

of young people. We have a real dearth of scientists today. More and more of our kids are going off and doing other things. Yet, in a very real sense, these youngsters are the best messengers for the environment, especially since they are going to inherit whatever environment we leave them.

This bill would encourage hands-on recycling to help children cultivate habits that conserve our resources. While they are at school they learn how to do recycling. My aim is also to help them concretize their interest in science and their understanding of scientific concepts, so as they learn about recycling, science comes alive for them, and they are encouraged to study math and science, to get interested in science earlier, and to maintain that scientific interest.

I see the need for it. I just nominated five of my youngsters to the academies, and I am encouraging my school systems to do more with science and math in order that I will have more youngsters to nominate to the academies.

Getting them involved in recycling helps them to understand science better.

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Second bill is called the National Urban Watershed Model Restoration Act. It is aimed at the problem of urban watershed. We all know and love watersheds in the great blue yonder, but the fact is our great cities are often located right in the center of watersheds, terribly polluted. I use my own river, the Anacostia River, which runs through our neighborhoods, as a model for the country so that this notion of working with the EPA, with the Corps of Engineers, and importantly involving the community in clean ups and in preservation of the watershed is what I seek to accomplish.

This would not be cleanup activity. It would be scientific. It would not only clean up communities; it would be a scientific watershed clean up, but done in collaboration with the community so that when it is cleaned up it stays cleaned up. We are located right here on the banks of Anacostia, but my folks cannot get to the Anacostia.

We are about to develop the waterfronts; and when, in fact, the waterfronts get opened up, what they will see is a river polluted by the national government, the Government of the United States of America. That is why I think we ought to begin here with the Anacostia and then go to the great watersheds. They are in New York. They are in L.A. They are in Baltimore. They are across the United States. Because they have been in cities, people have not paid much attention to them. They have been polluted industrially or, in our case, by the Federal Government. This would be on a 75/25 percent basis use Federal, State, and local funds to begin the cleanup of urban watersheds.

You cannot revitalize a community without revitalizing its river. When

you do both, you transform an entire city and an entire area. We would never allow such polluted rivers to be in our countryside. We must not allow them to encroach on our large cities, especially since these cities are now beginning to develop along the waterway. We are doing that in the District of Columbia, our Nation's capital. The one difference between us and you is the Federal Government is responsible for our pollution.

We are going to begin here and spread this idea throughout the country. I would like my colleagues to go to both of these bills and look for their "Dear Colleague" letters soon.

PETE CONRAD AWARDS BILL

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

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Charles Pete Conrad Astronomy Award Act. This act is intended to encourage amateur astronomers to discover new and attract previously identified asteroids and other heavenly bodies, particularly those that threaten a close approach to the Earth. This act is named after the legendary pilot, astronomer and space entrepreneur, Pete Conrad, who I was honored to know. He was a constituent of mine as well. Unfortunately, he passed away after a tragic motorcycle accident just last year. Charles Pete Conrad made history and today in his honor and in his memory I am introducing a bill that could help protect the United States of America and, yes, the entire world.

Pete Conrad more than anything else was a patriot who loved his country and felt that space would provide peace and prosperity for all of human kind. This act contains three categories of awards. The first category is an award for the amateur astronomer who discovers the largest asteroid crossing in near-Earth orbit.

The second category, an award to an amateur astronomer for discovering asteroids using information derived from professional sources and locating newly discovered asteroids.

The third category, an award for those who provide the greatest service to update Minor Planet Center's catalog of known asteroids.

Let me just state that for those people who believe that there is no threat and that we live in a world today where those movies that talked about asteroids colliding with the world and the threat that it posed, that that is all science fiction, I have got bad news for them. It is not science fiction.

There are numerous examples of asteroids and comets in the last few years that have come very near to the world and not been undetected until the last minute or even after they pass by the world. One of them was coming in from the Sun and was not seen until

after it passed the Earth's orbit. If any of these asteroids or comets would have hit the Earth, it would have been a catastrophic occasion, perhaps killing hundreds of millions of people. Perhaps in one case in the past, millions of years ago, that is perhaps what eliminated the dinosaur life on our planet.

The following is a list of examples of recently observed asteroids:

An asteroid about 300 meters in size crossed a near-Earth orbit about 500,000 miles from our planet in October of last year.

An asteroid about the size of three football fields made its closest approach to the Earth (roughly the same distance: twice the Moon's distance from the Earth) on January 7, 2002.

An asteroid reportedly the size of an 18-story building on a close approach to Earth (just a bit farther out than the Moon) was observed on March 8.

The disturbing point about this asteroid is that it was seen from Earth again only after it had moved out of the glare of the Sun and into the night sky on March 12.

For each nearby asteroid that is spotted there are several that pass entirely unnoticed.

Some researchers estimated that there are roughly 25 asteroids, roughly the size of the one observed on March 12, cross a near-Earth orbit that is closer than the Moon.

Astronomers believe that the number of undiscovered asteroids far exceeds the known list currently available to the scientific community.

We need to know if there is a threat coming at the world. And having our young people, giving them awards, having amateur astronomers look into the sky to help us find those objects is something that we are mobilizing the people to help us discover that possible threat. If we see something coming at us that is years away, then we can handle that. We can do something about it. If we do not find out until a mere month or two beforehand, the Earth could be in real danger.

I was the chairman of a hearing in which we had the experts testify on this issue; and one expert said, Congressman, you do not have to worry about that. There is about as much chance of a comet hitting the Earth as it is of you going to Las Vegas and getting a royal straight flush. And I said, Oh, my gosh. I did get a royal straight flush once. I remember that happening.

