Tax base—small towns may have to spend their small tax base to defend themselves from Environmental groups, or on costly modifications to their infrastructure, because of a species that may or not be in their community and, in some cases, may not actually be endangered or even exist.

When the Fish and Wildlife Service considers a listing in Rural America, the economic consequences are brought to their attention, but they often place the lowest priority on the communities they devastate.

While the Mountain Plover was being evaluated for listing, the government suggested if the plover was listed, farmers would have to cease normal farming practices from late April to mid-May because this coincides with the plover's nesting season. For a farmer in the Eastern Plains, this would be devastating because this is the only time of the year for planting most crops. USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service wrote that the plover's listing ''may adversely impact a number of common agriculture practices in the shortgrass prairie region in the United States.'' In already difficult times for farmers in America, the elimination of their planting season would cause extinction of the Rural Farmer in the eastern plains.

Farmers are often fined for continuing farming activities on their property, even if the species is not known to exist on their land, but just because their land might be potential habitat for an animal the government is concerned about.

The bottom line:

Federal agencies should not create mandates that will financially devastate entire communities.

Rural America is already burdened because they face various economic disadvantages.

Rural Americans cannot bear the burden of species recovery.

The government should take into consideration the economic consequences to already strained Rural Americans, and work with the communities, not against them.

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

(Mr. LIPINSKI 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 North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL OCEAN DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution in support of establishing a National Ocean Day.

A National Ocean Day would help to focus the public's attention on the vital role the ocean plays in the lives of our nation's people and the significant impact our people have on the health of this vital resource.

The ocean covers 71 percent of the Earth's surface and is key to the life support systems of all creatures on this planet. It contains a wondrous abundance and diversity of life—from the smallest microorganism to the blue whale. The potential of the ocean's tremendous resources are not yet fully explored and likely includes life-saving medicines and treatments.

Two-thirds of the world's people live within 50 miles of a coast and one out of six American jobs is in fishing, shipping, or tourism. Some 90 percent of the world's trade is transported on the oceans.

The health of our ocean ecosystems are threatened by global warming, pollution, overfishing, and the destruction of coral reefs. We must take steps today to protect this irreplaceable resource.

The State of Hawaii has designated the first Wednesday of June as Ocean Day in recognition of the significant role the ocean plays in the lives of Hawaii's people, culture, history, and traditions. I hope my colleagues will join me in calling for a National Ocean Day to help focus nationwide attention on the need for responsible stewardship of this precious resource.

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

(Mr. HUNTER 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 Washington (Mr. METCALF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

POWS AND MIAS IN VIETNAM

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

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, back in 1993 I met a gentleman named Binh Ly. And Mr. Ly told me and other Congressmen that he had a business partner, Mr. Nguyen Van Hao, who met with former Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown to seek his help in normalizing relations with Vietnam.

Mr. Ly said that Mr. Hao who met with Ron Brown three or four times told him that Ron Brown wanted $700,000 in up-front money to start the normalization process with Vietnam. Mr. Brown said initially that he never met with Mr. Hoa, but later, it was found out that he did indeed meet with him three times.

The FBI, on October 2 of 1992, was reported in the New York Times to have discovered evidence that the Vietnamese government was preparing to establish a special bank account in Singapore, and the evidence was in the form of a large transfer of an undisclosed sum of money or a transfer of undisclosed sum of money between the East Asian banks.

The interesting thing about this is that Mr. Ly told us before we found out about that that there was going to be $700,000 transferred to the Banque Indosuez in Singapore for Mr. Brown from the Vietnamese government.

Now, the reason I bring this up is we had hearing on this, and Mr. Brown was investigated. Unfortunately, Mr. Brown died in a plane crash over in the former Yugoslav a few years ago, but the fact of the matter is, Mr. Ly made this statement, and the normalization process then did go forward.

The administration said that the reason the normalization process was going forward was we wanted to heal old wounds and that the Vietnamese government had agreed that they would give us a full accounting of the 2,300 POW-MIAs that were still missing and unaccounted for in Vietnam while we normalize relations with Vietnam. And we have received a few reports on the POW-MIAs that were unreported up until the normalization took place, but the process went forward. And we normalized relations.

Mr. Speaker, now, here we are 7 years later in the year 2000, and we still have 2,023 POW-MIAs unaccounted for. Every President up until this administration had said that we would never start the normalization process until we had a full accounting of our POW-MIAs.

There is a lot of families in this country that still wonder what happened to their husbands, their fathers, their sons that do not know and may never know what happened to them because the Vietnamese government has not lived up to the commitment that they made.

Many people believe to this day that the reason the normalization process took place was because of the potential money being given to Ron Brown and others in the government as a payoff to start the process.

Others believed that the administration really did want to get a complete accounting of the POW-MIAs and they believed the Vietnamese government when they said they would give us a complete accounting.

Here we are 7 years later, and we have had an accounting of maybe 200 out of the 2,300 that were missing and are still missing and unaccounted for.

The reason I come to the floor tonight is because I am very concerned about something that is taking place as we speak. The Secretary of Defense of the United States, Mr. Cohen, has gone to Vietnam. And he is meeting with Vietnamese leaders to talk about the POW-MIA issue and to show good faith on the part of the United States Government in the peaceful agreements that have been made by this administration with the Vietnamese government.

The thing that concerns me is that our Secretary of Defense has gone over

there at almost exactly 25 years to the day that we have seen our troops pull out of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City. That really bothers me.

They are celebrating in Vietnam. They are taking our Secretary of Defense around to war memorials showing where their valiant airmen shot down our young Americans who were killed, and they are celebrating their victory over the United States 25 years after the fall of Saigon.

