

I appreciate the chairman's courtesy. I appreciate his leadership in working with me on this bill.

Madam Speaker, as we stagger under the implications of what we have just witnessed at Virginia Tech, I think part of what we ought to do is to rededicate ourselves to simple steps that will help make the world a better place. I can think of no better or direct way for us to act today than what this legislation means for us.

I would begin by thanking the gentlewoman from Texas, Ms. Johnson, who can't be here right now because she is actually chairing a committee dealing with water pollution as we speak, as Chair of the Water Resources Subcommittee. She has been really a terrific champion. I see here today my friend from Tennessee, the former Chair of the subcommittee, who likewise has been focusing on the central need for us to be respectful of water supply.

As the old joke goes, God gives us water for free, but he doesn't give us the pipes, the distribution system and purification.

Across the world, as my good friends from the Foreign Affairs Committee have just enumerated, every day millions and millions of poor people are paying the price for nature's failure to provide water exactly where they live, and a failure of stewardship on the part of governments and individuals to take care of the water that they have.

They are paying the price for pollution from inadequate or nonexistent sanitation, and far too many poor people are paying a huge amount of their scarce income because they can't otherwise get water. They are paying in time and in money. There are some poor people that are slowly going blind because of arsenic poisoning in their water system in Bangladesh.

I used to think that the pictures in the National Geographic articles with the water jug on the head was sort of exotic, but now I recognize this as the face of poverty. Indeed it is a travesty as young women particularly spend 1, 2, or 3 hours with that jug of water balanced on their head to meet the needs of their family. That is time that they are not spending in school, that is time that they are not spending economically to support that family. As has been mentioned,

every 15 seconds a child dies from lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and each is an unnecessary death because we know exactly what to do to stop it. Indeed, there are people from churches and synagogues and Boy Scout troops and Kiwanis Clubs that are acting on their own to help provide water around the world.

Lack of access to drinking water and sanitation is the number one preventable killer in the world. And I won't repeat the statistics, mind numbing as they are, of over 2 billion people without access to sanitation, and the fact that half the people who are sick today around the globe are sick needlessly from waterborne diseases.

As my friend from Florida said, this is tied to other health problems, HIV/AIDS, and poverty reduction. The tragedy is compounded because we are not doing enough to stop it. By recognizing the goals and ideals of World Water Day, we commit again on this floor to spread the word about this grave issue and build the momentum to address it.

As the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee pointed out, in 2002 the world did take a stand. I was privileged to be at that conference in Johannesburg, where the United States and 185 other countries agreed to that ambitious goal. The frustration is that this goal can be met, if done correctly, for less than the cost of a takeout pizza a year for an American family.

In 2005, the Congress passed and the President signed into law the Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, which I thought was important because not only were we for the first time taking a stand, but the way that we did it, with the leadership of Mr. Lantos and Mr. Hyde; and on the Senate side we had the minority leader and the majority leader coming together in broad bipartisan legislation. We were for the first time providing a plan to implement the commitment that the United States and 185 other countries made.

I am saddened as we come to the floor today, however, that the Bush administration has failed to implement this legislation. Instead, as I read the budget, the President has proposed major cuts to the already inadequate commitment from the United States to water and sanitation.

The centerpiece of this bill was to create a strategy for meeting our international commitments, to bring together some 15 agencies and departments, to have a plan. Sadly, the

deadline has passed, and as yet, we don't have yet that comprehensive plan. We continue to use gimmicks and numbers games to claim that the administration is meeting Congress' requirements, but they are not. This resolution ought to be a point of emphasis that Congress demands a greater effort, not lesser, from the administration, and indeed from ourselves, as we come forward with the budgets this year. We should insist that the United States stand by its word and actually do something about this crisis. We are saying that we have to partner with poor people wherever they are, not in a few allied countries in the Middle East, but especially in sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia, and around the world.

I would hope that with the help of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the distinguished leadership on the floor here that when the State Department comes back to Congress this June with its second report on the implementation of the bipartisan "Water for the Poor Act," I would hope that it will match our legislation in scope, ambition, and focus. If not, let us return to the drawing board to find ways to help the State Department meet its obligation under the Act.