

(Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FEDERALISM, EXECUTIVE ORDER 13083, AND H. CON. RES. 299

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, our republic recently celebrated 222 years of liberty and freedom. For the last 209 years, these freedoms have been guaranteed by our Constitution.

In spite of this, the Clinton administration is now trying to undermine the Constitution through Executive orders, threatening the powers of Congress, the sovereignty of the States, and the rights of all Americans.

Our Founding Fathers demonstrated timeless wisdom in the crafting of our Constitution and Bill of Rights. The Constitution carefully defines the authority granted to each of the three branches of the Federal Government to ensure a separation and balance of Federal powers.

Additionally, the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution protects the rights of the States to self-determination, requiring that powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively or to the people.

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Both of these constitutional provisions guarantee the individual rights of American citizens throughout the democratic process. Our Bill of Rights and republican form of government ensure that the people maintain the ultimate authority to govern themselves.

The success of our Constitution is clear. The United States is the world's strongest economic power, providing a standard of living to Americans that is the envy of the world. Our Nation is also the world's foremost military power, providing strong protection to American citizens from foreign threats to our liberties and to our democratic principles.

Finally and most importantly, our government is the single greatest guarantor and protector of individual liberties in the world today. The freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, the freedom to own property, the freedom to vote are just a few of the liberties that American citizens enjoy, thanks to the wisdom and foresight of the framers of our Constitution.

Sometimes we take these liberties for granted, but benefits such as public safety, education and the finest health care system in the world should remind us that the Constitution provides us with much more than abstract principles.

In spite of the great successes of our Republic, President Clinton has dis-

regarded our Constitution with the issuance of executive order 13083.

First, the order requires Federal departments and agencies to review State regulations and to dictate State policy without regard to the decisions made by States' own legislatures and agencies.

Second, the order's broad and vague definition of what should be a Federal issue reserves little if any jurisdiction for State and local governments.

Third, by granting Federal jurisdiction over all matters related to international obligations, the executive order threatens to bypass the U.S. Congress, imposing on States and the American people provisions of international treaties or agreements that have not been ratified by the Senate.

Clearly this executive order directly violates the separation and division of powers as provided by the Constitution. It violates the authority of the U.S. Congress, the sovereign rights of States, and threatens the liberties of every American citizen.

In response to this disregard for the Constitution, I have introduced House Concurrent Resolution 299. This resolution sends a message to the American people that representatives in Congress will understand the Constitution and will uphold the principles of the Founding Fathers that have made this Nation so great.

The Congress will protect the rights of States to self-determination and prevent undue Federal intervention into State and local affairs. The Congress will protect the rights of American citizens to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, without unwarranted and unconstitutional intrusions by the Federal departments and Federal agencies.

This resolution also sends a message to the executive and judicial branches of the Federal Government: The Congress will defend the people it represents against Federal actions that undermine the Constitution and threaten the rights of all citizens.

Congress is paying close attention to the actions of the chief executive. We will closely scrutinize any action by any member of the executive branch that threatens to usurp the legislative authority of the Congress, the sovereignty of the States and the freedom of the American people.

Furthermore, Congress will seek to remedy any judicial interpretation of U.S. law that is inconsistent with the intent of Congress, that threatens State rights to self-determination or threatens the liberties guaranteed the people by the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, I urge each of my colleagues to join me in defense of the powers of the Constitution and sovereignty of the rights of States, the rights of the people, by cosponsoring House Concurrent Resolution 299, reiterating the separation of powers that are established and preserved by our Constitution.

THE STATE OF UNITED STATES AGRICULTURE ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. MINGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to discuss the state of the agriculture economy and to report to my colleagues the results of a hearing that was held by the House Committee on Agriculture on Thursday.

That hearing is the first hearing that we have held in the House Committee on Agriculture this session on the farm economy and how the 1996 farm law, farm bill is responding to the crises that we face.

I am pleased that we held the hearing. I regret, however, it has taken so long for us to focus on this problem.

First, I would like to just urge that all of my colleagues recognize the severity of the problem that we face, and probably no State illustrates this better than North Dakota. The State of North Dakota has seen a 98 percent drop in farm income in the last 2 years. It is such a precipitous drop that in North Dakota and the Red River Valley portion of Minnesota just to the east, we see record numbers of farmers selling out, closing down their operations and saying, in this strong national economy, there is no reason why we should be continuing our farming operations.

What I see, in the area that I represent in southern Minnesota and the Chair represents, is a looming crisis. It certainly is not as serious as what we face in the Red River Valley area, but it is one that has the potential of having a parallel dramatic impact.

In the State of Minnesota at large, farm income is down 57 percent from the first quarter of 1996, compared to the first quarter of 1998, 57 percent. Part of the reason that it is down is that in addition to the disease problems that are affecting wheat and barley in the Red River Valley area, we also have severe price depression for agriculture commodities.

Wheat is selling in the neighborhood of \$2.50 a bushel. This is a product that in some years is selling for \$3 to \$4 a bushel. Those would be the average years. At \$2.50 a bushel, wheat can be used as a feed grain. Barley is being used as feed grain.

This has an effect on the price of corn and soybeans. Corn is now selling in the Midwest for below \$2 a bushel. For those of you that are not familiar with what that means to farmers, it means that you lose money, as much as 30, 40 cents on every bushel of corn that you market. Many say, well, if you have a good year, that just means that you are going to have a bigger yield and you can make more money.