Our Secretary of Defense is over there during this celebration. To me, as an American, it seems unseemly. And I think a lot of Americans, especially those who served in Vietnam or who had loved ones that died and are still unaccounted for in Vietnam, would feel the same way.

Mr. Speaker, I just say to this administration and to the Secretary of Defense, if he wanted to go to Vietnam to talk to them about the POW-MIA issue, if he wanted to go to Vietnam to tell them how important their relationship with us is, then why in the world did he do it during their celebrations of the defeat of the United States and Vietnam? It makes no sense to me. It rubs me the wrong way.

I hope that the Secretary of Defense and others in the administration hear what we had to say. He should have done it at a different time.

ISSUES FACING RURAL AMERICA

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

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a good day for rural America. I want to congratulate the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. EMERSON) and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) for reviving the Rural Caucus. I do not know what happened that it died. It should never have. For someone who represents a very rural district, it is certainly a delight that we have it back.

Why do we need a Rural Caucus? Well, first, I come from a very rural district, the most rural district east of the Mississippi, from northern tier Pennsylvania. A lot of people do not think of Pennsylvania as being rural. They think of Philadelphia and Lancaster and Pittsburgh. But much of Pennsylvania is rural. It is the most rural population in the country. One-third of Pennsylvanians live in towns of less than 2,500. That is rural.

Now, the problem we have is that urban America, who really runs this country, dominates governments at State and national level, does not understand the needs of rural America. I call rural America the heartland of this country where we have some of our finest, hardest working people with the best work ethic.

There is nothing more than we can point to today than the farm crisis. As I look out on the beautiful farmlands that are in Pennsylvania and other neighboring States, and as we see the farmers leave and the barns fall down and the underbrush grows up on what was beautiful farm fields, we are gradually losing much of our heritage in this country.

The farm crisis, if not addressed, will again put more and more rural people out of work and send them to the cities to push more urban sprawl. It is vital that this Congress meets the needs to preserve farms in this country because of the vital role that we play.

My message to the White House is stop the food embargoes. Allow American farmers to sell their products at a fair price around the world. By lifting the embargoes, it would be $12 billion to $15 billion added to the farm budgets, and our farmers would get a much better price for their products because their markets would be expanded.

Another issue that is facing rural America is rural health care. I chaired health issues in Pennsylvania for a decade. I understand them. Rural health care is paid an unfair payment in comparison to urban suburban America. Why should a procedure in rural America be paid maybe half as much as a procedure in suburban urban America. There is no real reason for that except that is the rules that have been promulgated by HCFA that administers Medicare and Medicaid.

If rural America's health payments are not equalized or made fair, we will lose rural health care, and there will be no winners because those people will have to travel long distance to suburban areas. HCFA will pay the high price for the same health care that could have been administered in the hometown communities.

Rural transportation, rural airports, rural rail lines, we cannot afford to lose another mile of rail line in rural America. We cannot afford to have another community lose its ability to have rail service because it will make sure that certain jobs and certain opportunities are not available to them. Local air service is vital to the future of rural America, and it is under threat in this country because of government policies.

Another issue that has just been recently brought into the national news is the explosion of substance abuse in this country and in particular in rural America. Rural America was always thought to be free of drug use. It was an urban problem. Mr. Speaker, the recent studies show that there is more abuse among young people in rural America than any other part.

One of the reasons is we do not have adequate enforcement in rural America. The strike force, the drug strike force, the special groups that have been put together to work in urban America and suburban America, they do not like to work out in rural America. Because we do not have adequate enforcement, drug usage is on the rise, and we are losing young people by the thousands because drugs, not only harm young people, they often kill them. Drugs are dangerous. Drugs are not healthy. Drugs are not safe. We must somehow stop the drug culture in all of America and specifically rural America.

A question I ask: Is rural America prepared for e-commerce? Do we have adequate ability to the Web, to the Internet? Are our telephone systems up to date? Do we have digital switching? Do we have an adequate amount of fiber optics? Because if we do not, it will be no different than if we do not have highways and we do not have rail and we do not have air service. E-commerce is where the future is.

One of the issues is equity in education. Rural school districts have historically been underfunded in comparison to urban and suburban districts. Suburban America has a strong tax base and can afford a good educational system. Urban America has some of the similar problems of rural. We have always subsidized them. But we have not subsidized rural education in the same manner that we have subsidized urban education. So rural education has had to take a back seat. Not all of the opportunities that are needed for our young people are there.

One of the issues facing this country and rural America is, do we have adequate access to technical education. My answer is no. The jobs that are out there today, many of them are high-tech jobs, many of them are mid-tech jobs. But we need an education that is a blend of academic and technology.

America is not prepared in my view, and rural America very much so, not prepared for the jobs of tomorrow, not prepared for the jobs of today. We are not adequately training the workforce. What is going to happen if we do not prepare this technical workforce, we are going to export another level of manufacturing that we should not lose and we do not need to lose if we do not prepare the workforce for the manufacturing companies.

The manufacturing companies that are still processing and manufacturing in America today are very high-tech. There is a computer and a robot hooked together all the way down the line. It is a very high-tech manufacturing, and it takes a worker far more than was needed in the past when one just needed a willing worker. One needs a person today that is trained.

ELIMINATION ON BAN ON IMPORTING TO UNITED STATES IRANIAN CAVIAR, CARPETS, AND PISTACHIOS

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

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for this opportunity, because I was not on the list to address the House today and did not expect to do so. My remarks may be intemperate because I come here in anger. I speak here not with any prepared text, but