

HOEFFEL) can see, his question was so pertinent that we have not gotten much further in it, and for good reason, because it requires some explication. The problem is here, if we do not do this, is a credibility gap. What will the President be able to say about North Korea? What will he be able to say about the Philippines? What will he be able to say about Colombia? What will he be able to say further about Afghanistan?

Afghanistan seems to have disappeared; yet I know there were two attacks yesterday, one on the American base and one on U.N. personnel. I do not believe anybody was killed, but who knows? Now we are told there are more attacks in Iraq than necessarily are being reported. I suppose that gets quotidian now. If they are on the 11 o'clock news at night, they have got fires to report, they have assaults to report or basketball players or the latest boxer to embarrass himself or something of that nature. They hardly have time to fit in anymore how many people got killed today. It is almost a loss leader in the news.

And so if we do not have some answers here, if the President does not take control and stop being dismissive of these questions as merely revising history or some other sarcastic observation, he is not going to be able nor will the administration be able to convince others who may find it in their interest to join with us in other circumstances. He will not be able to find anyone who is going to be willing to take us at our word. That is why this is so serious. It is way beyond partisan. Other people will occupy these seats down here. Other people will come to occupy our place. We are here only as long as the faith and trust of the people in our constituencies are willing to put us here. No one owns a seat in this Congress. No one owns a seat at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue either. We are only as good as the credibility with our own people before we can hope to influence others.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments. I think our time is getting short. Any final comments from the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) or the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT)?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I will just follow the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) by saying that when I first heard the President in response to attacks on U.S. soldiers in the way that he does suggest bring them on, I remember wanting to say to the President that what we should be doing, President Bush, is to bring allies on to this coalition and make it a genuine coalition of democracies to assist in terms of the reconstruction so that American taxpayers do not bear the burden almost exclusively and that American men and women who have served admirably can come home.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments. I

thank the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE). The Iraq Watch is going to be hard at work. I thank my colleagues for being part of this. We will be back next week to ask more questions, to seek more information, and to try to better educate our colleagues in the Congress and the American people regarding the challenges of our role in Iraq.

CRITICAL ISSUES FACING AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FEENEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDI) is recognized for half the time until midnight, approximately 40 minutes, as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. TANCREDI. Mr. Speaker, I first of all want to start off my comments tonight by saying I guess I am pleased to say and proud to say that there is a young man that I want to pay tribute to for just a moment, and his name is Randy Gifford. He is in California right now. He has had a number of really very exciting things happen in the near past because one is that he had his first child. He and his dear wife have given birth to a young boy by the name of Gabriel, and that was just the beginning of a lot of really good things that have been happening to them recently; and in fact I just found out a little bit ago that he had his first film, the first film that he has written and directed accepted to be debuted at the Breckenridge Film Festival in Colorado, and I have no doubt that this talented young man will soon be looking back at this particular accomplishment as the first step in a journey that is going to be a very successful one and one that he can look back on with great pride. I look at it with great pride because he is my son.

I wanted to discuss a number of things tonight, and so many issues come to the fore, so many important decisions need to be made by this Congress and so many challenging issues confront us that it is hard to pick from this panoply of different agendas which one we should focus on. I certainly will talk about immigration. It is always a topic that I think needs to be discussed and needs to be dealt with in the light of day, but before that let me just talk about a couple of other things.

And I listened to my colleagues on the other side tonight discuss their concerns with regard to Iraq, and really a lot of what they said boiled down to a concern, I guess, over the veracity of the administration and whether our goals, the goals of the United States as set out by the President of the United States were legitimate. Was the President being truthful? Was this some sort of scam, I guess, that was being played on the American public? To actually put men and women of this country, our young men and women who serve us so well in the Armed Forces, would

we really place them at risk if we were not sure, if we did not believe with all our hearts that the vital interests of the United States were at risk? And I certainly understand that there can be questions about the authenticity of information that we received, whether or not the information that was received from all the various sources from which we gathered information were legitimate and what weight we should have put on some sources and some decisions as opposed to others. All that is of course legitimate fodder for discussion and debate.

At a certain point it does sound, as I listened to my friends on the other side talk about this issue, that there is something that motivates them that perhaps goes beyond that desire for a legitimate understanding of exactly what happened and what were the circumstances that brought us to where we are today. I must admit to a certain extent it does seem like what is underlying the rhetoric is an overwhelming desire to find something wrong, to find something out that is bad, that is negative, that would perhaps lead to some sort of political change in this Nation, and that at some point in time it does sound to me like that desire supersedes all of the other desires and that the quest for legitimate inquiry is left behind in the dust and the desire to make political hay takes hold.

