

consistent with the offense in this case. He is being thoughtful and not political. What is best for the many of us is to be thoughtful and not political. All crimes are not "impeachment offenses." If so, we could impeach the President for walking his dog without a leash. That is unlawful in the District of Columbia. That is bad conduct, thus absurdly underscoring the danger of substituting our belief of what the Constitution states. The Constitution says nothing about bad conduct as an impeachable offense.

I believe the Constitution sets out a process that Congress should follow when serious allegations of wrongdoing, allegations of impeachable offenses, have been made against the President. Under the Constitutional mandates, a process is now underway to determine if the President should be impeached. When we fail to follow the constitutional process, we fail to consider the lessons we have learned.

Just ask Richard Jewel who was first accused of the Atlanta bombings, or ask anyone else or thousands of persons, innocent persons who have been wrongly accused. We should allow that process to take its course and, throughout this process, we should be very careful to insist upon fairness, the rule of law, and impartial judgment.

Mr. Speaker, we have learned many lessons. Hopefully, we have learned the lesson that an impeachment proceeding is a very serious process.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The Chair will remind Members of the House to refrain from personal references to the President.

DO-NOTHING CONGRESS

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

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, while I have another matter to talk about, I also want to rise in tribute to my colleague and classmate, the gentleman from California (Mr. TORRES). We came together in the Congress of 1983. I view the gentleman as being a true renaissance person in so many ways in the best sense of the word. He has always represented our class well, and I wish him good luck from one of his fellow classmates.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a couple of things: scheduling and investigations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it ought to be pointed out that as we hopefully wind into the final week of this Congress, we are today at October 6. October 1 is the beginning of the Federal fiscal year, and I think it is time that the American people understand that there is no Federal budget. There was no Federal budget passed this year. This Congress, while it can find time to

do all kinds of investigations, and we ought to be investigating where it is necessary, could not find time to pass a Federal budget. So we are operating under a temporary or short-term continuing resolution until October 9. Presumably, we will either have another continuing resolution or another short-term one to carry us forward or the government shuts down.

One of the basic things that the Congress ought to be able to do is to pass a budget for the next fiscal year. Incidentally, in the 13 appropriation bills that really make up the Federal budget, as of a couple of days ago, I believe one had been signed into law, several more are finally beginning to work their way through. Most of those will not be passed in a timely manner either and, once again, we will be faced with a continuing resolution.

So if we had all of this time to conduct all of these investigations, what is it we did not have time to do? Well, the investigations curiously, many of them, and I sit on the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight that has been involved in many of the investigations, many of them dealt with campaign finance reform. So it would seem logical after millions of dollars of investigations, hundreds of subpoenas and depositions and inquiries and witnesses, it would be logical that Congress would try to fix the problem, right? The problem being millions of dollars of soft money being abused by both Republicans and Democrats. That was the problem in 1996. That is what the investigation is about.

The American people will not see a campaign finance reform bill this year. It passed the House, it cannot be brought up in the other body.

One would think that with 70 percent of the American people covered by their employers in health insurance, and those 70 percent, they are in managed care plans; one would think there would be a Patients' Bill of Rights to protect those. That is one of the problems that I hear the most about. There will be no meaningful Patients' Bill of Rights for managed care plans this year.

One would think with Social Security being on everybody's lips, there would be something being done by this Congress about Social Security. Sorry, no Social Security reform this year.

One would think that with millions of Americans having lost much of their retirement in just the last 2 months because of the stock market going into the tank, one would think that that could be something that Congress could deal with. Millions of Americans are going to get a surprise this month when they go to open their quarterly statement on their 401(k) or thrift plan, retirement plan to find out how much their holdings have diminished because of the stock market decline. Sorry, this Congress is not taking that up this year.

Nor will it take up anything apparently that will deal with the Asian sit-

uation, including funding for the International Monetary Fund to stop the hemorrhage. Sorry, this Congress is too busy. But what can this Congress do? Boy, it can investigate.

