

and Oliver North. This administration can and should reveal the truth and put an end to this terrible affair. I cannot understand why a CIA report which details the illegal efforts of Reagan-Bush administration officials to protect the involvement of top-level Contras in drug trafficking should continue to be protected.

Although today's New York Times story is somewhat confusing to follow, the story includes some explosive details. Perhaps the most amazing revelation from these leaks is the admission that the CIA knew of drug trafficking allegations against the infamous Legion of September 15 Contra organization.

This group included the key Contra military commanders, including the Contra's top military commander Enrique Bermudez, and was the core of the most famous of the Contra armies, the FDN. They were comprised of a group of violent ex-bodyguards of Nicaraguan dictator Somoza. And they had proven themselves among the worst human rights violators in the entire Contra-era war.

The Times somewhat inaccurately reported this organization was disbanded, they said, in 1982. Of course, the Legion of September 15 had, by then, been merged into the FDN. That is the Contra army. So we now know that the CIA knowingly worked with Contra rebels involved in drug dealing, including the core of the FDN.

We also know that the CIA and Attorney General had a secret Memorandum of Understanding that allowed drug trafficking by CIA assets to go unreported to law enforcement. This, of course, was confirmed in documents I submitted for the RECORD in May. And we know that CIA officials at the highest levels knew of the Contra drug trafficking activities. What we do not know yet are the many damaging details of the 500-plus-page CIA report. The American people must be able to see this report for themselves.

We forced these investigations. A lot of people said, oh, there was nothing to it. The first half of the CIA reports were unleashed, and that is when we determined the Memorandum of Understanding existed that they did not have to report drug trafficking.

FLORIDA GIVES HEARTFELT THANKS TO FIREFIGHTERS THROUGHOUT THE NATION

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

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take a moment to share with Americans all over that for the past month and a half, as many people are aware, Florida has been besieged by wildfires, which have consumed almost half a million acres. The fires have badly strained the resources of local and State fire officials, who have had to respond to more than 2,200 individual fires throughout the State.

Given the widespread devastation, which includes the destruction or damage of more than 400 homes and businesses, firefighters from towns throughout Florida have had to travel to wherever they are needed. But even with this kind of statewide teamwork, the magnitude of the disaster has required help from beyond our borders, and the response across America has been overwhelming: 5,100 firefighters, from almost every State in the Union, as well as Puerto Rico, have uprooted themselves, leaving their families behind, to help Florida in its time of need.

On behalf of all Florida residents and the congressional delegation, I want to give my heartfelt thanks to each and every firefighter, to their family throughout the Nation, who have risked their lives to put an end to the devastation which has so profoundly affected my State.

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Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I want to share with my colleagues some of the developments in Congress that I am very pleased with.

An amendment to the Higher Education Amendment's Act of 1998 passed the Senate recently after successfully passing the House of Representatives. The amendment requires colleges to distribute voter registration forms to students while enrolled in an institution that receives financial assistance from the Federal Government.

I am excited about this legislation because it provides more opportunities for college students ages 18 through 24 to register to vote.

This group, one of the most mobile groups in this country, has the lowest voter participation rate of all Americans eligible to vote. Colleges would be required to distribute a mail voter registration form to each student enrolled in a degree or certification program. This amendment encourages students to exercise one of the most fundamental rights, the right to vote.

I also want to applaud the action by the Senate in passing an amendment as a part of the Fiscal Year 1999 agriculture appropriations to restore credit to small farmers. The 1996 Farm Bill changed the eligibility criteria for the USDA farm loans.

Anyone who had ever received any kind of debt forgiveness, including restructuring and rescheduling, is now ineligible. Many of these farmers suffered disasters due to flood or drought.

Both the Civil Rights Task Force report and the National Commission on Small Farms cited this change as unduly harsh and recommended that it be modified. In the light of those findings, I introduced the Agriculture Credit Restoration Act of 1998. It would modify the debt forgiveness limitation enacted by the 1996 Farm Bill.

