

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

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

#### EARTH DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be here this evening on the 34th anniversary of Earth Day. Now, the pollsters tell us that the environment may not be the very first thing that springs to people's minds when asked about the most important issues of the day, but we find that when you probe just a little bit, it is clear that that really does not give the whole picture, because the environment is more than just an issue, it is an umbrella, it is an overview, it is a prism through which Americans see the things that touch their lives most intimately.

When you get those Americans starting to talk about what matters to them most, we hear things like clean air and clean water, a secure energy future, a quality of life for their families. In dealing with the children, one in four admissions, we know in urban areas, are for children with respiratory problems to emergency rooms. When you start Americans down that path, they do not stop talking about it.

If we look at the hundreds of millions of dollars that State and local communities have voted to increase their money spent on water quality and open space, in community after community we see demonstrated concern and action at the local level.

One of the things that characterized the first Earth Day and the activities that followed it was a bipartisan spirit of commitment to improving environmental quality overall and in very specific terms in communities across the country.

I am proud to spring from an Oregon tradition that was decidedly bipartisan and environmental. My first governmental position was an appointment by then-Governor Tom McCall, a legendary Republican in our State, to the Livable Oregon Committee. I was privileged to serve in the Oregon Legislature a third of a century ago when we enacted the first comprehensive land use planning legislation of any State in the Union, and it was the product of bipartisan leadership and concern. On the Federal level, the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act were enacted during Republican administrations with bipartisan leadership.

Unfortunately for our success in protecting the environment, on this Earth Day we are seeing that the bipartisan tradition of environmental leadership

is being abandoned for short-term political advantage catering to powerful special interests. We can take, for example, the sad saga of President Bush's efforts to weaken the Clean Air Act, documented in a fascinating article in The New York Times Magazine 3 weeks ago.

But it is something that Members of this Congress are familiar with, as we have struggled with this administration under the New Source Review Program, which was requiring old power plants to install pollution controls. Instead, this administration has radically transformed the Nation's Clean Air Act quietly, trying to do it under the radar screen by way of regulatory changes and bureaucratic detectives. And now, older polluting power plants that should have been cleaned up decades ago have been given essentially a free pass, allowed to continue to spew forth harmful pollution and global-warming gases into the air.

Mr. Speaker, it is frustrating to the extreme to see what is happening in terms of global climate change. The administration has been challenged just 2 weeks ago by the Union of Concerned Scientists, a group of 60 scientists, including 20 Nobel laureates, who are concerned about how this administration is turning science on its head, shifting, changing, and obscuring, when, in fact, the role of science should be one that is a constructive one to help us promote environmental protection.

We are seeing at this point the situation where these environmental threats are increasing on the global scale, in terms of global climate change, global warming. We have a generation of Americans today who may be the first generation where there will be no glaciers in Glacier Park, and who may witness the eradication of polar bears in their natural habitat.

But it is not an obscure activity that is going to occur in remote reaches of wilderness or in the Arctic netherland. No American is immune to the deadly consequences of the actions of the last 100 years of assaulting our environment and our government's inaction in some of the simplest common-sense steps.

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No one in America will be immune from global warming. It is not just the disappearance of permafrost in areas of the Arctic tundra, the buckling of roads and the erosion of coastline we are seeing in our 49th State, it is the increasing temperatures, rising ocean levels, extreme weather events, and storm surges in coastal areas put all Americans at risk.

We are a rich country, and much of our territory is in temperate areas. Imagine what will happen in poor countries around the world already prone to drought, or to tens of millions of poor people in Bangladesh that will be threatened with drowning by rising sea levels and storm surges.

But there is good news for us to consider on this Earth Day, and a growing consensus of Americans across the country, contrary to the approaches of this administration. They want us to take simple, common-sense steps today to clean up the air, slow global warming and protect our public lands. One simple step is simply to keep in place the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act and other landmark legislation. We have hundreds of Federal rules, regulations and efforts at rollback that demonstrate that we are actually having initiatives by the leadership in this Congress and by the administration for environmental activities that, rather than making the air cleaner, the water more pure, will actually put us at risk.

Today we need to stick to some of the fundamental underlying environmental legislation we have got. It will be a cleaner America, a healthier environment than if we were to follow some of the so-called reforms of this administration.

Another critical step is to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. The reality is now that our best estimates are that U.S. production of oil is going to peak in 2008, and there will be a decline of 18 percent over 20 years. It is not happening because of environmental protections, it is because we simply do not have enough oil. However, according to the Energy Information Agency, we are going to be skyrocketing in terms of demand, over 40 percent in the next 20 years, which will increase our demand on foreign oil. Under the current situation, placing our reliance on unstable areas is simply not a good strategic undertaking.

I am pleased that the likely standard-bearer for our party, Senator JOHN KERRY, has put on the table a wide range of environmental initiatives, including fuel efficiency for automobiles, one that could be good for the American consumer, for the environment, and indeed for our auto industry.

Right now there are three alternatives for the American consumers who want hybrid vehicles, but they are, sadly, all Japanese. General Motors has announced it is bringing pickups on the market that will improve gas mileage, but that is the tip of the iceberg. There is far more we can do.

I am pleased that I have been joined by a number of colleagues here who have ideas to lend to this discussion this afternoon, but I want to just put on the table the notion that the most important thing the Federal Government can do for new initiatives is to model the behavior it expects of other Americans. If the Federal Government would simply clean up after itself, establish high standards for the hundreds of millions of square feet it has in offices, the tens of millions of acres that it manages, its vast enterprises, it could have a transformational effect. There are opportunities to discuss this further, but I want to turn to some of my colleagues that are here.