That is why I find it so interesting, when there are some who want to urge the Committee on the Judiciary to be open-ended, to go beyond the matters that have been brought to it, and instead to get into Travelgate, Filegate, Whitewater, maybe even Watergate, who knows.

The irony to this is that these have been covered extensively for the last 2 years. The Senate Thompson hearings, the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight hearings on Filegate and Travelgate. The Committee on Banking and Financial Services hearings on Whitewater. Our committee alone spent 22 days of hearings on these matters, including campaign finance reform, millions of dollars spent.

So when we hear the talk about, well, we need to have the Committee on the Judiciary open all of these up, this is what this Congress, all it has done for 2 years. Where are the results?

Mr. Speaker, the reality of the situation is, this is a do-nothing Congress, and unfortunately, there is a lot of diversion going on to cover that fact up. No budget, no campaign finance reform, no Patients' Bill of Rights, no Social Security reform, nothing done about the economy, nothing done about the stock market, nothing done about the Asian economy, nothing done about South America.

Mr. Speaker, if people love investigations, they will really like this Congress. Let me just suggest one more investigation. Who is responsible for this do-nothing Congress?

ELECTRIC RESTRUCTURING—LET US GET IT RIGHT

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, deregulation of the airlines, natural gas, railroads, telecommunications, and trucking industries yield annual savings equal to nearly 1 percent of America's gross domestic product. Next January, in the 106th Congress, we will attempt to craft a measure that will finally and successfully unleash competition and savings from the utility industry.

In recent years, competition has replaced regulation for the electric power industry in many other nations, including the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Norway, Chile and Argentina. Many took a very long term approach to this process. The United States faces a unique situation in that our electric power industry is largely already privatized. So we must focus on altering our current system and effectively fostering competition.

Now, this should not be done through a Federal mandate. Five of the 10 largest electric consumer States already have mandatory competitive restructuring. Clearly, we would be wise to make the State-mandated restructuring more efficient instead of imposing a separate, huge new Federal mandate.

I see the ideal measure as one that fosters competition, avoids Federal mandates, and lowers rates for all consumers. To create this legislation, we must eliminate outdated laws, inject fairness into the process, and delineate the proper role of the Federal Government and State governments. But do not misunderstand me. Reforming the electric industry is no simple matter. This is an enormous undertaking. Next January, in the 106th Congress, we will consider the livelihoods of entire industries, constitutional questions, and the interests of the entire rate-paying public. Accordingly, we must address these points to fully realize the benefits of energy reform:

Every customer must benefit from this deregulation, not just the large industrial users of electricity. I am concerned that any rush next year in reforming the electric utility industry could result in large industrial users seeing greater benefits, while residential users and small businesses would pay for that benefit. One must look at the State-level experiences of Massachusetts and California to see that if we do not effectively address consumer issues, we will certainly face a consumer backlash. The ballot measures in these States underscore how unique the electric power industry is: it permeates every aspect of our lives and, of course, our economy.

We must honor past regulatory schemes and commitments and allow recovery of stranded investments. Electric utilities incurred "stranded costs" under a regulatory scheme not of their own choosing. These utilities made long-term decisions based upon decades of regulation. To deny industry recovery of these costs would go against the fairness that I spoke of earlier. That being said, lower rates would be fostered by real deregulation and industrial and regulation innovation, not by just merely shifting costs. We should not merely "reshuffle the deck," so to speak, on who pays.

A significant hurdle to deregulation is the diverse nature of power generators, including public power providers, municipalities, investor-owned utilities, and Power Marketing Associations. Reconciling these disparate views will be a monumental task, no doubt, yet fairness demands that we produce a level playing field for all energy providers and transmitters.

Reforming the energy industry on a Federal level means clarifying the roles of the Federal and State governments. Where does the Federal responsibility end and the State responsibility begin? The diverse situation among the States adds to the difficulties of this reform. Some States have always supported regulation; others have taken progressive stances, while still others, like my home State of Florida, enjoy the benefits of moderately priced electricity, and, of course, they see very little need for reform.

