

inhabitants to protect it to the best of our ability. We have serious environmental problems, but unfortunately, the Bush administration is making matters worse, not better.

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to show strong support for Earth Day. It is a great opportunity to encourage citizens to be conscious and take action regarding their responsibility towards environmental protection.

The first Earth Day was held in 1970 as an annual event to honor our planet and our responsibility for it. Earth Day's purpose is to educate our citizens of the importance of conserving the environment and to encourage them to restore their local community, improving quality of life and human health for all.

The natural resources of Earth are the essential components of our environment and the development of life; therefore our dedication to its conservation is very important for sustaining future generations. Currently, Puerto Rico, as well as the rest of the world, is facing many environmental challenges due primarily to human development and environmental pollution. Essential resources such as water, air, soil and biodiversity are threatened by human activity. The existing population of Puerto Rico is almost 4 million people and this overpopulation results in limited available resources to support its residents. Water scarcity and contamination, air pollution and climate change, the destruction of natural habitats for construction, erosion causing water shortage, and the endangerment of many species are among the main problems that our environment is facing.

Pure water is essential for all life on Earth and provides habitat to many organisms. The human race is putting in serious danger this vital resource by the energy production, interruption of water flows, deforestation, and the wasting of water by those who overuse this resource. Air is an essential resource for life as well. Its pollution comes primarily from coal burning power plants, automobiles, and industrial operations. These activities affect not only human health but also the atmosphere that protects us from the sun's radiation. Human activities also destroy biodiversity through contamination, deforestation and destruction of natural habitats for construction and other developments. As humans, we are totally dependent on nature for survival and, instead of conserving, our actions negatively impact nature.

In Puerto Rico, we are faced with immediate challenges in areas like Vieques, Culebra and Roosevelt Roads, where contamination threatens the health and well being of thousands of residents, water quality, and sustainable economic development. Residents of these regions deserve full and prompt clean up and decontamination of their lands. Another challenge for the Island is the protection and recovery of endangered species population. Endemic species' population such as the golden coquí (*Eleutherodactylus jasperi*), the Puerto Rican boa (*Epicrates inornatus*), and the Puerto Rican parrot (*Amazona vittata*) that lives primarily at the Caribbean National Forest, El Yunque, have been significantly reduced due to encroachments of their habitats. The West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) and the green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) are other examples of endangered species as a result of marine contamination on coastal areas due to human development.

In order to protect some of the natural environment of Puerto Rico, I have introduced legislation designating approximately 10,000 acres of land in the Caribbean National Forest in Puerto Rico as the El Toro Wilderness and as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Through this legislation, the habitats within the El Toro Wilderness will be protected, as well as the forest's magnificent biodiversity.

It is necessary to educate our citizens about the importance of environmental conservation and conservation practices to maintain the natural resources of Puerto Rico and the rest of the world for future generations. This can be better accomplished by providing information through schools, communication media, conservation programs, and volunteer or special activities. Earth Day is a perfect moment to put in practice these goals by instructing and encouraging citizens to contribute to environmental conservation. As responsible and dedicated citizens to the conservation of our environment, Earth Day should become an every day priority to ensure and increase the quality of life and human health. Earth Day is not only one day; it is every day because every day is a good time to consider our environment, and take action to protect the nature that surrounds us.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURNS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oregon?

There was no objection.

#### THE REAL LESSONS OF 9/11

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, we are constantly admonished to remember the lessons of 9/11. Of course, the real issue is not remembering, but rather knowing what the pertinent lesson of that sad day is. The 9/11 Commission will soon release its report after months of fanfare by those whose reputations are at stake.

The many hours and dollars spent on the investigation may well reveal little we do not already know, while ignoring the most important lessons that should be learned from this egregious attack on our homeland. Common sense already tells us the tens of billions of dollars spent by the agencies of government whose job it is to promote security and intelligence for our country failed.

A full-fledged investigation into the bureaucracy may help us in the future, but one should never pretend that a government bureaucracy can be made efficient. It is the very nature of a bureaucracy to be inefficient. Spending an inordinate amount of time finger-

pointing will distract from the real lessons of 9/11. Which agency, which department, or which individual receives the most blame should not be the main purpose of the investigation.

Despite the seriousness of our failure to prevent the attacks, it is disturbing to see how politicized the whole investigation has become. Which political party receives the greatest blame is a high-stakes election-year event and distracts from the real lessons ignored by both sides.

Everyone I have heard speak on the issue has assumed that the 9/11 attacks resulted from the lack of government action. No one in Washington has raised the question of whether our shortcomings brought to light by 9/11 could have been a result of too much government. Possibly in the final report we will hear this discussed, but, to date, no one has questioned the assumption that we need more government and, of course, though elusive, a more efficient one. The failure to understand the nature of the enemy who attacked us on 9/11, along with a predetermined decision to initiate a preemptive war against Iraq, prompted our government to deceive the people into believing that Saddam Hussein had something to do with the attacks on New York and Washington.

The majority of the American people still contend that the war against Iraq was justified because of the events of 9/11. These misinterpretations have led to many U.S. military deaths and casualties prompting a growing number of Americans to question the wisdom of our presence and purpose in a strange, foreign land 6,000 miles from our shores.

The neocon defenders of our policy in Iraq speak of the benefits that we have brought to the Iraqi people: removal of a violent dictator, liberation, democracy and prosperity. That the world is a safer place is yet to be proven. So far it is just not so.

If all of this were true, the resistance against our occupation would not be growing. We ought to admit we have not been welcomed as liberators as was promised by the proponents of the war. Though we hear much about the so-called benefits we have delivered to the Iraqi people and the Middle East, we hear little talk of the cost to the American people: lives lost, soldiers maimed for life, uncounted thousands sent home with diseased bodies and minds, billions of dollars consumed, and a major cloud placed over U.S. markets and the economy.

Sharp political divisions reminiscent of the 1960s are rising at home. Failing to understand why 9/11 happened and looking for a bureaucratic screw-up to explain the whole thing, while using the event to start an unprovoked war unrelated to 9/11, have dramatically compounded the problems all Americans and the world face.

Evidence has shown that there was no connection between Saddam Hussein and the guerrilla attacks on New