

SETTING RECORD STRAIGHT ON
GAMING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SAXTON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am dismayed about the news articles this week erroneously reporting on the gaming industry. For the benefit of my colleagues, I want to set the record straight. I offer my comments on behalf of the more than 700,000 Americans who are employed by legal and well-regulated gaming.

One recent article alleged that the gaming industry has caused major problems in our society and that it exploits the public. Another article includes the allegation that the only people who go to casinos are elderly Social Security recipients. These unfounded and outrageous allegations are a product of what objective researchers call the circle of disinformation about the gaming industry, disinformation spawned by a clique of antigaming zealots.

Unfortunately, this disinformation finds its way into the press, misleading the public and hurting the reputation of each of the 700,000 Americans employed by the industry.

Gaming must be the most studied industry in the United States, and study after study shows that the industry's customers come from all age groups, all geographic areas and from all walks of life. They choose legal gaming as a part of their leisure activities. And study after study shows that, by a large margin, Americans firmly believe that people should be allowed to participate in gaming if they so choose to do so.

Academic studies also show that legal gaming does not cause society's problems. To the contrary, the research on the benefits of the industry to the communities are lengthy and convincing. Tens of thousands of gaming employees are in good jobs rather than being on welfare and on food stamps. Two-thirds of the gaming employees report they have better health care because of their jobs in gaming. More than 40 percent say they have better access to day care as a result of employment in the gaming industry.

The industry has a payroll approaching \$9 billion, generating tremendous community economic benefits. Gaming employees buy houses and cars and appliances. In many areas, they have ignited economic booms. For example, my hometown of Las Vegas now ranks in the top three best cities to start up a business because of favorable taxes, a lower crime rate, job growth and recreational facilities and civic pride, all stimulated by a robust gaming economy.

I encourage my colleagues to look closely at the well-documented facts about the gaming industry, rather than being influenced by the distortions that come from a circle of

disinformation. I can use myself as an example, having been raised in Las Vegas. My family moved there 38 years ago. My dad was able to get a job and, because of the robust economy that the gaming industry provided Las Vegas, he managed to put a roof over our head, food on the table, clothes on our back and two daughters through college and law school. The reason for that was a robust economy fueled by the gaming industry. I ask my colleagues to look to me as an example, look to my family, look to my parents, and look to my children as cited as examples of what good community gaming can foster.

INTRODUCTION OF COMPREHENSIVE
RETIREMENT SECURITY
AND PENSION REFORM ACT OF
1999

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

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to discuss an issue of great importance to so many Americans, and that is financial security in retirement. It is an important issue that has made the headlines a lot lately because of the retirement squeeze that our country faces.

We have more and more people who are going to be retiring, the baby boom generation, 76 million Americans, including myself, beginning to retire in 10 short years. We have people living much longer in this country, which is a good thing. But it is a huge demographic shift, this combination of this big generation retiring and people living longer, that is putting a lot of pressure on our retirement systems.

The Social Security system is not ready for it. Most of us know that now. But also our private retirement system, the employer-sponsored pension system, is not ready for it. Social Security needs to be a top priority of this Congress and this President.

I would love to see Social Security reform this year. I am pushing hard for it. But Social Security is only one component of a secure retirement for Americans. It was never intended to meet all the financial needs of retirement and for most Americans, of course, it does not, as this chart shows.

In fact, retirement security has often been called the three-legged stool, because people depend on three aspects of retirement savings. One is Social Security, one is personal savings and another one, a very important one, is employer-provided pensions.

□ 1700

The fourth part of this pie, of course, is people's earnings after they retire from a full-time job, but it is employer provided pensions that 19 percent of people's retirement that I would currently like to focus on today.

This is 401(k) plans. This is profit sharing plans. This is all of the plans

that people who have a comfortable retirement have to supplement their Social Security.

It is interesting when we look at pensions as compared to Social Security benefits. It is already a very important part of the retirement for so many Americans. In fact, last year more money was paid out through employer provided pensions than was paid out under Social Security.