And there is so much that can be said, and there are so many little technical points here and there; and I think that the administration and especially Secretary Rumsfeld, who I saw on television over the weekend, had done such a great job in explaining in very simple terms, in very common sense ways, in very honest analysis what we believe to be the case, how we got the information we got, how that information led to a series of decisions that eventually meant a commitment of U.S. forces in Iraq.

By the way, those of us who are in the position having to vote to support that decision, none of us come to that place, I think, easily. Certainly I know I did not. I do not think there is a Member of this Congress, frankly, who cavalierly cast a vote on something like that. And all of us wonder, and certainly I do, whenever I have to cast a vote to send someone's children off to war, I have to think about whether or not I am willing to send my son Randy or his brother Ray, and this is the highest possible standard I can imagine for any of us; but it is the standard we should all use because of course it is perhaps somewhat easier to vote to send someone else's children off to war than it is one's own; so we have to think about this very carefully: Am I willing to do this? Are the risks to the Nation so great that we would actually commit our forces?

□ 2245

I believed, and I still believe, that the risks were that great. But it was not easy. It was not easy. Because I do not

for a moment think that American power should be projected around the world in a cavalier fashion; and I believe that, for the most part, this country, under this President, has committed American troops only after it became apparent that that was the only option available to us and that it was in the pursuit of legitimate and laudable goals, both in the defense of the United States and the liberation of the people of Iraq.

Interestingly, we see e-mails from the troops on the ground in Iraq, we see alternate sources of news, I guess I should say, on the Internet and even some of the popular media that portray a completely different picture of what is going on in Iraq today than what the popular media portrays. Every day the popular media suggests that things are falling apart in Iraq, that our involvement there is not turning out to be a positive thing. And certainly, every day, the most unfortunate news that we receive is that some American has either been hurt or wounded, hurt or killed in Iraq, and this is, especially to the family of those folks who have been wounded or killed, this is the ultimate in the sacrifice that this Nation has made and has asked them to make. So for them, it is everything.

We must, however, try to put it in perspective and understand what it is that we are trying to gain, what it is that we are trying to do there and who the enemy really is. And that is a very, very wide-ranging question, who the enemy really is and what it is we are trying to accomplish.

But I think that the goals were laudable. I believe that our President operated with the best information available to him and made a decision and, although a very difficult one, I believe he made it with his heart in the right place.

Not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, I heard of an exchange between Secretary of State Colin Powell and the Archbishop of Canterbury; and, in a way, I think this exchange sums up in a very succinct way what it is that motivates America today and what has motivated America for most of its history in terms of any sort of foreign policy goals. I think we can be proud of what it is that we have either accomplished or are trying to accomplish. Because it is not for territorial gain. It is not for any sort of economic gain. It is not for that that America extends its power around the world, or projects its power around the world, or risks its men and women. And in this exchange that I mentioned, I think again it characterizes it better than I ever, ever could in any other words.

The Archbishop of Canterbury said to Secretary of State Colin Powell, and I am having to paraphrase here, because I do not have the exact quote, but it was very close to this. He said, isn't it true, Mr. Secretary, that the war in Iraq is nothing more than a desire on the part of the United States to extend its hegemony around the world and to

maybe even, as an imperialistic power, gain control of other lands and places and people? And Secretary of State Powell said, Archbishop, you know, over the last hundred years or so, the United States has sent its young men and women off to defend freedom in far-off lands all over the world, and many of them did not come back. And the only thing we ever asked for in return, he said, the only land we ever wanted in return for that expenditure of our blood was the land necessary to bury the folks who did not return. And I think that is the truth about America.

I think that it is something that we can be proud of. It is unfortunate that lives have to be expended in the quest for our own peace and security, but that is the nature of this world. I do believe with all my heart that we are in another very, very dangerous and very challenging battle, and it may be called a clash of civilizations. I happen to believe that it is. There are many people who would challenge that, I am sure, and want to characterize what is happening is as just a series of small engagements here and there brought about by individuals who have "hijacked a religion." I believe it is more serious than that, and I believe that the battle is bigger than that. I believe it is a clash of civilizations.

I believe western civilization is, in fact, at stake. The values, the principles that we stand for are being challenged around the world, and they are at risk. And it is extremely important for Americans to understand what is at risk and why we fight. Because if it is not for what I have just said, then the fight may be in vain and lives expended for naught. But if the fight is for what I suggest it is, then it is worth the endeavor. It is even worth the thought that we have to send our own off to war.