The bill, H.R. 3513, would allow creditworthy USDA borrowers a second chance to receive a loan from USDA after having received debt forgiveness

on a previous loan. A companion piece of legislation in the Senate, S. 1118, was introduced by Senator ROBB.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that the long-term economic health of rural America depends on a broad and diverse economic base which requires investment in agriculture, rural businesses, infrastructure, housing stock and community facilities.

The Senate amendment, like my bill, would allow farmers and ranchers to remain eligible for USDA credit through two experiences requiring debt forgiveness, including a loan write-down or net recovery buy-out.

The Senate amendment and my bill now will allow one exception to borrowers who experience financial difficulties because of a natural disaster, family medical crisis, or as a part of a settlement of a civil rights case.

The Senate has done a great service for small farmers. They deserve our applause.

Finally, the Senate yesterday inserted another very important language into the agriculture appropriation. The Senate version of the 1999 agriculture appropriation, like the House, contains provisions for lifting the statute of limitations contained in the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, thus allowing black farmers who have complained of discrimination against the Department of Agriculture to have a hearing either before the Department or before the courts.

Where relief is merited, it will now be granted. Cases back as far as 1983 can now be heard. This is indeed historic. Black farmers in America have struggled for more than 4 decades, and the very department designed to help them has over the years hurt them.

I am delighted that, after much effort, we can claim a significant victory. There has been more than a 64-percent decline in black farmers just over the last 15 years, from 6,996 farms in 1978 to 2,498 farms in 1992.

The Department of Justice ruled earlier this year that legal and technical arguments should prevent these farmers from receiving recovery from the damage done to them. The Department's position was taken even in cases where discrimination has been proven, documented and demonstrated recovery was not possible. Yet, the Department continued to receive complaints and, in fact, in its literature encouraged farmers to submit their complaints to them, knowing full well that the Reagan and Bush administrations eliminated the unit to investigate their complaints.

Black farmers' relied on this empty process to their detriment. Mr. Speaker, it is a good thing that we have now come to this point to move this dark history from the chapter.

Y2K BUG

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, some computers and electronic systems will have difficulty adjusting to the dates beginning in the year 2000. This is the oft-mentioned "Y2K" bug. This problem is caused by a long-time custom in electronic industries to use 2-digit dates. Thus, 1980 was simply "80", 1990 was "90", and 1998 is "98." However, that system does not work when we get to January 1, 2000. At that time, many machines will think it is January 1, 1900.

There are enormous national interests at stake as we prepare to deal with the technical challenge of the year 2000. Critical national infrastructures may be threatened, including many government services, banking and financial services, energy and power, telecommunications, transportation, and vital human services such as hospitals.

It is not surprising that Federal Government agencies include millions of computer and electronic systems. Led by the gentleman from California (Mr. HORN), the chairman of the House Committee on Government Reform's Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology, the Republican Congress has pushed long and hard to whip Federal agencies into action to address Y2K problems.

Although the Federal Government faces a major Y2K challenge, the private sector challenge from the year 2000 transition is far greater. Recent congressional testimony from the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System estimated costs at roughly \$50 billion, and many estimates go far beyond that staggering figure. And those are U.S. costs alone. Actually, this is an international problem, and we must recognize that.

Mr. Speaker, while I am not an alarmist, I believe it is prudent for Congress to immediately consider legislation to help the private sector deal with Y2K problems. It is clear that two legislative reforms would effectively encourage computer-related companies and the private sector clients that they serve to avoid Y2K problems and reduce the impact on the public by, first, a limited modification of Federal liability law and, second, a targeted anti-trust exemption for firms working together to deal with Y2K problems. These reforms make up H.R. 4240, legislation that I introduced just yesterday called the Y2K Liability and Anti-Trust Reform Act.

The press is already reporting that some unscrupulous lawyers are planning and filing multi-billion-dollar Y2K lawsuits to reap monetary rewards from America's pain. It is clearly in the national interest to have companies focused on fixing Y2K problems rather than being frozen by the fear of lawsuits.

Earlier this week, the Clinton administration proposed a pop-gun response to this potentially immense problem. The President proposed to provide a small degree of liability protection to

encourage companies to share information on how to solve Y2K problems. Mr. Speaker, far more than that is needed.

