

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

#### STEMMING THE SPREAD OF CARGO THEFT

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, billions and billions of dollars are sapped from our economy each year by cargo theft. It is a staggering problem, and, at the same time, a problem that really no one is aware of.

Every day, millions of cargo carrying trucks transport their contents across the highways of our districts. And, every day, millions of dollars of goods are stolen from these trucks, often times with violent results.

Mr. Speaker, this week I will introduce legislation that will seek to address the growing tide of cargo theft in hopes of bringing awareness of this problem to the national spotlight.

With the prevalence of cargo theft today, insurance companies have placed a heavy burden on the trucking industry. The costs associated with investigation, insurance payments, are only exacerbating what is already an industry crisis.

Typical targets for cargo theft often include shipments of clothing, prescription drugs, computers and jewelry. A truckload of computer microprocessors can be worth millions of dollars. A single pallet of pharmaceuticals, another common target, can be worth upwards of \$2 million dollars, and cargo containers are capable of carrying dozens of such pallets.

The high value-to-volume ratio of these goods has encouraged criminals previously involved in drug dealing to move into this area of activity, where they run less risk of detection and suffer less severe penalties if they are caught. The National Cargo Security Council reported that cargo worth \$12 billion is stolen in the United States every year, and yet the penalties for cargo theft are lower than those for selling drugs.

Cargo thieves employ creative means to prey on cargo carriers and have managed to stay one step ahead of authorities. Thieves know what they want and where they can find it, striking cargo containers at ports and at trains and 18-wheelers.

Thieves will either roll the dice, stealing containers with unknown contents, or they will go as far as camping outside of distribution centers. This method is called "full load truck theft." It involves monitoring shipments out of distribution centers that are known for putting out expensive goods. The thieves will then follow the trucks in rental cars waiting for the right time to pounce. This will often

occur at truck rest stops, where the driver leaves the vehicle. The process can amazingly take but a few minutes. These professional criminals are usually licensed truck drivers, who can hot wire a truck quickly and efficiently.

The legislation that I have proposed will seek to finally give both lawmakers and law enforcement officials the tools they need to combat this growing crime. Cargo theft does not receive the attention it deserves because very little concrete information exists today concerning this problem. There currently is no all-inclusive database that collects, contains or processes distinct information and data concerning cargo theft. My bill would require the creation of such a database that will allow State and local law enforcement officials to coordinate reports of cargo theft, helping them prove to lawmakers just how severe this problem really is.

Also, after speaking with officials in my Congressional District, it has become clear to me that stricter criminal penalties are needed in order to keep criminals from turning to cargo theft. My bill does just this, requiring that the United States Sentencing Commission determine what sentencing enhancement must be made.

Finally, this legislation would ensure that cargo theft reports would be reflected as a separate category in the Uniform Crime Reporting System, the data collection system used by the FBI. Currently no such category exists, resulting in ambiguous data and the inability to track and monitor trends.

Mr. Speaker, Members in this Chamber need to be aware of this problem, a problem not only specific to the large port cities of this country, but a problem specific to all Congressional districts. Flowing up and down I-75, through the heart of my district, thieves transport goods to and from Miami. Billions of dollars are being sapped from our economy, and this body is doing little to stop it. It is time that we get aggressive and make our highways safe again for commerce.

This body must make an example of cargo thieves. We must let them know that they will not get away with merely a slap on the hand. And as sheriff's departments begin integrating special cargo theft task forces, we must arm them with the ability to prosecute criminals with stiffer penalties.

Mr. Speaker, my bill represents a cohesive effort backed by law enforcement and industry representatives alike. I urge Members to support this bill, in hopes of bringing acknowledgment of this fight against cargo theft at the Federal level.

With links even to terrorism, cargo theft is a problem that has flown under our radar screens for far too long. Until we strengthen these laws, this 30-year-old crime wave will persist, threatening our ports and roads and costing our economy billions of dollars.

#### LOOMING DIABETES EPIDEMIC CAUSING HEALTHCARE CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, the headlines shout out: "Healthcare crisis looms." "Diabetes epidemic." "Increase in childhood obesity." Solutions abound, but the one which could make a real difference, prevention, is only paid lip service. We say "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," but then we fail to reinvent our health policy to make prevention a cornerstone.

The facts are ominous, unrelenting and tell it all:

An obesity epidemic started in the early 1980s and equally impacts all age groups. Nearly one in four Americans are obese. Obesity is highly predictive of diabetes.

One in three children now being born in the United States ultimately will become diabetic.

Diabetes incidence increased 61 percent in the last decade; 76 percent for people in their thirties.

An alarming British study reported one-third of 5-year-old girls were overweight and showing signs of developing Type II diabetes, formerly called adult onset diabetes.

The Surgeon General in his December 2001 report left no doubt where we are headed. "Left unabated, overweight and obesity may soon cause as much preventable disease and death as cigarette smoking."

The healthcare costs to deal with these trends are overwhelming and unaffordable. The National Institutes of Health has estimated that diabetes costs the United States close to \$138 billion each year in direct and indirect costs. Let me repeat, \$138 billion. We cannot afford to double, triple and quadruple these costs. Even if we could find the resources, would this be a wise expenditure of our finite healthcare dollars?

Today we spend 95 percent of our healthcare dollars on treating chronic and acute illnesses, many of which could be prevented in the first place. In other cases we could at least delay the onset of disease for a number of years and provide a higher quality of life. The dollars we spend on prevention are minuscule, and we do not track the outcomes in a meaningful way.

This Nation needs a new approach to healthcare, which puts prevention front and center. The key to prevention is personal responsibility and personal action. If people are given the facts and alternatives, they can take charge of their health.

We are facing an epidemic of diabetes in New Mexico due to obesity and unhealthy lifestyles. Minority communities are disproportionately impacted. But there is hope in many of our communities, where individuals are taking charge of their health and their future.