

seems that in our darkest hours, Americans always rise to a new level of decency and honor.

During the American Civil War, it was Abraham Lincoln who gave voice to the truth that America cannot truly be free as long as we excluded men and women based on the color of their skin. As the civil rights movement in the 1960s grew, a new voice was heard, the voice of a preacher who reminded all Americans that only God could determine what was in a person's heart and a colorblind system of justice could establish equality in America.

Now at the dawn of the 21st century, Mr. Speaker, only a free and equal society can shape the future of this great Nation. Only by working together as a unified nation can we truly realize the potential of all of our citizens and the beauty of our more perfect union. Even today we have not reached a place where all minorities share equally in the American dream. President Clinton in his inaugural address issued a challenge to the Nation to reshape our society by creating a new government for a new century, a government humble enough not to try to solve all our problems for us, but strong enough to give us the tools to solve our problems for ourselves.

I agree with his challenge, but I add that all Americans must have access to the tools necessary to solve those problems. And so here in Black History Month, Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues from the House on both sides of the aisle and the Senate as well and join with the executive branch and all Americans across the United States to make sure that we rededicate ourselves to the principles of Abraham Lincoln, the principles of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and to make sure that we correct the inequities and to make sure that opportunity for all, whether it be in education, housing, jobs, in training, access to public accommodation, is equal to all, and we will rededicate ourselves to that purpose and to those goals.

HR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 10 a.m. tomorrow.

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

There was no objection.

AMERICAN PATENT SYSTEM UNDER THREAT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRBACHER] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, I am asking my colleagues today to join me in cosponsoring the Patent Term Restoration Act. This piece of legisla-

tion is basically the same bill that I offered last year as H.R. 359. H.R. 359 had over 200 cosponsors; 81 of them were Democrats. H.R. 359 had the support of major universities, pharmaceutical companies, energy companies, energy innovators, biotech companies, venture capitalists, and, most importantly, it had the support of every small inventor organization in the country.

Last year H.R. 359, my piece of legislation, never made it to the floor of the House of Representatives for a vote. This year, we have every indication that it should get to the floor and have a vote here on the floor of the House of Representatives by the August break.

Last year there was another patent bill, as well as my own, that was introduced. This was a far different bill. It was introduced by Congressman Carlos Moorhead and Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, who are now, of course, retired from this institution. This bill had a dozen or so cosponsors, but it had the tremendous support, the enormous support, of multinational corporations and those people in the political and economic establishment that are struggling to create what they are calling a global economy.

You see, the Patent Term Restoration Act, H.R. 359, which I will be submitting and asking Members to join me in cosponsoring, takes a totally different approach than what last year's bill by Mr. Moorhead and Mrs. Schroeder was taking. In fact, their bill now, H.R. 3460, has been reintroduced as H.R. 400, which will also come to the floor by the August break.

So we have two different approaches, and I thought that today I would discuss this major decision that Congress will make that seems like it is such an obscure issue and a complicated issue that many Americans will probably not even understand that there is an important decision about to be made that will impact so directly on their lives and the lives of their children.

First of all, let us note that patent protection in the United States of America is something that has reaped tremendous rewards for our people. We have had, in the United States of America, the strongest patent protection of any country in the world.

In fact, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and others of our Founding Fathers insisted that the concept of patent protection be written into the Constitution of the United States. We in fact had the strongest patent protection because our Founding Fathers believed it, it was written into our Constitution, and throughout our history the idea of the ownership of one's creative genius was always supported by the American Government.

Thus, over the years, as people came here from every part of the world, people who wanted to work hard and people who had the creative spirit and a revolutionary spirit about them, these people brought with them new ideas, and they were confronted with a society that protected their ideas and gave

them the right to own those ideas, just as we gave people the right to own property.

Many of the countries from which our Founding Fathers and Mothers came from, the right of property ownership for the average person did not exist. In fact, people were repressed, and the right of ownership, just like other rights, the right of religion and speech, were not things that were granted to the common man. These were things that were meant for the aristocracy. That is why people came to the United States of America, because they read Thomas Jefferson and they read Benjamin Franklin and they read Thomas Paine and Patrick Henry and John Adams and George Washington, and they read our Declaration of Independence and they knew something was going on in the United States of America. It was a place where the common man could come, he could raise his family, and a family could expect that their children would have opportunities beyond anything that was accessible anywhere else in the world. Part of this opportunity came from the fact that we recognized property rights. The property rights to own land, as I say, was also protected by the Constitution. The right of contract, and other economic liberties that were only thought of as rights for the elite in these other countries, were turned over to every person who was an American, and every person who came here who wished to become a citizen was given freedom. They were not given any subsidies or any type of welfare, but they were given freedom, and they were given the promise that their rights would be protected. As I say, interestingly enough, one of these rights that is so often ignored and often overlooked was the right to own one's own creative genius, the product of one's own creative genius, the patent right.

Traditionally, this is how the patent system worked in America. As I say, it was the strongest of any place in the world. Someone who had a new idea, whether it was Eli Whitney with the cotton gin or whether it was Samuel Morse with the telegraph or Alexander Graham Bell with his many inventions, the light bulb and others, these people would work on their idea and they would then develop their idea into a patent and take it in the proper form and would submit this idea, submit it to the Patent Office and the Patent Office would consider their idea.

Traditionally, no matter how long it took our Government to act in granting the right of ownership to that piece of property, that intellectual property, the applicant always knew that after the patent was granted that he would have a guaranteed patent term. Well, that was part of the guaranteed rights that we had.

You have a right to freedom of speech, you have a right of freedom of religion, you have a right of freedom of assembly. You have a right to own your property. Well, you also had a