Now what worries me about the kind of discussion we have had on the floor tonight and has been happening almost every week certainly for the last several weeks by members of the other party is that in a way, as I say, to the extent that they are trying to simply make sure that the decisions that were made were good ones or what information we may have made those decisions upon was faulty or good, all of that is appropriate, and I do not for a moment suggest that it should not be a discussion on the floor of the House. But after a while it begins to play into the hands of those people who, in fact, do hope for the demise of this civilization and of our country in particular, because we represent its best and brightest hope.

So it is important for us, after all the rhetoric is done, all of the partisan snipes have been made, sniping has been made, that we revisit this basic underlying fact: that there is a challenge to the United States of America and to western civilization. It is posed by radicals, Islamists, people who cannot see a world in which they can coex-

ist with western ideals, the ideals of individual freedom, the rule of law, and the ability for men and women to select from whatever they want to select from to follow, the dictates of their heart when it comes to a religion that they choose to adhere to. These things are true. The evidence is there. Thousands of Americans are dead in this battle and are dead at the hands of the people who are trying to accomplish what I have just described, the overthrow of western civilization and of the United States in particular.

So please keep that in mind. Let us put this in perspective. The threat is real. The challenge is enormous. And it is incumbent upon every one of us to tell America what is at stake. It is incumbent upon every one of us to talk about the values that we should cherish and, for the most part, do cherish. It is incumbent upon the President and the Members of this body to tell the American people that there are things, in fact, worth defending, that there are principles worth risking life and limb for. And this thing in Iraq, this battle in Iraq is just a battle in a war, a war that is going to be fought for a long time, a war that will claim many more lives, unfortunately, and depressingly.

But that is the truth, and not facing it head on leaves us open to a very, I think, corrosive sort of influence that I hope we can avoid. Because, in fact, as I say, the stakes are great. The risk is great. So it is important I think for us all to put that into perspective when we listen to the rhetoric of our friends on the other side of the aisle.

Western civilization and America in particular is worth fighting for. It is worth saving. It is the best and greatest hope of mankind, I believe. And people should be willing to say that here on this floor and from the White House and in the media. It is worth fighting for.

Now, let me go on to several other topics, if I could. When we talk about what is worth fighting for and where to commit American troops, there is another issue that is developing right now and it is the debate over whether or not we should be sending troops to Liberia as "peacekeepers." Well, there is not a lot of peace in Liberia to keep right now. We would have to create it. This is the difference. I mean, we have to ask ourselves. This is the question that I think is incredibly legitimate: What are the vital interests of the United States that are at stake in Liberia? Is it a place of great human rights abuses? It is undeniably that. Are there places throughout the world where those abuses are just as great if not greater? Undeniably so. Are there places on the African continent where human rights abuses are even greater than in Liberia? Absolutely so.

I think, of course, immediately of Sudan, a country with which I have some intimate knowledge, having traveled there, having been the sponsor of the Sudan Peace Act and having committed as much as any other Member

of this Congress to bringing an end to that conflict in that war-torn nation. But never in the discussion of the problems in Sudan did I ever suggest putting American troops in there because, of course, I could not see that, in fact, it did rise to that level, that it rose to the level of a situation that placed American vital interests at stake. I want to do everything I can, everything possible to bring an end to the conflict there and an end to the conflict in Liberia. But American troops I do not believe should go there.

I do not believe that American troops should have been used in Bosnia. I would not have voted for it. I must admit to my colleagues that I believed it was an adventure that we should not have embarked upon, even though there were horrendous atrocities there. I did not see where it was in the interests of the United States. What was the threat from Bosnia to the United States? I do not believe it existed. And do we do what we can to help logistically? Do we send materials? Do we send aid? Absolutely. I think that is a laudable goal, again. But it does not rise to the level that I mentioned earlier, which is what I need to tell me whether or not I will vote to send American men and women and/or my own children off to war.

So I hope we do not commit troops in Liberia, Mr. Speaker.

□ 2300

I hope that we will do what we can. I hope we will provide what we can to the members of the African Union, or to ECOFS, the Economic Community of African States. I believe we should, in fact, do what we can to support them logistically, but I do not believe that troops are necessary there or even would be a good thing for the region.

Today as we see over and over again by reports continually coming back to us even though there are people today in Liberia saying that they want Americans there, many of those same folks would, I fear, in a short time be saying that they want Americans out and be doing things in order to effect that eventual end. So I want an end to the fighting. I want to do what we can. I would not send troops there, and I hope we do not.