With just 17 months remaining before January 1, 2000, one of our core principles on Y2K policy must be to focus all relevant talent and energies on avoiding the problems. While the President's proposal falls short, the liability provisions in H.R. 4240 are the best way to achieve that goal.

While talk is nice, the Y2K Liability and Anti-Trust Reform Act provides a real incentive for companies to solve Y2K problems before computer systems fail and the American people suffer.

My legislation requires computer-related companies to take responsibility for products they have developed and sold. They must make fixes available to customers for their non-Y2K compatible hardware and software, and those fixes must be available cost-free for products sold after December 31, 1994. I am confident that freed from the fear of multi-billion-dollar lawsuits that the enormously creative and successful American high-technology industries can respond to this challenge.

Companies that use computer and electronic systems must also take responsibility for fixing Y2K problems before things go wrong. Remember, Mr. Speaker, it is the American people that lose when a company adopts a strategy based on the plan to simply sue someone when things go wrong.

Companies that use computer and electronic systems gain a similar degree of liability protection if they make all reasonable efforts to fix the Y2K problems in their systems, run a test by July 1, 1999, and notify all customers and the President's Y2K Commission of the prospects for their own Y2K failures by August 1, 1999.

Right now, as the clock ticks towards the year 2000, too much private-sector energy is being wasted on legal liability strategies rather than finding and fixing potential failures. The liability provisions in H.R. 4240 will create a real incentive for companies to focus on finding and fixing problems, because there will be a tangible reward, some freedom from aggressive Y2K lawsuits.

MEXICO POLLUTES BEACHES OF IMPERIAL BEACH, CALIFORNIA

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

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Speaker, this weekend, the City of Imperial Beach, the most southwest lake community in the continental United States, is going to celebrate its 17th annual sand castle competition.

Now, we hear many Members of the House come here and talk about great things in their communities. But, sadly, this is not going to be a great event unless things change over night. Sadly, we are going to be confronted by the fact that Mexico is sending down 25

million gallons of untreated raw sewage that may close the beaches of Imperial Beach for this great weekend for this community.

Now, instead of being greeted by sand castles and happy children and families and blue sky and warm water and beautiful surf, the visitors of Imperial Beach may have to confront red pollution signs, not because they did not clean up their environment, not because they did not spend the money for infrastructure to make sure that they did not pollute, but because the United States allows a foreign government to violate American sovereignty and pollute American soil.

Sadly, for the last 20 years, Mr. Speaker, we have stood by and watched a foreign country pollute our wildlife preserves and our beaches in southern California. And we have talked and we have negotiated. We have spent hundreds of millions of dollars of American taxpayers' funds at trying to address this issue while negotiating with the Republic of Mexico.

Now, this problem is something that most people do not understand. The Tijuana River flows through a major metropolitan area of over a million people and flows north into San Diego. And San Diego has been impacted by this.

Now, the responsibility for cleaning up this mess, Mr. Speaker, is not a local, not a State, it is a Federal obligation, because it is crossing an international border. And if the people of Mexico do not care about what they are doing to their neighbors, and we all talk about being good neighbors, I think we can all understand, in a civilized society, being a good neighbor does not mean dumping your raw sewage into somebody else's neighborhood.

I am asking the Congress and the President and the Senate and all of America to finally stand up and say, we are willing to confront our friends and our neighbors to the south about the environmental problems that are not just HIDTA and NAFTA but predate NAFTA, but it is time to do what good neighbors should do every once in a while, tell our neighbors to clean up their act, quit polluting our waters, quit destroying our sand castle competitions, quit endangering our children and our families.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that Congress makes some firm, tough decisions about what we are willing to do to send that message across. I would ask us to consider that if Mexico is not sensitive to the fact that tourism has been destroyed in the City of Imperial Beach again and again over the last 20 years, we should consider a sensitivity lesson to the Republic of Mexico and consider if tourism going into Mexico from the United States is a guaranteed right that we want to continue as long as this pollution continues.

I am not proposing any actions today, Mr. Speaker, but I am asking us to become aware that it is time that