But all is not well with our pension system, not well at all in fact. Fewer than half of Americans who are working today have pensions. This is a major problem.

Madam Speaker, in 1983 about 48 percent of Americans had pensions. One would think that by 1993 we would have improved that and said it was only about 50 percent. It remains there. Sixty million American workers do not have access to one of the most important means of a comfortable, secure retirement, and that is pension savings. Half of all workers do not have it, and actually it is worse than that among those employees of small businesses. Among our smaller businesses where so many of our jobs are being created in our economy today fewer than half of the workers have pensions. In fact when we combine those companies between 1 and 10 employees and those between 10 and 25 employees, the average for those smaller companies, and again this the companies that are creating most of the new jobs out there, is that only 19 percent of them offer any kind of pension program at all today. So those employees with smaller businesses even have less of an opportunity to be able to get the kind of retirement security that they deserve.

Why is that? Madam Speaker, it is because setting up these plans, these pension plans, 401(k)s and so on, has become so costly and so burdensome, maintaining them has become so costly and there is so much liability that small businesses cannot afford to do it. Not enough workers have pension coverage at a time when our overall savings rate in this country also is terribly low. In fact, it is at historically low levels, and this is a real problem. Economists will tell us, whether they are liberal, centrist or conservative economists, we have got to increase the savings rate in this country if we want to continue to have the kind of economic prosperity we have enjoyed over the last several years.

We have a plan to solve these problems. It is called the Comprehensive Retirement Security and Pension Reform Act of 1999. I have introduced it this year with my colleague and friend the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN). It is designed to dramatically increase personal savings rate and overall retirement security for millions of Americans by expanding the availability of pensions. It knocks down barriers to savings by raising limits and allowing workers to set more aside tax free for their retirement. It also untangles the complex

and irrational rules and cuts through the red tape that burdens retirement plans and their participants, and it creates new incentives for small businesses to establish these pension plans. It has a wonderful catch-up provision where older workers who are coming back into the work force can put even more aside for their pensions. This is particularly important for working moms who have been out of the work force but coming back after age 50 and want the opportunity to get more in the nest egg for their retirement. It responds to the needs of the increasingly mobile work force we have in this country by allowing people to vest faster in their pension plans and allowing portability so you can move your pension plan from job to job, which is so important to many, Americans. We believe that changing jobs should not mean that you get short changed on your retirement savings and your sense of security in retirement.

If enacted, these changes will expand savings, and they will make the difference between mere subsistence in retirement and retirement security for millions of workers nationwide.

I urge my colleagues to cosponsor the legislation, H.R. 1102.

FORMULATING A RATIONAL DRUG POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BONO). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Madam Speaker, I come before the House again tonight to talk primarily about one of the major issues I am involved in in the United States Congress and as a Member of the House of Representatives.

I have the privilege and opportunity to serve as the Chair during the 106th Congress of the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources, and in that capacity it is my responsibility to help formulate a rational drug policy both for the House of Representatives, for the United States Congress and, hopefully, for the American people, to deal with a problem that is epidemic and devastating across our land. We do not fail to pick up a newspaper across the United States today or in my local community in central Florida and not read about some tragedy, particularly among our young people, some faceless, some unknown, some celebrities, some stars; one last week, I believe Mark Tuinei of the Dallas Cowboys. A 39-year-old healthy successful athlete died tragically from the results of a heroin overdose. I understand it was one of the first times he had ever used heroin. I understand it was also possibly in conjunction with another drug, possibly ecstasy. I am sure all this is to be investigated, but nonetheless he did die a tragic death, and we lost another young athletic star.

But, Madam Speaker, it is my concern that we cannot get attention to this problem.

This past couple of weeks the Nation has been focused and riveted on the tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado, and certainly this horrific act in Colorado and Littleton did cause all of us pause and concern about the state of violence in our school system and education and with our young people.

