

been a troubling trend, a trend that affects the very quality of their life. During these 2 decades, income and wealth inequality, the disparity in income and wealth due to wages, accumulated wealth, investments and returns, have been well documented.

It is an alarming and disturbing trend because among those rural Americans left behind, fewer can afford healthy meals, fewer can afford health care for their families, and fewer can afford a college education for their children. It is an alarming and disturbing trend because rural America has been disproportionately affected. Consequently, rural America lags far behind other communities in personal access to the Internet as well as the total use of the Internet.

This disparity exacerbates the persistent poverty, high unemployment, inadequate health care and education resources. Thus, as the economy rapidly expands, rural communities find that it is far more difficult to participate.

Moreover, technological advances, which could provide some solutions to these conditions, elude rural communities because of digital disenfranchisement. Such advances as telemedicine, distance education and electronic government, depend upon Internet access.

It is clear that the competition among service providers that is driving the Internet explosion is not as concentrated in rural communities. The lack of population densities, the absence of essential infrastructure and the fact that rural communities are often spread over great distances are reasons cited for this lack of enthusiasm. Even the Department of Commerce has concluded in its Report, "Falling Through The Net," that, "Disparities clearly exist (and) . . . access comes hardest for Americans who are low-income . . . less educated, single-parent families, young heads-of-households, and (those) who live in the South, rural areas and central cities."

However, these barriers should not, must not remain as impediments. A rising tide should lift all boats.

It is for these reasons that this House should have had the opportunity to debate, vote on and support amendments that would require education and training for American citizens who reside in rural and other depressed areas; amendments that would require both public and private sector entities to make reasonable and diligent efforts to find American citizens who are willing to be trained in information technology positions; that would raise the H-1B visa fees; and that would use those increased revenues to, in part, carry out the other amendment mandates.

Mr. Speaker, this House has not had the will to pass a modest increase in the minimum wage, an increase to help move millions of America's workers out of poverty. But we did find the will to pass a bill that mandates that foreign workers earn a minimum of \$40,000 a year. That is what the H-1B Bill that passed provides.

Late last night, Mr. Speaker, those who favor large business interests won. But, the American people, especially those who live in rural America, the many willing and able unemployed workers and this Nation, lost.

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that rural America indeed lost. In fact, the Nation lost. Indeed, I think we should make an opportunity for American workers as well.

TRIBUTE TO LT. BRUCE JOSEPH DONALD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a man from my district, Lieutenant Bruce Joseph Donald of Poughkeepsie, who was killed last Friday when his F-18 Hornet strike fighter crashed in the Persian Gulf.

Lieutenant Donald, known by his call sign, "Straydog," was a 1995 graduate of the Naval Academy where he earned a Bachelor of Sciences degree in Ocean Engineering. Following graduation, Lieutenant Donald spent 6 months at his alma mater on temporary duty prior to being sent to Pensacola, Florida, to begin preflight indoctrination training. Afterwards, he traveled to Corpus Christi, Texas, for primary flight training, and then completed advanced jet training in Kingsville, Texas.

According to his superior officers, Lieutenant Donald performed exceptionally during flight school and, in February of 1998, he earned his Wings of Gold and an assignment to F-18 replacement pilot training at VMFAT-101. Having successfully completed replacement training, "Straydog" reported to VFA-25 in July 1999.

As a member of the "Fist of the Fleet," he excelled as a strike fighter pilot and served as the squadron's naval aviation training and operations procedures standardization officer, air-to-ground training officer, coffee mess officer, and landing signals officer. Lieutenant Donald was an exceptional pilot with sound judgment and was a designated combat section leader.

Although we live in a time of relative peace, we must never forget that the men and women who serve this Nation are constantly putting their lives on the line. We owe a tremendous debt to these men and women and to their families who love and support them through their training and deployments so that we may continue to live in a world of hope and the promise of peace.

Having dedicated much of his young life to the service of this Nation, it is only fitting that Lieutenant Donald can be commemorated here. Lieutenant Bruce Donald is survived by his parents, Patrick and Elaine Donald, his brother Brian, all of Poughkeepsie, New York. I offer the Donald family and their friends my deepest condolences.

OIL DRILLING IN ALASKA

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

tleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to refute some of the comments that were made previously on this floor by Members of this House that know little about what they talk about, and that is energy and energy policy.

I noticed the gentleman from New York was talking about the fragile environment in Alaska. He showed a picture, very frankly, that is not the area which would be drilled in Alaska that George W. Bush suggested last night. He showed a picture that is far south. This is the area of Prudhoe Bay, 74 miles away from the 1002 place where we would drill.

If you notice the caribou here are around the oil rigs. In fact, our caribou herd has increased tenfold from where it was prior to the exploration in Prudhoe Bay, which provided to this Nation of ours every bottom barrel that has been delivered of the 16 billion barrels of oil. That is 16 billion barrels of oil that you would not have to import from the OPEC countries.

You have to keep in mind, Mr. and Mrs. America, that we are now so totally dependent on oil, approximately 57 percent this year, that if there is not a policy change, it will be 60 percent by the year 2005.

I watched the debate last night, and everybody else watched the debate, and I would suggest respectfully that George W. Bush's idea about energy production is vital to you. As you are sitting watching this, if you are a senior citizen and worrying about heating oil prices, right now we are importing, keep in mind, about a million barrels a day from Saddam Hussein. The area which we would like to explore, which is 74 miles away from the pipeline, 74 miles, has the potential, has the potential, of 39 billion barrels of oil. We could increase the production, going through the present pipeline, about a million barrels a day, equal to what we are importing from Saddam Hussein. We would not be dependent upon the OPEC countries. But that is just a small part. Alaska is just a small part.

This administration, the Vice President and the President himself have closed 34 refineries since 1992 in the United States of America. The Vice President asked us to use our reserve to lower the prices, which it will not do so. But as we do take that oil, if he is successful in his attempt, the oil will have to be shipped and refined in Venezuela and then shipped back to the United States because they have discouraged the building of new refineries.

The refineries themselves we have in place are running around 95 percent, which is unhealthy for the refineries because it is hard to maintain them at that level.

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We must consider the production and the refining capability, and this Nation with this administration has not done.