Now, that is the kind of foreign policy discussion and I could certainly go on at length about each one of these things, but because this is that hour where we sometimes have to share the last hour with another speaker, my time has been cut in half so I want to get on to two more things, and these are on the domestic-policy sides of things. I wanted to really make a couple of comments about some things that are happening that are, I think, again, worthy of note and certainly issues that are becoming quite controversial in the United States.

Now, we have had a lot of discussion recently about a new provision for Medicare that adds \$400 billion or so, it could go up to what those people sug-

gest is a trillion dollars in cost, to add prescription benefits to the Medicare plan. And I am a "no" vote, and I do believe that it is not the right thing to do. I do not believe we should expand this program.

I believe that Medicare itself is a program that is in desperate need of reform and the amount of reform that comes with the bill that we talked about earlier, that we passed on this floor earlier, the amount of reform is rather small. The amount of mandates for a new program, mandatory spending is really high. I just do not think it balances out, but I think there is a way to achieve a reduction in the costs of prescription drugs for every senior in the United States and that is to allow reimportation.

What does that mean? It means that in Canada and Mexico and other countries around the world, drugs are being sold, exactly the same drugs are being sold at much lower prices than any American is able to buy them at their drug store or pharmacy. So how does that happen?

It happens that the countries on both sides of the United States have laws that restrict the amount that can be charged for drugs. And so you say to yourself, well, then why are the pharmaceutical companies selling drugs in those countries? Well, they are making a profit they say, but not enough of a profit to support all of the research that needs to be done and all of the advertising that is being done on television in the United States to push their drugs.

Well, I must tell you that I think that is not a legitimate excuse for having the cost of one drug be \$1 in one country and \$20 in the other for a single pill. And I want to let the market dictate the actual cost of the drugs and the profit to the companies, and so I would allow for reimportation.

Well, let me tell you what has happened recently. The pharmaceutical companies have put on a full court press here because the possibility is that this idea of the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT), he has been the primary sponsor of this concept for quite some time. And because it is finally coming to the floor, it is finally raising up to a level where people can begin to think about the possibility of it passing, the drug companies are going ballistic. And they have gone out and sought out all kinds of friends that would not have necessarily thought would have been supporters of their side of the coin.

Earlier this week, the Traditional Values Coalition, an organization in which I am certainly familiar and in the past have been supportive, they sent out a letter stating that the passage of this Gutknecht bill I was telling you about, the drug reimportation bill, would effectively repeal the prohibition on mailing abortion products around the world.

Now, they say that it would allow abortion-inducing drugs to be mailed

from international locations to individuals in the United States who are not pharmacists or doctors. These unscrupulous individuals would then be free to mail these abortion-producing drugs throughout the Nation to our daughters without parental knowledge.

This is a direct quote from the mailing that went out from the Traditional Values Coalition who I believe, I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, I believe they have been co-opted here. And I just wonder to what extent they have actually benefited as a result of their decision to come in in opposition to the reimportation bill. Have they benefited financially? I would like to see whether or not this has been the case, because my hunch is they have.

These mailers were sent out in en masse in a congressional district of a number of Members, myself included, who are and have always been and will continue to be staunchly pro-life. I have a 100 percent voting record on pro-life issues.

The gentleman from Minnesota's (Mr. GUTKNECHT) bill, which the Traditional Values Coalition has characterized as the Abortion Drug Importation Act, is a pharmaceutical market access bill, completely separate from other Federal laws which govern the administration and distribution of specific drugs. In fact, if the Gutknecht bill passes, RU-486, the abortion bill, will still be governed by the same distribution regulations it currently falls under. The idea that under the Gutknecht bill pregnant teenagers would be able to mail in for a bottle of RU-486 pills as if they were aspirin is political scare-mongering of the worst and lowest kind.

Now, I have seen the disinformation mailings that the Traditional Values Coalition is sending out. And in addition to being ridiculously disingenuous, they are also very slick, very expensive, which begs the question: Who is really behind these efforts? The Traditional Values Coalition has obtained huge pro-life voting lists which have to be purchased to be used by other groups, and targeted conservative pro-life Members who are in competitive races. Their tactics are reprehensible, immoral, unethical, and belie the name of the group. In fact, their actions represent anything but traditional values.

There are, in fact, legitimate arguments to be made both for and against the merits of reimportation, but it is ludicrous to suggest that it is somehow an abortion issue. I simply wanted to bring that to the attention of the body tonight, Mr. Speaker, because I believe with all my heart in the concept of, I am a pro-life Member of this body and I believe in protecting life at its earliest beginning, at conception. And I have voted that way, and I want that to be the culture of this country; I want us to be a pro-life Nation. And I worry that actions like this taken by the Traditional Values Coalition actually hurt that effort because it places the coalition, I think, in a light that it

should not be seen in, does not want to be seen in.

