[Mr. Smith] expect to propose a resolution urging the FDA and the EPA to postpone action on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, 30 million people in the United States today rely on these medications and as each of us know, some better than others, these people use a product called a metered dose inhaler, which I will refer to as an MDI, to deliver the medications they need into their lungs. Over the past 25 years, we have developed many new treatments for people with asthma, chronic pulmonary disease, and other airway diseases that prevent people from breathing. In fact, there are now 70 different products available in metered dose inhalers. For people who cannot breathe, these products are lifesavers and allow people to lead normal lives.

On March 6, 1997, the Food and Drug Administration surprisingly issued an advance notice of proposed rulemaking that sets in motion a process to take these medications away from patients. According to the FDA, this proposed rule was developed in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency, seeking to ban CFC's, which I will refer to as.

CFC's are important in this picture because all metered dose inhalers, except one, use CFC's, a propellant that gets the medicine from the inhaler canister into the patients' lungs. Until recently, CFC's were the only propellant approved by the FDA to do so.

I am told that makers of metered dose inhalers believe that elimination of CFC's is a worthy goal. Therefore, that is why the United States and 140 other countries signed a treaty to phase out CFC's use. I believe this treaty did a good job establishing a process that allows companies that make products that use CFC's to develop alternatives and get these to the customers.

The treaty went for the big users of CFC's. In the United States we no longer use CFC's in hair sprays, air fresheners, new cars containing air-conditioning systems, and new refrigerators. Some of us here in the House may question this altogether, but it is done.

The treaty, however, also acknowledged that some uses were more difficult to phase out. Asthma medicines were one of them. So why is the FDA now proposing action that would unnecessarily move up the time line provided in this international treaty? Why, when FDA's mission is to provide patients with safe and effective medicines, is it seeking to ban the safe and effective medicines from patients who require them?

Thousands of Americans fear this proposed policy. I am keenly aware of the experiences of a woman in Ocala, my hometown of Florida, said,

I understand there is an FDA proposal to withdraw certain inhaler medications. As an asthmatic patient with a daughter and 3 grandchildren who are also asthmatic, I protest your proposal vehemently. The CFC and the metered dose inhalers have minimal impact on the environment. One of my family could suffer or die because of your phasing out the proposal. You will be responsible.

Another man from Ocala, L, writes,

In September 1993, I was discharged from the hospital under the care of a hospital specialist who had attended me. I had been confined for almost a month with viral pneumonia and was being treated with a wide range of medications, including 16 inhalers. After the specialist had given me hope and estimated that I could live for perhaps 2 weeks. Needless to say, they were wrong and I survived but my lungs are severely damaged. I have been using three different MDI medications ever since since my recovery and would not survive without them.

Great strides have been made in elimination of these products in refrigeration systems and in various aerosol sprays but MDI products must be viewed in a totally different way. They are essential to the health of many persons as opposed to the other products which were used for comfort or convenience. Moreover, reasonable substitutes have been found for nonmedical products. This is not the case for MDI's. I urge the FDA to postpone action on elimination of CFC's from metered dose inhalers until such a medically safe substitute is found.

In conclusion, another woman from Ocala states,

My life depends on MDI's and I am never without three of them, and they all contain different medications. I'm 69 years of age and I've used them most of my adult life and I cannot understand the big rush suddenly to ban the MDI's. It is frightening to think of the ban since my very life depends upon it.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the 10,000 letters that the FDA has received over the past 2 years urging the FDA and the EPA to postpone action on the elimination of CFC's from metered dose inhalers until such a medically safe substitute is found.

LEGISLATION TO EASE IRS BURDEN ON ELECTION OFFICIALS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. Gekas] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. Gekas. Mr. Speaker, it is not an overstatement to say that our system of free elections, which is the envy of the world and the envy of the history of civilization, depends a great deal on the volunteer election system that we have in manning and womaning the polls, our election workers who come from our neighborhoods and who help every single election day to put through a process which, as I say, is the envy of the world. Yet over the last several years we have found a subtle threat to these free elections. I say again I am not overstating it. What has happened is that the IRS has mandated that these workers who only work once or twice a year, who most of the time are senior citizens who have long since retired and are only helping out in their precincts because they have been requested to and because they want to help out, they are being subjected to the same tax regulations as the high-earning citizens of our communities.

A long time ago the Congress took a step to try to help the situation, to say that if a person earns less than $1,000 a