

your family all the best for a wonderful future.

HONORING SENATOR JOHN GLENN

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I will take a moment this afternoon to say a few words about another truly historic announcement that occurred during the recess. On behalf of the people of the State of Ohio and all of our colleagues in the U.S. Senate, let me say how truly proud we are of our distinguished friend and colleague, Senator JOHN GLENN. By now, everyone in America knows that in October at the age of 77, Senator JOHN GLENN will return to space as a member of the crew of the space shuttle Discovery.

Mr. President, very few people show the kind of courage shown throughout his lifetime by JOHN GLENN, courage that Senator GLENN showed when he flew 149—149—heroic combat missions as a Marine pilot in World War II and then in the Korean war facing death from enemy fighters and antiaircraft fire. Because of all the enemy fire that JOHN GLENN braved, we are told his buddies called him the “Mig-Mad Marine,” and I guess they had a few other names for him, as well.

Mr. President, it comes as no surprise to those of us who know him that our friend, JOHN GLENN, is that kind of a rare person. One reporter commented that when he was a young man he was thrilled by then Colonel GLENN's orbits around the Earth and yelled out, “Go, Colonel GLENN, go.” Well, Mr. President, I had pretty much the same experience, as millions of Americans did. My experience occurred when I was in high school, my wife Fran and I were in high school in Yellow Springs High School and the day that JOHN GLENN orbited the Earth and made that historic flight I happened to be in Mr. Ed Wingard's science class in Yellow Springs High School. We all listened on the radio to the progress of this truly historic flight. For those who were not born at that time or cannot remember it, it is hard to describe the atmosphere in this country. It is hard to explain how literally this country came to a stop, when people gathered around TVs and gathered around radios for that period of time as he went around the Earth and made those three orbits.

In fact, just about anyone around back then can tell you how important that achievement was for the American people, and they can tell you where they were and what they were doing at that moment. We, as a Nation at that time, Mr. President, were shaken, we had been shaken when the Russians beat us into space with the Sputnik, Sputnik satellite, earlier in 1957 and then in April of 1961 they sent Yuri Gagarin into orbit, the first man in space. The same week as that flight the U.S. was rocked by the tragedy and failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba.

In short, Mr. President, America was reeling, and that is one of the reasons why our hearts were lifted so very

much by JOHN GLENN's daring exploit. That, Mr. President, was a great day to be an American. I hear a lot of that enthusiasm today after the announcement that Senator GLENN will be going back into space. I think that one of his last public services as a Member of the U.S. Senate may be one of the most valuable achievements of his long and very distinguished career because JOHN GLENN has a rare, truly incredible opportunity to educate the rest of us, to educate the American people about the value of America's adventure in space. Who better, Mr. President, than JOHN GLENN to speak to Americans about this great American achievement? Who better to explain to us the importance of NASA, the importance of space exploration? And who among us, except JOHN GLENN, has that historical perspective and can explain it in terms that average Americans can understand? JOHN GLENN has a unique ability to tell this great story. He has that ability because he has lived it.

Mr. President, I think this space mission is already starting to fire up the imagination of the American people about the wonders of discovery. It can remind us again that we as Americans have a tradition of national greatness and that the pursuit of national greatness remains our continued breathtaking challenge. So, Colonel—Senator—the hearts of all Ohioans and the hearts of your colleagues in the Senate, and indeed all Americans, will be with you on your historic mission. Our hearts will also be with your great family and with your heroic wife Annie. As President Clinton said the other night, godspeed, JOHN GLENN.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, what is the business before the Senate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are still in morning business.

Mr. GRAMS. Thank you very much.

TAXPAYERS ON THE HOOK: THE NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE COUNTDOWN

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today because after 16 years of denials, delays, and indifference on the part of the U.S. Department of Energy, the American taxpayers are about to find themselves saddled with the liability for our nation's nuclear waste.

It is a liability they do not deserve, and one they most certainly cannot afford. Unfortunately, the President failed to warn them on Tuesday night during his State of the Union address that many of the achievements he acknowledged are at risk—threatened by

a federal government failure so massive that it may take the taxpayers years, even decades, to burrow out from underneath it.

What could be so potentially devastating? The failure of the U.S. Department of Energy to begin accepting the nation's spent commercial nuclear fuel.

And, Mr. President, the taxpayers will inherit the responsibility for that failure just three days from now.

At midnight on January 31, 1998, the DOE is required by law to begin accepting spent nuclear fuel from sites across the nation.

The clock was set in motion 16 years ago, upon enactment of the “Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982.”

Since then, utility ratepayers have been required to pay the federal government more than 13 billion of their hard-earned dollars in exchange for the promise that the DOE would develop and build a centralized repository for the safe and efficient storage of spent nuclear fuel.

But that's yet another government promise that won't be kept.

Today, 16 years later—with 7 billion of those ratepayer dollars already spent—the waste is piling up.

Nobody at the DOE wants it—nobody at the DOE is prepared to claim it—and because there's no place to put it, nobody at the DOE would be ready to take it by the January 31st deadline anyway. That's just three days from now.

At the same time energy consumers are pouring billions into the waste fund, ratepayers and utilities are continuing to pay for on-site storage at more than 70 commercial nuclear plants throughout the country.

In other words, ratepayers are being forced to pay twice for nuclear waste storage—all because the Department of Energy has failed to meet its legal obligations to the American people.

Sadly, these costs pale in comparison to the true catastrophe the DOE has in store for the taxpayers beginning just three days from now.

The United States Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, in a ruling issued on November 14, said that not only is the DOE authorized to begin accepting waste on January 31, but also able to fulfill its contractual obligations to remove it.

By failing to do so, the court ruled, the DOE makes the federal government liable for any damages resulting from even the smallest delay in performance.

And we all know who foots government's bills.

By failing to take possession of the nation's nuclear waste just three days from now, the DOE will in essence make the American taxpayer responsible for those damages.

According to the Nuclear Energy Institute, the estimated cost of storing spent nuclear fuel at power plants across the nation through 2020 is \$56 billion, with the federal government—the taxpayers—liable for every dollar.