I think it implies that they are willing to actually profit from the discussion of this, and they want to profit even if they have to fudge the facts a little bit. And it does not help them, and it does not help our cause. So I am going to join with other Members of the pro-life coalition in the House of Representatives to denounce this activity on the part of the Traditional Values Coalition and to say in no uncertain terms that this kind of lobbying is absolutely unacceptable, and it is certainly at the least disingenuous.

That is the first of the domestic policy issues. And then I suppose to no one's surprise, the final domestic policy issue with which I want to deal tonight is, of course, immigration. I want to spend a little time, the remaining time I have, as a matter of fact, on the discussion of one specific aspect of immigration and that is the toll that massive immigration is taking on the jobs of Americans, both low-skilled, low-wage jobs and high-skilled, high-wage jobs, spending a little time on the latter, H1B visas in particular.

H1B visas, I will be using that term quite a bit, and let me explain what that means. An H1B visa is simply a category of visa that we hand out to people all over the world so that they can come to the United States for a specific purpose. In this case, the H1B visas were created specifically for sort of high-tech or white collar workers who were ostensibly needed in the United States because that industry was growing, as you recall, the bubble was expanding dramatically and everybody and their brother was making money at it; and there was a lot of employment and many of the firms came to us, many of the very high-tech firms came to this Congress and said, we have to have more people. We cannot fill the jobs we have here in the computer sciences, computer technology, high-tech jobs; we cannot fill them with people coming out of our colleges because there just are not enough.

□ 2310

There are not enough of them so we need to go outside the country and bring people in here for a certain period of time until we can actually fill the job with an American citizen, and so Congress responded and created something called the H-1B visa. It was expanded in 1999 when the Congress raised the cap to 195,000 a year from its previous level of about 65,000.

In 2000, Congress enacted the American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act which expanded the program again, contained few protections for American workers. Congress was persuaded at the time that there was a critical shortage of computer scientists, software engineers and programmers.

Even if that were true and I would tell my colleagues that now we are finding out that maybe that was not as

accurate as we had hoped, maybe some of the testimony that was provided by companies like Sun Microsystems when they testified to the Senate and said that they really needed these people and that they would never displace American workers, apparently it sort of I guess was not true. They are now saying, no, that they did, in fact, replace American workers and did so because essentially foreign workers will work for less.

Whatever was the case in 1998, 1996 in terms of the need for this particular program, no shortage exists today in the program. No program shortage exists in terms of the supply of labor for the high-tech industries in America, does not exist. It is not there. No one can suggest that there are no American workers today who are seeking jobs in the high-tech field because we know that that is not true.

We know that as a matter of fact that the area that has been hit hardest by the drop in the dot com bubble, the burst of that dot com bubble I should say, where unemployment ranges maybe 7 to 7.5 percent, there is massive unemployment and underemployment of American workers in the computer field.

The number of H-1B visas is supposedly limited by a cap, but that cap is often exceeded through loopholes and extensions, and beginning in 2000, all universities and nonprofits were exempted from the cap. In 1998, the cap was supposed to be 65,000. Do my colleagues know how many actually came in? Two hundred and five thousand. In 1999, the cap was 115,000. Do my colleagues know how many we took in? Two hundred and thirty-four thousand.

In the year 2000, the cap was 115,000. We took in 294,000. In 2001, the cap was 107,000. We took in 384,000. In 2002, when the cap went to 195,000, we took in 294,100. In 2000, Congress added an exemption for universities and nonprofits. As I say, in the 2 years of 2001 and 2002, 342,000 H-1B visas were issued in this category. If we add to this number the number of visas already issued not yet up for renewal, it is clear that there are well over 600,000 H-1B visa holders employed in 2002.

There are a number of problems with the program as it has been operated since it was expanded in 1998. Do we need the program? Is the program based on valid analysis of real labor market conditions? I would say it is not adequately tied to demonstrated labor shortages in the fields of computer science and technology. In fact, in 1996, the Department of Labor's Inspector General found that the program does not protect workers' jobs. It allows aliens to immigrate based on attachment to a specific job and then shops their services in competition with equally or more qualified workers without regard to the prevailing wage.

All of these things they are supposed to not be able to do. They are not supposed to be able to dislocate any American worker. They are not supposed to

be able to pay anything less than the going wage, but in fact, it has happened continuously and indiscriminately.

The Department of Labor's certification program does not meet its intent of excluding foreign workers when qualified, willing, U.S. workers are available. In 2000, a report by the National Research Council concluded that there is no analytical base on which to set the proper level of H-1B visas and that decisions to increase or reduce the cap on such visas are fundamentally political.

