

construction are working with care to build 600 homes in Marcovia. At the same time, volunteers with health care training are joining with the International Medical Corps and Catholic Relief Services to provide victims with basic health care in Catacamas, Choluteca, and Marcovia.

These goodwill ambassadors from Ohio's Ninth District deserve recognition in this well of the House today. I commend them for their wonderful efforts to bring aid to a devastated region and assistance to our fellow citizens in this hemisphere. I echo their call for action by this Congress on the Emergency Supplemental Bill to help the devastated people of Honduras and Central America but also our farmers here at home.

Let this Congress be as humanitarian as the people of Toledo, Ohio.

AMERICA'S FUTURE

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

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. Speaker, in the next 5 minutes, I want to ask my House colleagues and the people watching at home to help me write a new chapter in the American story. Over the next years, we will be the authors of this new chapter. Tomorrow our children will live this story.

As a father of four, nothing could make me feel more secure than knowing that this story includes my children pursuing their dreams and living a life free from dependency on government. Surely, all of us want our children and grandchildren to live in a place where freedom's lamp shines brightly for all people.

This is how the American story is read for nearly three centuries. This story began with a band of freedom-loving people who escaped oppression to form a new land of liberty. It is a story of exploration and new beginnings, a story of faith, enterprise, tragedy, and success. Its pages are filled with the names of heroic men and women like Patrick Henry, Frederick Douglas, Susan B. Anthony, and others. It is also filled with lesser known names but no less special: The mothers, fathers, grandparents, teachers, coaches, doctors.

We, in every line, in every chapter, the American story is filled with a Nation defined by its people, governed by its citizens, and preserved by those who love freedom. But too many are still uneasy about our future.

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We lie awake at night worrying about tomorrow. Will our paychecks be enough to cover the bills? Will Social Security be around when we retire? Will we be able to provide the health care our elderly parents need and deserve? Will our children get the education they need to succeed in the next century?

We have the ability to give every American more security. But we will have no security, no hope, no opportunity if we trade away our liberty to achieve that security. I believe the gravest threat to our country is from those who promise security in return for our freedom. They promise security in exchange for more of our money and more control of our lives. Some of those in government even act as if they were elected to manage our lives. I believe we were elected to provide a framework of freedom so Americans can manage their own lives. We were also elected to provide a safety net for those in need when families, communities and States are unable to help. But the need for this safety net does not require the confiscation of our freedoms. We must remember that in America, we are most secure when we are most free, when we are in control of our lives.

Many believe that the debates in Congress are about which party is for Social Security, Medicare, education and the environment. The fact is we are all for these things. Every Member of the House wants to provide a strong and bright future for our country. The real debate in this Congress day in and day out is about who is going to control your life, you or the government.

Many of us here who call ourselves the GOP believe in a government of the people. This means, as it has for three centuries, that the government is controlled by you and your family, not the other way around. We believe in the GOP that we can secure the future for every child when we have an education system that is controlled by parents, teachers and local communities. And we will secure the future for every senior when we guarantee their Social Security benefits today and move towards giving their grandkids a choice to own and control their own Social Security accounts. We believe that we will secure the future for every older American when they have even greater access to quality health care and can choose their own doctors and make their own health care decisions. We will secure the future for our Nation when we rebuild our national defense and can control our borders and live free of the fear of missile attacks. And we will secure the future for every working American when we let them keep more of what they earn, a lot more.

Now is the time for us to write our chapter about America, an America that is free and secure and controlled by its people. Let no one edit the American story in a way that makes us dependent on the government or politicians. Let us write about a people that can overcome every challenge, education, jobs, health care, retirement, whatever we face. May our families live freer today than they did yesterday, and may we sustain a Nation that is dependent only upon God and the blessings of freedom.

Mr. Speaker, that is my prayer for this Congress and that is my prayer for this Nation.

THE FARMERS' PLIGHT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, at the Farm Resource Center, a national crisis line for farmers, those seeking help cannot get through. The line is busy.

Small farmers and ranchers are struggling to survive in America. In fact, small farmers and ranchers are a dying breed. And because they are a dying breed, quality and affordable food and fiber for all of us is at risk.

Passage of the 1996 farm bill sounded the death knell for many of our Nation's farmers and ranchers. Farmers and ranchers, able to eke out a living from the land in past years, now find it almost impossible to break even. Most are losing money and fighting to stay in the farming business.

And the crisis line is busy.

We are all aware of the problems tobacco is having, particularly in my State, North Carolina. But, in North Carolina, according to a recent news report, the State top farm commodity, hogs, have experienced a 50 percent drop in prices since 1996. Wheat is down 42 percent. Soybeans are down 36 percent. Corn, 31 percent; peanuts, 28 percent. Turkey and cotton prices are down 23 percent since 1996. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there is no commodity in North Carolina that makes money for farmers.

And the crisis line is busy.

In 1862, the year that the Department of Agriculture was created, 90 percent of the population farmed for a living. Today, American producers represent less than 3 percent of the population. By 1992, there were only 1.1 million farms left in the United States, a 45 percent decline from 1959. North Carolina only had 39,000 farms left in 1992, a 23 percent decline. In 1920, there were over 6 million farms in the United States, and close to a sixth, 926,000, were operated by African Americans. In 1992, the landscape was very, very different. Only 1 percent of the farms in the United States were operated by African Americans, 1 percent, 18,816, a paltry sum when African Americans comprise more than 13 percent of the population.

In my home State of North Carolina, there has been a 64 percent decline in minority farmers just over the last 15 years, from 6,996 farms in 1978 to 2,498 farms in 1992. All farmers are suffering under this severe economic downturn.

Very recently while in my district I spoke with a farmer who was working off the farm, not to earn extra money but to earn enough money to save his family farm. He makes no money from his farm for himself. He loses money from his farm. Taking a job off the