What farmers are facing is that the excitement of a bumper crop is being moderated and turning into a much more depressing situation, because the price is collapsing. What is more distressing is that the number of farm

families that are willing to maintain their farming operations is dwindling. Time after time, as I visit with families in Minnesota, I hear the common refrain, we have decided that with a good education, the young people that grew up on this farm ought to be pursuing a career in town. We do not think it is a good idea for them to try to continue farming.

As one after another of these farming units disappears, what we see is a phenomenon that is altogether too common and too distressing. It is the collapse of a rural economy and of a rural way of life.

Now, some may say that is just the way the market works. It is the wonders of the marketplace. But before I turn to a couple of things that we can do to try to respond to this and were discussed at the hearing, I would like to focus on the fact that the farm economy does not have the resiliency that some other parts of our economy have. You cannot downsize your operation quickly to respond to changing economic times. Your investment in fixed assets, land principally, but machinery is enormous. You have to use those assets.

At the same time you have risks that are phenomenal, the risk of weather, of course, is familiar to all of us, but the risk of disease, such as they have suffered in the Red River Valley, the risk of markets such as the collapse of markets in Southeast Asia, which were the promising opportunities for American agricultural exports, all of these things combine to haunt agriculture.

What is the response? Just in a couple of sentences, first, an emergency disaster package for crop insurance that is a bipartisan proposal; second, accelerating the payments coming under the Freedom to Farm Act, a partisan proposal; third, extending the marketing loan period, something we might have bipartisanship on; raising or uncapping the marketing loan program. These are a variety of things that were discussed.

I recommend or urge my colleagues to look more closely at what is happening in rural America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BEREUTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

H.R. 4355, THE YEAR 2000

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the year 2000 problem, we all know that time is running out and we are competing in a race against the calendar to avert an impending computer catastrophe. This Congress is firmly committed to moving the Federal Government and private industry toward correcting the year 2000 problem in a timely and effective manner.

In order for private industry to be Y2K compliant, given the relatively brief amount of time left before the January 1, 2000, deadline, we must foster an environment for the exchange and the free flow of information among businesses. Allowing information about year 2000 solutions to be widely available can help private industry move expeditiously to correct the problem. But, unfortunately, liability concerns have made many in the private sector reluctant to exchange such information.

At the request of the President, I join today with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to sponsor H.R. 4355, the Year 2000 Information Disclosure Act. While the bill in its current form may not fully address the liability problems associated with information sharing, I believe it is important to begin the debate on addressing this issue.

As the co-chair of the House Y2K task force along with my co-chair the gentleman from California (Mr. HORN), I intend to work with the appropriate committees of jurisdiction in Congress and with the private industry to craft an effective bill which will promote the open sharing of information about year 2000 solutions.

By working together, and only by working together, we have an opportunity to effectively address the liability concerns of private industry and to encourage the sharing of important information about solutions to correct the Y2K problem.

Let us move ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I include a statement by the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Technology, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BARCIA).

Mr. BARCIA. I want to join my colleagues in introducing the Year 2000 Information Disclosure Act.

We have all read about the potential effects of the Year 2000 computer problem. The Subcommittee on Technology and the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology have been at the forefront of publicizing the nature of this problem, and have consistently pushed Agency officials to fix their computer systems. As my colleagues have already outlined the scope of the problem and the provisions of this bill, I want to focus on a few key elements.

First, I want to commend the Administration and especially Mr. John Koskinen, Assistant to the President and Chair of the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion, for drafting this legislation. Although there has been much discussion regarding what actions Federal agencies should take to correct their systems, the larger private sector issue has been large-

ly ignored. This legislation is the first of several steps necessary to assist the private sector in addressing the Y2K problem in an open and constructive way.

By protecting those who share Y2K information in good faith from liability claims based on exchanges of information, this bill promotes an open and public exchange of information between companies about Y2K solutions. Throughout the Subcommittee on Technology's examination of the Year 2000 computer problem, I have continued to be surprised about the lack of hard facts. The goal of this bill is to make companies feel more secure in sharing information about this problem.

However, this is only a first step, and many important issues remain to be addressed. I believe that the most important element of any national Y2K strategy is informing consumers and small- and medium-sized businesses on how the Y2K problem could affect them. The public needs a Y2K checklist and they need to know what questions to ask. I know my colleagues on the House Y2K Task Force, Representatives HORN, KUCINICH, and MORELLA, share my concerns and I look forward to working with them to develop an appropriate strategy.

In closing, I urge the swift action on this important piece of legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MEEHAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HEALTH CARE PROPOSAL FOR SENIORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I want to alert Members about a very disturbing proposal recently offered by the chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health. This proposal would charge senior citizens in this country an \$8 copayment for Medicare home health care visits. At present, as you know, these visits are now without cost for the patient.

Mr. Speaker, in my judgment, if this very terrible proposal were ever passed into law, and let us make sure that it is not, it would cause enormous pain and hardship for some of the weakest and most vulnerable people in this country, low income and sick elderly people. Why, in God's name, would we be making life more difficult for so many people who today are finding it difficult just to pay their bills?

Mr. Speaker, as you know, nearly half of all senior citizens in our country have incomes of less than \$15,000 a year, and about 12 percent of them live in poverty.

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Many of them today are finding it extremely difficult to pay their bills, to