Continuing cries of shortages come from high-tech industry lobbyists, yet academic and government studies fail to find evidence of any shortage. A National Research Council report in 2001 concluded that the H-1B visas have an adverse impact on wage levels. According to estimates among professionals in the field, there are at least 800,000 unemployed and underemployed computer technicians and programmers in the United States of America. Could it be that there is a relationship between this number and the 1,300,000 plus H-1B visas now in this country?

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report that unemployment among electronics engineers has soared to 7 percent. Among computer hardware engineers the rate is 6.5 percent. The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers says that these employees lost 241,000 jobs over the past 2 years, and computer scientists and systems analysts lost 175,000 jobs.

One of the Nation's leading academic experts on the computer science industry, Dr. Norman Matloff of the University of California at Davis, has demonstrated that there is no shortage of U.S. workers to fill these jobs. A UCLA study cited by Dr. Matloff shows that H-1B workers are paid 30 percent less than comparable Americans, and a Cornell University Study found that this difference is 20 to 30 percent.

Remember, this was started out to be a temporary program. It was supposed to be a response to a temporary labor shortage in the computer science industry. Yet, by its structure, it has become a way for foreign workers to enter our labor market and then take up permanent residence.

The 3-year term of the H-1B visa can be renewed for a second 3-year term for a total of 6 years. After 3 years, the worker can begin his petition for a change in status to permanent resident, and hundreds of thousands have done that. A 6-year term is not a temporary visa, and it ought to be changed to a single 2-year term that is not renewable. In fact, this whole program ought to be abolished. There is no need for it, and you cannot prove it.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GINGREY). The Chair wishes to inform the gentleman that he will be recognized for an additional 20 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Chair.

We have to ask ourselves, are there adequate worker protections in the H-1B visa program? All right. The present program pays lip service to worker protection, but in reality an independent study by the Department of Labor's own Inspector General has shown that these protections are a sham.

The Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers believes that so-called safeguards to prevent employers from laying off workers and hiring H-1B employees are ineffective and limited to the employers' actions over a 90-day period prior to the hiring of H-1Bs. This 90-day rule is easily evaded and must be expanded to 6 months if the program is retained. Also, H-1B workers who are laid off must be required to return to their country of origin within 60 days.

A General Accounting Office report found that the training funds appropriated and aimed at helping displaced U.S. workers are misused and benefit comparatively few U.S. workers.

Lastly, are the qualifications and experiences of H-1B visa workers frequently fraudulent? That is a great question. Accusations that H-1B visa applicants often falsify their educational background and experience were verified by the State Department's Inspector General. Documents are frequently and routinely falsified.

A yearlong study of the H-1B visa application from the American Consulate in India found that 45 percent of the work experience claims were fraudulent. There are places in India that they call body shops. These are simply companies that are set up for the purpose of creating these false documents, false degrees and diplomas and attaching them to the H-1B workers, sending them on. Once that worker gets here, it really does not matter because no one really comments on it, and they become part of our labor pool.

□ 2320

The Department of Labor Inspector General has averaged 14 indictments and 11 convictions in the labor certification program each year since 1996; and believe me, that is the tiniest tip of the iceberg. The program could be amended and reformed and its major abuses corrected, but the simple fact is we do not need the program at all. It should be repealed, and I have introduced a bill to do just that.

We could reduce the cap to 25,000 or 35,000; but the truth is we do not even need 10,000 new H-1B visas when we have unemployment of 7 percent among software engineers.

That is why I have introduced H.R. 2688 to repeal the H-1B program. It is now in the Committee of the Judiciary, and I ask for Members' support of this measure. I also have to say that this is just an example of something that I think needs to be discussed on this floor, and the American people have to understand and we need to tell them about it. That is the fact that we have embarked, both the Congress of the

United States and the administration, and this is not new, this has been a long time in coming, we have embarked upon a cheap labor program. We have decided that it is in the best interests of someone, certainly the corporations, especially the high-tech corporations, to do what is necessary to reduce the wage rates of American workers who were employed in that industry.

We have testimony, we have hundreds and hundreds of examples, we have tons of empirical evidence to show that the whole H-1B program is a fraud and that the idea that it came as a result of some need that still exists is ludicrous. So why are we still doing it? Why do we allow the 1 million or more H-1B visa holders who are living here essentially illegally, why do we allow them to stay? One reason, Mr. Speaker. It is because the high-tech corporations of this country have opposed it. They have put a great deal of their money into lobbying against any reversal of this program and of the whole philosophy of cheap labor.