□ 1700

Eliminating the barriers to entry into the electricity market is fundamental, of course, to this reform. We must repeal, one, the Public Utility Regulatory Policy Act, PURPA, and the Public Utilities Holding Company Act, PUHCA, to ensure that any transition to retail competition should be truly competitive.

The entire efficacy of PURPA centered on the supposition that producing electricity would become more expensive. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it has become cheaper. Thanks to PURPA, Americans will pay \$38 billion in higher electricity bills over the next 10 years than they normally would have.

In conclusion, deregulation of the electric industry requires consideration of a myriad of factors. The stakes are high but so, of course, are the benefits. In the 106th Congress let us not rush. Let us work together and consider all these issues.

TRIBUTE TO CONGRESSMAN ESTEBAN TORRES

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

Mr. PASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a few minutes to give my appreciation to a great leader in this Congress but also a great leader in the Hispanic community. As this term ends, the gentleman from California (Mr. TORRES) will be retiring. I have had the honor of working with ESTEBAN for the past 30 years. I first met him when he was involved with Telecue, a community based organization, whose objective was to give a voice to the Hispanic community in southern California.

He was very effective in organizing that organization and today in southern California many Mexican Americans have great pride in this organization. ESTEBAN was recognized for the fine work that he did when he was named ambassador, and he served for many years in Paris, representing this great country and was called by President Carter to come back to the White House and work in his administration.

ESTEBAN was a voice for many of us. ESTEBAN was an advocate for us and again gave us great leadership. Since he has been in the Congress, he has been involved in many endeavors. Whether it be civil rights, betterment of education, ensuring that the Smithsonian Institute reflected the makeup of our country in terms of its diversity, ESTEBAN has been out there.

I know that very recently he was honored because of a scholarship program he promoted on a national basis. The people of Miami, Arizona, are very proud because ESTEBAN was born in Arizona but moved to California to continue his career.

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that ESTEBAN has been

a friend, a mentor and a leader for me personally. It is with great regret that I see him retire from this great institution, but I know that he and Arcy are going to have a great time with their grandchildren and their children, but I know that he will continue to be the advocate that he has been for our community.

So I congratulate ESTEBAN for the fine work he has done. We are going to miss him, but we know that he is still going to be out there for us.

Mr. TORRES. Mr. Speaker will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PASTOR. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and for his tribute to me during this special order. Indeed, I am honored. He mentioned Miami, Arizona. It should be noted for my colleagues here that the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. PASTOR) and I are both natives of Miami, Arizona, a small mining town in southeastern Arizona. He comes from that stock of people who have worked hard to make this nation what it is today, and I am proud that I come from the same part of the country. Perhaps it must be something that was in the water in Miami, Arizona, but it has yielded two great sons to the House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the kind words about me from the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. PASTOR). He has been, indeed, a friend of mine throughout my period of time here and before that, as he mentioned, and I will continue seeing him in our lives as they continue on, as we continue our commitment to our communities.

INDEPENDENT AND FREE ELECTIONS IN SLOVAKIA

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

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I come before the House this evening to talk very briefly about a great European leader, Alexander Dubcek, and also to talk about the Slovak elections. Recently, in Slovakia, we had the opportunity, after a thousand years, to witness free and independent elections. As some may know, Slovakia gained its freedom some 5 years ago and independence as a free nation in the Western European host of nations. In the last few weeks Slovakia has had the opportunity to elect for the first time representatives to their government that potentially will allow a true, free, honest government for that nation.

In the past years, there has been some conflict, there have been some problems in Slovakia, and in an election, which was a record by all Western democratic standards, 85 percent of the Slovaks turned out to cast their ballot. They decided to make a change in government, an important change in Slovakia, and it is very important to the Congress and to the Western world the