

million for south Texas students and has become the premier scholarship foundation in south Texas.

Mr. Speaker, this successful scholarship program has doubled the number of students who can have access to higher education. Joe, Jr. and his wife, Derrelene, have seven children and 26 grandchildren and consider their close-knit family their greatest asset. Joe is one of the hardest working entrepreneurs in south Texas. He is honest and a man of integrity, and I am proud to call him my friend. He truly deserves to be the Border Texan of the Year.

I urge my colleagues to join me in commending Joe LaMantia, Jr. for his tireless efforts on behalf of children and in congratulating him on receiving this prestigious award.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BISHOP of Utah). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KING of Iowa addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak in the gentleman from Iowa's (Mr. KING) stead.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

ENDING MERCURY POLLUTION

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, the Congress and the President are preparing for a major debate on reducing air pollution. In this debate, partisans for and against greater environmental protection are both right. And they are both wrong.

The environmental community is correct in highlighting the growing danger of mercury pollution. Once considered an "average" pollutant, the EPA's Children Health Protection Advisory Committee warned last month that mercury is a powerful neurotoxin that accumulates in humans. Just one-twenty-fifth of a teaspoon of mercury can contaminate a 25-acre lake. Blood tested from Illinois pregnant women showed that they averaged 14 times the naturally occurring level of mercury in their blood.

Coal-burning power plants that have not yet been required to reduce their mercury emissions are the major source of this pollution. The Federal Government already requires all municipal incinerators and other sources of air pollution to scrub their emissions to remove most mercury. Raw po-

litical power and threatened litigation have delayed such requirements for coal-fired plants.

Enough of the delays. We need to clean up mercury pollution today. In eastern States, downwind from the rest of the Nation, mercury levels in the water are rising. The National Wildlife Federation recently released a study showing that the rainwater falling on suburban Chicago communities contained three times the naturally occurring level of mercury. With higher levels of mercury poisoning than other regions of the country, New England and the Great Lakes are becoming mercury "hot spots." This poses a threat to the Great Lakes, a critical ecosystem that is the source of drinking water for over 20 million Americans.

The scientific debate about the danger of mercury poisoning is now over. The real question is, how quickly can we reduce such pollution? When the Clean Air Act was written, there was little thought to how best to control pollution. The act imposed a rigid set of 1970s controls on each source of pollution, with many opportunities for polluters to challenge any action by the government in court. The worst example of what followed is the Federal Superfund cleanup program. Today, over half of all Superfund environmental cleanup dollars have been spent paying lawyers and not protecting the environment.

There is a better method. In the 1980s, the program to reduce acid rain was based not on endless court litigation, but on a system of tradeable credits that restrict the total output of pollution in a way that is more flexible than the litigious old regulatory system. The acid rain pollution credit trading system is a great success, leading to more environmental cleanup and less courtroom cost. This system cuts acid rain pollution in a way that is faster and cheaper than the old regulatory approach. President Bush proposes using such a system based on acid rain to also reduce mercury pollution. His approach could be effective but needs two major amendments by environmentalists here in the Congress.

First, the President's proposal allows more mercury pollution under a trading system than the old regulatory approach. Trading credits can be allowed but Congress must reduce the supply of tradeable credits to dramatically cut mercury pollution to levels at or below which would have been allowed under the old system.

Second, a flexible system also carries a danger for areas already contaminated with mercury. If credits to emit mercury can be purchased in an already polluted area, a trading system could worsen mercury hot spots that already exist. Congress should clearly define mercury hot spots, and we should allow emissions credits to be sent outside such a zone but not to be purchased to contaminate inside.

These two changes, restricting the supply of mercury emissions credits

and higher environmental protection for mercury hot spot zones, could make a program modeled after the acid rain program work to reduce mercury pollution in our country. This is the kind of bipartisan approach that takes the best aspects of both sides to focus taxpayer dollars on cutting pollution rather than killing time in court.

Whatever the outcome of this debate, one thing should be agreed by bipartisan majorities in the Congress: the days of unregulated pollution from coal-burning power plants should be over. Period. The science is now clear and convincing that mercury pollution from such emissions represents a clear and present danger to the mothers and children of North America.

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

(Ms. LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. TERRY 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 gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MURPHY 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 gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida 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 gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak in place of