Maybe it is something that we cannot avoid that we will be forced, that all American workers will be forced to lower their wages, lower their standard of living to meet the competitors around the world who are competing for these jobs. If that is it, I want somebody who believes that to stand up and tell the American people that is where we are going and they will have to take less money for what they are doing, what they want to do for the rest of their lives, the jobs they are involved in, or become underemployed or unemployed. Maybe they have to sell their homes and get a smaller house and their whole standard of living has to change because of this whole new world economy.

If that is the case, and I do not believe it is, but if that is what we believe to be the case, tell the American people that is what we are doing. Do not hide it under these things called temporary worker visas that are necessary because of the great demand that exists for these jobs and the low supply of labor in the United States to fill that demand, because that is absolutely and clearly a sham. It is a lie that is untrue, and we should not continue to perpetrate that lie.

We have talked about the problems with the massive immigration into this country, specifically in the area of jobs and what it has done to the labor markets. We concentrated for a long time on low-skilled, low-wage workers and what the effect of massive immigration of folks in that particular category meant to low-skilled, low-wage workers here. Guess what it is. This is not brain surgery, as they say.

It is pretty simple to understand that if you bring millions of people into this country every single year who have very few skills, that they are going to compete with other low-skilled, low-wage workers in America. And these are primarily recent immigrants. But

even those people who have been here for many years because, unfortunately, many times people who are in the minority communities who are stuck in these low-wage jobs, they are the most negatively affected by massive immigration because it is their jobs that are at risk, and it is their wages that go down. It is a cheap labor policy.

Yet we hear from both sides of the aisle how we need to encourage this phenomenon. From the Democrats who are petrified of actually impeding the flow of illegal immigrants into this country, or legal immigrants, for fear that their voting constituent rolls would be impaired negatively, that the numbers would not be rising as quickly as they would like of potential voters for the Democratic Party, because they fear that political outcome and because a significant chunk of their supporters come from immigrant groups and immigration groups that want to expand immigration into the country, because that is the case, they will do nothing to impede this flow.

On my side of the aisle there is this desire for cheap labor. We want to respond to the needs of corporations in this country that have lobbied so hard to get cheaper labor. Well, both of these agendas I think are unworthy of our efforts. Both sides of the aisle should think about something that is far more important than the immediate political future of either party, and that is the effect of this kind of massive immigration, legal and illegal, on the people of this country.

Is it right and proper that our own Nation's borders should be porous so as to allow the flow of millions of people into this country to take the jobs of American citizens, to force people either to work for less money than they were working for just a few years ago or be unemployed, in order to achieve these political goals that I have just described, cheap labor and greater political benefit, greater potential voter pool? I think it is despicable, Mr. Speaker; but that is exactly where we are. That is exactly where we are because there is no other way that you can possibly explain this phenomenon.

How can we explain the fact that maybe 70 percent of the population consistently tells pollsters that they are in desperate need and they have a great desire for control of immigration, for securing our borders, for even reducing the amount of legal immigration so we can actually integrate those people, the millions that have come in in the recent past?

People say we are a Nation of immigrants. In this Nation's past we have had periods of high immigration, but we have had periods of very low immigration. It has been cyclical. It has not been a constantly increasing pattern since the day the Nation was founded. There are many decades with low-to-almost-nonexistent immigration in terms of the ratio of people coming and leaving, and yet the economy actually grew. In the late 1940s and early 1950s,

immigration was a very small percentage of the population growth of this country, and yet we had an enormous growth rate in the productivity of the country and in the economy itself.

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There are many times in our Nation's history where that has happened. We do not need massive immigration to fuel economic growth. We can point to the areas, as I say, the times in the past where this economic growth has been achieved without massive immigration. We need a time-out. We need some time to actually in a way, if you will, digest the massive numbers of people that have come in and to help them get integrated into this country. That has been the process in the past. But we are abandoning that for the political goals that I have identified here. We are suggesting that we can keep the doors open forever, that our borders can and, in fact, should be erased.

There are people who believe that. I want them to stand up in front of this body and defend it. I want them to say that we need to have open borders, because that is what they really want.

I think that it is just, as I said earlier, about the need to tell the American people exactly what it is we are involved with even in the clash of civilizations. It is important to tell the American people what we are involved with in terms of our immigration policy and let them make the decision as to whether we are right or wrong, who is right or wrong.

