

Prop 209 passed. Thank God for our historically Black Colleges. Our African American students are now going south benefiting from their excellent education. But what we have learned is that 70 percent of these students do not return to California. What a brain drain we have in California.

Shame on California.

One observer described the process of eliminating affirmative action, at Boalt Hall, the University of California's premiere law school, as "watching justice die."

In looking at the Administration's position on affirmative action, we have to place that particular choice within the larger context of the Bush Administration's class war on America's working families and their policies of rewarding the rich.

This Administration and its allies in Congress are rolling back advances in racial equality, economic opportunity, and gender equity.

First Trent Lott lamented the defeat of Strom Thurmond's white supremacist Dixiecrat Party in 1948.

The Administration may have rushed to disown itself from those remarks, but its policies are taking us back to those days nonetheless.

The Administration is creating massive tax cuts for the rich, but twelve million children of America's working families were left off their master plan for the child tax credit. They did this deliberately. It was not a mistake.

So were single mothers who apparently don't deserve tax credits in the world of George Bush. They also left out over 200,000 military families. What a disgrace.

We have an Administration that preaches leave no child behind, but then wants to gut Head Start and leaves tens of thousands of children on waiting lists instead of in preschool. They want to block grant head start, remove it from the Department of Health and Human Services, put it in the Department of Education and require four year olds to take a literacy test. Their proposal would end head start as we know it.

We have an Administration that would like to privatize both Social Security and Medicare, leaving our parents and grandparents with neither financial security nor real prescription drug coverage.

We have an Administration that is trying to block grant Section 8 housing programs, dismantling Section 8 as we know it.

And we have an Administration that is stripping away our civil liberties, one by one. We must stop Patriot Act II from getting through Congress.

It's an Administration that is wiping out decades of progress on Clean Air and Clean Water, even though asthma, childhood cancer rates, and scores of other health problems associated with pollution are on the rise, especially among people of color. It's an administration that puts our tax dollars into a \$400 billion dollar defense budget to build more missiles, yet cuts after school programs and won't fully fund education.

This is an administration that is launching a similar assault on women's rights.

Look at its attack on Title IX, for example, a program that is featured in this conference. Title IX has opened up opportunities for girls and women on the sports field that have also opened up opportunities in life.

Our beloved, recently deceased Congresswoman Patsy Mink of Hawaii, sponsored Title IX. In honor of her memory and legacy, we must not let this Administration turn back the clock.

Title IX is about banning sex discrimination, pure and simple. And the Bush Administration is trying to wipe out those protec-

tions, just like it's trying to wipe out affirmative action and the Clean Air Act.

This is an administration that wages war abroad while also waging war at home, on the nation's poor, on people of color, on women, on the environment, on seniors, and on working families.

What can we do in the face of these assaults? Fight back! Believe me, we must be vigilant to stop any legislation—illegal legislation that the Republican House and Senate will put forward.

We must take back the House, take back the Senate, and take back the White House in 2004.

To do that, we must educate, organize, mobilize, and vote!

We must register our folks to vote, we must vote and we must demand that our votes be counted. No more stealing elections. Democracy is at a crossroads. We must make democracy real.

Rainbow PUSH represents the very diversity that is under attack. And diversity is a tremendous strength. Use it!

If people tell you their vote doesn't matter, remind them about Florida.

Each and every vote the Supreme Court chooses to count matters. We must demand that they all be counted!

This is a critical moment in history and you have to make it our moment.

I am reminded of the Book of Esther and the conversation between Mordecai and Esther when she faced her moment of truth.

Mordecai turned to Esther as she paused in the face of what looked to be an insurmountable obstacle, and he said to her, "Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Let me pose a similar question to you here, today. Who knows whether or not you have come for such a time as this?

Queen Esther and her forces were victorious. This too is a battle we can win. We, too, will be victorious. And, again, women will help lead the way.

Thank you for all that you do. Let us take from this moment the determination to follow in the footsteps of our heroes—Dr. King, Justice Marshall, Mrs. Parks and Mrs. Till, Ida B. Wells, Sojourner Truth, Maynard Jackson, and Reverend Jesse Jackson—and, like Esther, seize our moment.

I say again, Rainbow Push, you have come for a time such as this.

Thank you and God bless you.

TAXPAYER PROTECTION AND IRS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say that I cannot support this bill. I do support nearly everything in the underlying bill. It is mostly the product of a bipartisan effort to address taxpayer rights issues and those provisions should be enacted. Unfortunately, the addition of "poison pill" language into this bill prevents me from supporting this legislation today.

This bill has many good components, including provisions I worked on personally with Mr. HOUGHTON. There are several excellent provisions from members of both sides of the aisle, in addition to a number of important rec-

ommendations made by the Taxpayer Advocate at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to improve services of the agency and protect consumer rights. Most of these provisions are broadly, if not unanimously, supported.

However, what started as a good bipartisan bill has been tarnished by the addition of an anti-consumer provision that is troublesome enough that I cannot vote for it. Language was added to this bill to strip essential consumer protections for those purchasing health insurance using tax credits granted under the Trade Assistance Act (TAA). These existing, carefully negotiated consumer protections are in place to ensure adequate coverage for those using the tax credit. They are enjoyed by every member of this Congress, and they are critical to providing meaningful health coverage.

Proponents of removing these consumer protections call it "consumer choice." But as a former insurance regulator, I can tell you that families facing unemployment and possible loss of health insurance due to U.S. trade policy need health insurance that is both affordable and provides adequate coverage. They should not be forced to "choose" one over the other.

Under current law, insurance companies who agree to offer coverage to displaced workers under this program are substantially limited in their ability to turn down applicants, charge excessive premiums or otherwise seek to cover only the healthiest individuals. Without these requirements, the promise of help for most of these people and their families would be meaningless. Understand, however, these are not special protections. These are standard protections and they are being stripped in this bill.

Making coverage cheaper by restricting it to the healthy undermines its purpose—health security for those who need it most. It's like making automobile air bags out of tissue paper—a tactic sure to make cars cheaper for all and hurt only those few who are in accidents—those whose goal it is to protect in the first place.

Only healthy people can afford to "waive" the protections. If the waiver is available, the insurance industry would likely gladly enter into arrangements to cover only the young and healthy displaced workers and walk away from those who need help most. This would make a mockery out of the agreement the members of this House voted for in passing the TAA.

Or worse yet, perhaps those most in need of coverage would indeed be issued policies, using this credit, but only coverage that exempts any pre-existing conditions. In other words, this credit could be used to underinsure individuals or families, leaving them vulnerable without the protection they need most. Is it really helpful to displaced workers to provide a tax credit to purchase coverage that doesn't cover what they need most? Of course it isn't, and that's why we included standard consumer protections in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, aside from this anti-consumer provision related to health care tax credits, I strongly support the underlying bill. The majority of this bill is good for taxpayers and would serve to improve the operations of the IRS and the services they provide to our constituents. However, as long as this poison pill provision remains in this bill, I will oppose it.