLICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. METCALF). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MICA] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, when I came to Congress 3 years ago, I was really appalled, like many other Americans, to find out that Congress really did not have to live under the laws that they imposed on everyone else.

I remember, when I ordered signs for my district office, I attempted to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Then I came back to Washington and was shocked to find out that in Washington, they did not comply with the ADA Act, and they did not comply with the rest of the rules and regulations.

It was ironic, shortly thereafter, that I had visiting constituents from my district and around the country who were visually impaired. I really was embarrassed to see those folks try to find their way around this place, this maze, without any proper, even common courtesy identification for those with a disability.

I wrote on February 26, 1993, to the Democrat committee chairman who was in charge of the House oversight at that time. Mr. Speaker, I include that letter for the RECORD.

The letter referred to is as follows:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
*Washington, DC, February 26, 1993.*

Hon. CHARLIE ROSE,
*Chairman, Committee on House Administration, The Capitol, Washington, DC.*

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: My recent experience in ordering signage for my district offices in Central Florida has prompted me to ask why the House of Representatives should not comply with a simple and necessary provision of the Americans with Disability Act with regard to use of braille for blind and visually impaired people.

After laborious efforts to get local district office signs approved by the committee on House Administration, the sign company informed me that ADA regulations also required that the suite numbers be in braille. After inquiring with committee staff as to why this was not addressed in the Congressional Handbook, I was informed that the House was exempt from the regulation. I did, however, request the addition of braille to my signs.

It was ironic in that the same week this happened, representatives for the blind and visually impaired around the country were visiting their Members of Congress and no Member suites in the House Office Buildings are equipped with braille signs.

I would like to request that House rules add braille directional signs located in the interior of local district offices and in the House offices buildings. I urge that consideration be given to this much needed service to our visually impaired citizens.

Sincerely,

JOHN L. MICA,
*Member of Congress.*

Rather than reading the whole letter that I wrote to the chairman of the Committee on House Oversight, I will summarize it. I told him our experience, that here we are, a Congress telling people to comply with the laws, and I just had these folks with visual infirmities and disabilities in the hallways, trying to find their way around the Capitol. Why could we not at least give them the courtesy of labeling our offices in compliance with ADA? I never got a reply. I brought it up again, and I asked and begged.

The American people made some changes here then. On the first day of the 104th Congress we passed, remember, the Congressional Accountability Act. That said that every Member of Congress and Congress must comply with the laws they impose on everyone else. Most people do not know that that is now the law. Sometimes around here there are great battles and little victories.

I am here tonight to tell you about one little victory. Here is the little victory. Going up around the Capitol Building and in my office, and I am so proud of this little improvement, little victory, are these signs. They are placed in compliance with ADA. If you are visually impaired, you can even find out whose office you are in. This is a small success, but we said when we took control of this Congress we were going to make some changes. We were going to make Congress obey these laws. This is one little victory that I am so proud of.

Not only did we do that, but how thrilled I was today to also find another sign which was going up. Heaven forbid we should have maps that should help those visually impaired to find their way around the maze of the Capitol Building, but we have these, and actually your can put your hands across these, and those visually impaired and who read Braille, they can find their way around this maze.

So Republicans said they would make changes, and they are making changes. I know this is not changing the world as we know it; it is not changing everything, our freshman program, but it is a beginning.

There are some other things that people probably do not know about what we have done with the Congress and the congressional budget. I want to take a minute to thank, first of all, the gentleman from California, BILL THOMAS, who is chairman of the Committee on House Oversight, for his actions and leadership on this issue and other issues.

Mr. Speaker, the Republicans said they would cut the cost of operating this Congress, the legislative branch, and they did. We cut a quarter of a billion, $250 million, out of our budget. That is done.

Republicans said they would cut congressional staff, and we reduced the staff on the Hill somewhere in the neighborhood of 2,000 positions. I chaired the Civil Service Subcommittee, which was three subcommittees before. It had 54 staffers. We operate it with 7. We said we were going to make changes. We did make those changes. Republicans said they would privatize capital operations, and we did.

## EARTH DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, my purpose tonight is to talk about Earth Day and the lessons of Earth Day and what it means for us now in 1996. I think many of our constituents know that Earth Day is 26 years old now. It will take place this year on April 22, and the first Earth Day was in April 1970.

The reason we are concerned and the reason that several Democrats are here tonight to talk about Earth Day is because we are very concerned that this Congress, under the Republican leadership of the gentleman from Georgia, NEWT GINGRICH, has essentially tried to roll back the bipartisan effort that has been made in the House of Representatives, in the Senate, by Presidents of both parties over the last 25 years to try to improve our laws and our enforcement with regard to environmental protection.

In the last 14 or 15 months or so that we have been here in this Congress, we have seen day after day, week after week, efforts by Speaker GINGRICH and the Republican leadership to weaken the laws that have been on the books, and to provide less funding for enforcement and investigation against polluters who are violating those laws.

Before I go on, though, I will yield to the gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. MEEK] who would also like to address