

announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

AUTISM

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, for some time now I have been coming to the floor on a regular basis talking about children who are autistic. A few short years ago, one in 10,000 children in this country was autistic. Now it is more like one in 200. This is a 50-fold increase. We have an absolute epidemic.

The major culprit in most people's minds is the mercury, mercury that has been in vaccines as a preservative. Since the 1930s and 1940s, they have been putting mercury in vaccines as part of a preservative called thimerosal. As children started getting more and more vaccinations, the amount of mercury in their systems grew and grew and grew. And now children get between 25 and 30 shots before they go to kindergarten. The cumulative effect of all that mercury in their brains is causing severe neurological problems for these children, their families, and the entire country.

We did a report, a report that took 4 years in studying the problems with these vaccinations, and most people in the country are not even aware of the problem. A lot of people do not even know what autism is. But the fact of the matter is an awfully large number of these children who have been damaged and who are autistic, we believe and our report believes and shows, that they were damaged by the mercury that was injected into their bodies along with the vaccinations they were getting.

Mr. Speaker, I have been coming to the floor for some time, and every time I come to the floor I talk about letters I have been receiving from families of children and pictures of children who are autistic and their stories about how their child became autistic. We have found from all these letters that the children get their vaccinations, four, five, six, and seven shots in 1 day, in many cases; and within a very short time after that these children who are normal, who make eye-to-eye contact, who laugh and walk and do all the things that normal children do, they change. They no longer communicate, they no longer look you in the eye, they bang their heads against the wall, they have chronic diarrhea and constipation alternatively. And the problems go on and on.

I have a letter here from a fellow who says it has cost him his house. He had to sell his house, \$45,000. He had to borrow money. He is in debt up to here, and he has nowhere to turn. The Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund, which was supposed to help these people, it

was created to help these people whose children were damaged by vaccines, shows no hope.

Many of these people did not get in within the 3-year time limit because they did not know what caused their child to be autistic. They did not even know their child was autistic because the doctors misdiagnosed them. So they missed the 3-year statute of limitations, and they have nowhere to go.

So we are trying to get the Senate and the House together to work out a program where children can get into the program, can have their case reviewed. And if it is proven that they were damaged by the mercury in the vaccines, or the MMR vaccine, then they can get restitution from this fund. But we are having a terrible time because the pharmaceutical companies are fighting us because they are afraid of the liability they might incur.

So we come down here every day, and we beat on this issue and beat on this issue and will continue to do that until we get some positive results, because these parents, and we have thousands of these letters, thousands, and it is growing every day, these parents have no place to turn. These children are going to grow up living to be 65, 70 years old and the taxpayers of this country are going to be taking care of them. That is the only place they can turn because the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund is not doing what it is supposed to do to help these children.

I wish everyone would look at these pictures, my colleagues back in their offices and those on the floor. These are normal children who were damaged by vaccines. Their parents have no place to turn, and the pharmaceutical companies have turned their backs on them. That is criminal and something has to be changed.

HONORING HAITIAN-AMERICANS

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Haitian-Americans. Yesterday, May 18, marked the 200th year of Haitian history, that country's Flag Day celebration. They celebrated in Haiti, and not only in Haiti but also in Miami, Florida, in the place we know as Little Haiti.

This was a celebration of a very proud people, a people that have invested so much into our democracy that we have here in the United States, and not only now but in the beginning. America was founded on the basic democratic beliefs of cultures and values, of people from every country in the world.

There are over 1.2 million Haitians living in the United States today, with 700,000 of them in Florida. I honor those Americans, those Haitian-Americans who continue to believe in the guiding principles of their country. Flag Day represents unity and

strength. That unity has been seen throughout American history since the 1700s during the American Revolution at Savannah. Haitian-Americans fought side by side, prevailing against Britain and creating an independence of 13 colonies. Haitian-Americans are woven within the very history and fabric of this country.

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am not alone on this floor this evening in introducing this Sense of Congress to establish a Haitian-American Heritage Month; and so I yield to my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTSCH).

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, I too join with my colleague in supporting this resolution, but also speaking out really to help educate our colleagues in the country about the 200th adversary of Haitian Flag Day. It is a significant event, the bicentennial of the second oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti, that joined the United States in seeking its freedom from European colonialists in the early 1800s.

The Haitian people have fought for 200 years, have been part of a movement towards democracy not just fighting side by side with Americans but side by side with other Western Hemisphere countries in seeking their own democracy. We have had a community also in south Florida as well as throughout the country that has grown and prospered and, in fact, many of their friends and relatives today still seek that opportunity that all of us have sought in the United States of America.

Today, we have Haitian-Americans that are detained in Krome, in prison really, in the United States, in Miami-Dade County, some of whom, by court order, have been ordered to be released, and yet Attorney General Ashcroft has prevented their release by categorizing Haiti as a terrorist State at this point in time.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I would now yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE).

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman for bringing this very important issue to the floor. I too would like to add my support.

Haitian-Americans, Haiti in particular, had a great deal to do with the development of this country during our fight for independence in the Revolutionary War. There was a battalion in the Savannah battles where Haiti sent troops to fight alongside the colonies against the British.

Also, I think that because of Haiti's battle against Napoleon, one of the first countries to defeat the Napoleon Army, France was very strapped for cash, and it therefore had to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States for a very, very low sum of money because they needed money