Maybe I am 180 degrees off base. Maybe I am completely wrong about my concerns with regard to immigration and the impact it will have on this country, the negative impact. Let us get it debated. I want somebody to stand up and say, no. In fact, we need to abolish the borders. We need to repeal all the laws on immigration. We are just a region. We are not really a country at all. Lines on the map, they have become anachronistic, not important at all; and, in fact, markets should determine the flow of goods and services and people and that is all. Markets should determine everything.

Maybe they have got a case to make. Let them make it to the American people. I believe that we have a duty to the people of this Nation to tell them exactly what is at stake here, just as I said earlier about the war on terrorism, what is at stake.

Mr. Speaker, I believe with all my heart that massive immigration into this country will not only determine what kind of a country we become, that is divided, balkanized or united, it will determine whether or not we will be a country, a nation, at all. There are folks who want us to simply be a place on the earth that has residents, not citizens. The whole concept of citizenship is under attack every single day.

Constantly, we are seeing proposals, especially on the other side of the aisle but not uniquely from the Democrats, something from our side, too, proposals

to have amnesty for people who are living here illegally, proposals to extend all kinds of benefits to people who are living here illegally, proposals to give people who are living here illegally, who have violated the laws of the land to come in, proposals to say to them, we not only will teach all of your children in K-12, we will teach them in higher education at taxpayers' expense, that we will give you driver's licenses, that we will give you social service benefits, and that we will in fact even let you vote.

There are places called sanctuary cities popping up all over the country, and they are telling their police forces in these cities that they are not to cooperate with the INS in any way, shape or form. They are telling people in the community that they can come and vote if they are simply residents of the community, not citizens of the United States but simply residents of a community.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, in fact that is what we are doing, if in fact you provide all of the benefits of citizenship to people who are not citizens and in fact are not even here legally, then what in the world is the value of the word? What is the value of citizenship? It is destroyed. It means nothing. That is what is at stake here. It is not just jobs. Believe me, if you are one of the folks that is out of work, that is a pretty important issue. But it is not even the most important issue for the Nation to deal with right now.

We have got to think about what is the effect of the elimination of the concept of citizenship. What does it mean when a nation abandons its own borders? What does it mean when it tells people by the millions that they should attach themselves not to the principles of the United States, the principles of western civilization but they should actually hang onto the political and cultural heritage that they came with and that they came from, they should keep it, and they should keep the language, not become immersed in an English language, not become part of the American mosaic but stay separate and distinct. How does that benefit us if our goal is to create a continuing American society revolving around the ideals on which this Nation was founded?

And that is important to understand, that this country uniquely was founded on ideas, nothing else. No other country has that distinction. Ideas are the only thing that holds us together here. It is not culture, it is not language, it is not habit, not custom, none of those, not the color of our skin, not our ethnicity, none of those things do we have in common in this Nation. What holds us together is an adherence to principles.

Mr. Speaker, I fear that that adherence is being destroyed in the pursuit, in this incredible desire, I call it the cult of multiculturalism that permeates our society, the cult of multiculturalism.

Multicultural is a term that can be positive in many respects. You can explain how important it is to be a diverse country and the value of that and all that, and I can certainly understand that. As an Italian American, I certainly appreciate my heritage and try to pass it on to my children, but I stop far short of suggesting that that heritage has anything superior to offer to the American culture that my grandparents accepted and desired and had a strong desire to move into as quickly as possible. It is the cult of multiculturalism that permeates our society, this desire to destroy everything that is good about America, to say to children, there is nothing unique about America, nothing good about America, that every other society is as good if not better, that all cultures, no matter what they do, if they force women to be thrown on the funeral pyre of their husband, if they stone women for adultery, if they perform various operations on them. You can go on and on and on about certain things other cultures do and you can say, it's okay, it is just another culture.

Mr. Speaker, I think that western civilization is superior. I do. I believe it is superior. I think it has at least as much to offer, and if you do not want to buy that, then consider it has at least to offer as any other culture in the world. There are many things that we should be proud of, there are many things that are part of western civilization and American culture that we should try to hang on to and fight for. It goes back to that first discussion we had tonight. It is very hard to make sure that you can do that if your own society is being torn apart, being cut up into little pieces, everybody is put into victimized classes and told that whatever culture they came from was better, was superior and they should hang on to it; politically, hang on to it; ethnically, hang on to it; linguistically, hang on to it.

This is not what America was founded on. It has to be discussed, has to be brought to the attention of the American public and ask them for their opinion and then reflect that opinion here in this body and in the White House. This issue has got to be brought up in every debate, in every election in the country from city council to the President of the United States. It is the overriding domestic issue. It will determine where we are as a Nation; and, as I say, it will determine if we are a Nation. That is why it is important. That is why I bring it to this body night after night as long as I have the voice to do so.