But, Madam Speaker, there are three Columbine High Schools or the equivalent of the death and destruction among our population every single day in America. There are three Columbine High School tragedy equivalents across our land on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and every one of the 365 days. Last year over 14,000 Americans lost their lives to drug-related deaths. The statistics are mind-boggling when you stop and think that in the last 6 years of this administration over 100,000 Americans, the equivalent of cities of significant population have been entirely wiped out by drug-related deaths, and what is more disturbing is some of the policies of this administration which were instituted in the first 2 years when they controlled the United States House of Representatives, the other body, the United States Senate, and the White House, that in fact we are still reeling from the devastating effects of those policies on our country and particularly in the area of illegal narcotics deaths.

We have seen a dramatic increase in both the use and abuse of very hard drugs including heroin. A heroin epidemic exists and rages across this land, in my own community. Our young people, our teenage population in the last 5 years, has experienced an 875 percent increase in heroin use. Now I am talking about our teen population, our youngest victims in again this epidemic of heroin.

What has also caused the record number of deaths and I am sure will be attributed to the deaths we have read about just in the past few days in my local community and the death I cited of a Dallas Cowboys athlete is the high purity of heroin that is entering the United States. People today have no idea of the deadly effects of high purity heroin, and particularly when they are used with any other substance the results are devastating.

In my local community, and I represent central Florida from Orlando to Daytona Beach, a very prosperous area, an area that has a high education level, a high income level, again relatively high prosperity across the district, we have a situation of heroin deaths now exceeding homicides in that, again, tranquil part of central Florida, and this is no longer a problem of one urban addiction population, a hard-core use in, again, center cities problem; this is a problem that now extends to every income level and, again, particularly is violent and prevalent

among our young people and our teenage population.

The cost of this epidemic is staggering. We have filled our prisons across this great land with almost 2 million Americans incarcerated. Estimates are now that 60 to 70 percent of those behind bars in our jails, in our prisons, in our Federal penitentiaries are there because of some drug-related offense. And many of these individuals are there because they committed a very serious crime, not small usage of illegal narcotics, but very serious felonies, and sometimes because they were on drugs or sometimes they were dealing in illegal narcotics, but the results are 60 to 70 percent of our prison population across this land is now again involved and has been involved with illegal narcotics.

If my colleagues want to take an example of a human tragedy, take the area we are in, Madam Speaker, the Nation's Capital, an area that is visited by thousands and thousands of tourists daily. It should be the pride of every American, and unfortunately, my colleagues, Washington, because of illegal narcotics, has become a sad commentary on the abuse and misuse of illegal narcotics. Three hundred fifty to 400 young men in most instances, and mostly black males, in our nation's capital have died annually the past 6 or 7 years, tragic deaths, and most of them related to illegal narcotics. The situation is even worse when you look at the effect again on the minority population, the young black males who have so much potential in our society. In the District of Columbia nearly 50 percent of the male population is part of the judicial system on probation or behind bars, again an incredible human tragedy and much of it linked to the abuse and misuse and trafficking in illegal narcotics.

□ 1715

The cost in dollars, not to mention the human tragedy that I just mentioned, is phenomenal. As chair of the subcommittee, we are now trying to work with others in the Congress to formulate a package to address in dollars the direct cost of illegal narcotics, and we do not have all of the costs combined in this figure but we will be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$18 billion that Congress is about to pass a supplemental appropriations, of which \$6.9 billion can be attributed to the war in Kosovo and we are looking at double to triple of that direct cost in our budget to the war on drugs, which again is an expensive proposition.

Madam Speaker, these are only the direct costs that I am referring to, this \$18 billion we will consider for the next fiscal year. There are a quarter of a trillion dollars in additional costs, in lost wages, in incarceration, in costs to the judicial system, in welfare and support systems and social systems and the loss, the tremendous loss, of people involved and victims of illegal narcotic trafficking.