

Mr. Speaker, there are many more issues that I could review, but I think I am approaching the end of my time.

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, we are hearing increased rhetoric, some of it bordering on fantasy and hysteria, concerning global climate change. What is lacking and desperately needed is a full and open and robust debate. Is our climate changing?

One temperature measuring system suggests that since 1900 there has been less than 1 degree of warming. Two other systems point to a slight cooling trend. While treaty supporters assert that the science of issues of global climate change are settled, the evidence clearly and loudly says that the debate should just be beginning.

Here are some of the risks not mentioned by treaty supporters: the risk that energy suppression mandates will devastate employment in major U.S. industries; that rising fuel and electricity prices will depress the living standards of American families; that new tax and regulatory policies will handicap employers, enrich special interests and expand bureaucracy and risk the surrendering of more U.S. sovereignty to the U.N.

Now, some people think that the Kyoto Protocol is the flawed execution of a bad idea, based on the conceit that government planners can know today what will be the worst calamity facing mankind 50 or even 100 years from now. Mobilizing the nations of the world and spending vast sums to fend off one possible threat that may prove to be nonexistent or trivial compared to the age-old scourges of poverty, hunger, disease and oppression is not a prudent insurance policy.

The resources available to protect human health and safety are limited, especially in the Third World. Any policy that diverts trillions of dollars from real problems and real science to speculative and imaginary ones, or that locks mankind into politically correct and industrial policy schemes can only make societies less resilient, less able to meet the challenge of an unknown future.

Mr. Speaker, should we risk the American economy and way of life before the evidence is conclusive? Let us have the debate first. Let us not approve the many billions of dollars that the President has requested to start implementing in this year's budget. The President has not submitted a treaty to the Senate. No debate has been held in the Senate. No ratification of a treaty has taken place.

Let us tell the President, no, no, no, on funding until we have the debate first and until the evidence is conclusive. I have no doubt that if the evi-

dence is conclusive, if we do come to that conclusion, this Congress will do whatever is necessary to resolve the problem.

But until we have that debate, until the evidence is in, until we have absolute proof, let us say no to the President to spending billions of our tax dollars, starting this year, on a treaty that has not been approved by the Senate.

REPUBLICAN AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our leadership for designating me as the person representing our leadership and House Republicans during this special order. The very first thing I want to do is compliment the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. PETERSON, who preceded me to the well for his very, very incisive remarks on the global warming theory, particularly when we get so much "chicken little" hysteria on environmental issues back here in Washington that are not always supported by very sound science. I thank him for his comments today. I join with him in his efforts.

I also wanted to take the floor to address the House during this special order because just a couple of days ago the President accused congressional Republicans, since we are the majority party and we do have a responsibility for governing the legislative branch of government and the country, to accuse us of being a do-nothing Congress, specifically with respect to his proposals.

So I would like to challenge his comments, I do not think they should go unchallenged or that we should allow them to stand without a rebuttal, and try to put things in context for my colleagues; and to, and for, frankly, our fellow Americans who might be viewing or listening to this debate.

First of all, with respect to the President's new education proposals, let me assure my colleagues that we Republicans in the Congress have our own agenda. It focuses on common-sense reform, not creating more bureaucracy back here in Washington, not funding a host of new Federal programs and regulations with your hard-earned tax dollars.

We would prefer, we Republicans would prefer to focus on parental involvement and parental choice in education. We understand that the key to improving education in America today is to empower parents to choose the education and the schooling that is most appropriate, that they deem most appropriate for their child. We understand that empowering parents through greater choice in education is the only way really to make our education system more competitive and, therefore, more accountable. It is

called "bootstrap improvement" because empowering parents, giving parents more choice, and I favor giving parents the full range of choice among all competing institutions, public, private or parochial, that has been my position even before I was elected to Congress and certainly before last year when I assumed the chairmanship of the education subcommittee in the House.

I personally believe that empowering parents to choose the school and education that is appropriate for their child is the only way to make schools more accountable. However, that involves what we would call a paradigm shift. That involves shifting the focus in education from the providers of education, the whole education establishment, including the very powerful teachers' unions, shifting the focus from them, the providers of education, to parents, the consumers of education.

We are working hard to do that here in Washington. We are working hard to help working families and stay-at-home mothers.

With respect to the President's child care proposal, he wants to put more and more emphasis on institutionalized, that is to say "outside the home," child care, especially for families where both parents work. We Republicans believe that as a matter of government policy and in terms of spending again your hard-earned tax dollars, we should not favor institutionalized day care. We should not, as a matter of policy, almost discriminate against families where one parent chooses to stay at home in order to be there for the children, in order to provide the children with the additional care and nurturing that they need during their early or all-important formative years. In fact, we think that, again with respect to child care, the President's emphasis is in the wrong place, that we ought to reverse his emphasis and put more emphasis on helping families keep more of what they earn so that both parents do not necessarily feel compelled to work outside the home in order to be able to meet the needs, the financial needs of that family.

With respect to education, we also want to drive more money down to the local level. We would prefer that at least, at least 90 cents of every Federal taxpayer dollar for education, every dollar that you send to Washington that is earmarked for Federal education purposes and programs, we would like to ensure that at least 90 cents of every dollar go back down to the local level, ideally to the classroom to pay someone who actually knows that child's name, who works with that child on a daily basis, rather than continue to use it to build more bureaucracy back here in Washington.

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That only leads to concentrating more power, more money, more decision-making in Washington as we Federalize education and move further and