So this is a real threat, but it is not something we have to fear. It is something we have to look at and try to find a way to identify threats. It is called Home Planet Defense. We need to pay some attention to it; and then if an asteroid does threaten us, we will be able to identify it far in advance and deter it from its path so it would not hurt the people of the world.

This is the purpose of this Pete Conrad bill. We want to get our young people more interested in space and science and mathematics. This bill is a way to do it. The awards will be administered by the Smithsonian Institution, and I am asking all of my colleagues to join me in co-sponsoring the Pete Conrad Award bill because this bill will do a great deal in bringing to our

young people the realities of science and America's space program. Let us get them off of these electronic games and get them into the real world and the real world may well be dealing with threats coming to us from outer space from great distances away, asteroids and comets that we should know about.

Again, I ask my colleagues to join me in co-sponsoring the Charles Pete Conrad Astronomy Award Act, and I look forward to working with my colleagues and seeing that we get young Americans looking up just like Pete Conrad, always looking up and getting involved.

NATIONAL MINORITY CANCER AWARENESS WEEK

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the 15th annual National Minority Cancer Awareness Week, to highlight and bring attention to the cancer care needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and medically underserved communities.

I come to the floor today to recognize the American Cancer Society, the Intercultural Cancer Council, and the National Center for Minority Health and Disparities at the National Institutes of Health for their continued work to increase the awareness of cancer and reduce health disparities among minorities.

While there has been a decline in cancer mortality since 1991, cancer still is the second leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for more than 555,500 deaths each year. That is more than 1,500 deaths a day. But what is most disheartening and most disturbing is that minority and medically underserved populations continue to bear a startling disproportionate share of the Nation's cancer burden.

According to the American Cancer Society, African American men and women have a cancer death rate of about 33 percent higher than whites. Among women younger than 50 years of age, African Americans are more likely to develop breast cancer than whites. Prostate cancer will claim the lives of more than twice as many African American men as men of other racial and ethnic groups. African Americans are at a significantly higher risk of death from intrauterine and bladder cancers. Hispanic women have nearly twice the rates of cervical cancer than non-Hispanic white women. Hispanics are less likely than other minorities to have a regular source of health care, visited a physician in the past year, and received a routine physical examination. Native American women with breast cancer have the lowest 5-year survival rate of any United States racial/ethnic group. And native Hawaiian women have the highest incidence and mortality rates of endometrial cancers of all United States women.

There is something equally as important as statistics, and that is the question, why our cancer rates are disproportionately high among minorities. According to a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association on April 23 of this year, higher cancer rates in minorities seem to stem from difference in treatment, not biological or genetic differences.

I say to my colleagues, to be truly effective in eradicating all types of cancer, the Federal health agenda must address low-income minorities and medically underserved populations. I think Congress can be instrumental in helping to accomplish this goal in this country. In fact, at my request during the 106th Congress, the Committee on Government Reform held a hearing that afforded us the opportunity to engage in a more exhaustive investigation of the disparities in cancer treatments of minorities. This hearing was a positive first step in addressing the issue of disparities and cancer treatment of minorities in the United States.

In keeping with this point, Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust, chaired by the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN), met to discuss a report which had been requested by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON) and others, from the Institute of Medicine and that report was titled "Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care."

This report concluded that Americans of color tend to receive lower-quality health care than do whites; and these disparities contribute to high death rates of African Americans from cancer, heart disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and other life-endangering conditions.

The American Cancer Society, health care providers, community organizations, and State and local agencies and many other participants agree that we need to do more; that there needs to be more cooperation between the Department of Health and Human Services, local and State health agencies, medical schools, businesses, et cetera, to address the disparities in minorities health care treatment but especially for life-endangering illnesses like cancer. Let us recognize the National Minority Cancer Week as an opportunity to increase awareness in the knowledge of cancer detection treatment and risk through, among other things, target outreach programs to minorities and other underserved communities.

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

Mr. ISSA 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 gen-

tleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

BANNING COCKFIGHTING

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

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to spend a moment on the floor of the House this afternoon dealing with an issue that passed this House by voice vote overwhelmingly during the discussion on the agricultural bill earlier this session.

We now have in conference the ag bill that seems to be moving forward. I have grave concerns in one particular area, Mr. Speaker, that I am going to be working over the course of the next few days to seek clarification because I want to make sure that the intent of the House and the Senate are preserved in the final form that comes out of conference.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a practice of cockfighting, game hens, that has been tolerated by this Congress even though it is now illegal in 47 States. The public long ago has come to the point that this practice is inherently inhuman and barbaric.

□ 1545

The handlers of these fighting birds drug the animals to heighten their aggression and to clot the blood. They affix knives or ice picks like gaffs to their legs and place them into a pit to fight until one of them is dead, all for amusement and illegal gambling.

Mr. Speaker, this barbaric practice is slowly being made illegal around the country. It is currently legal in only three States. The problem is that under current law it is still legal to transport these birds from States where it is illegal to States that it is legal, and this loophole is exploited to allow people to maintain, to train, and it facilitates illegal game bird fighting.

Last October, my colleague, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO), and I offered two amendments to the farm bill that would close these loopholes and strengthen the penalty for violations of animal fighting laws. These two amendments were passed overwhelmingly by this body by voice vote, adopted in identical form in the Senate. This, in fact, should not even be a conference item. Identical language was adopted by both the House and the Senate. The intent of both Chambers was to close the loophole, ban foreign export of fighting animals, and increase the penalty.

According to the House Agriculture Committee's Web site, a conference committee is permitted to deal only with matters in disagreement between the House and the Senate. It may not change language that both have previously approved.