Swift Raids

When federal immigration officials raided six plants owned by Swift & Company, the world’s second largest beef and pork processor, last Tuesday, they brought Spanish translators. They knew exactly what kind of work is found in low-paying, strenuous work, and Basic Pilot is ineffective and disingenuous, a not-to-the-books technical qualms that allows.

The AIDS-Malaria Connection

AIDS prevention has seen two breakthroughs this month. The big news is the protective virtue of circumcision. But there is another important finding: AIDS and malaria feed on each other, with disastrous effects.

In a paper published in the journal Science, researchers looked at health records from Kisumu, Kenya, a city of 200,000 with high levels of both diseases. They calculated that the interaction of the diseases increased AIDS cases by 8 percent and malaria by 13 percent. Over 25 years, that meant 8,500 additional AIDS cases and almost a million extra cases of malaria. The researchers drew on earlier findings that H.I.V.-positive people who get malaria experience a six- to eight-week spike in the level of the AIDS virus in their blood. During that spike, they are supercontagious, with double the usual chance of infecting a sexual partner. People with H.I.V. have been shown to be more likely to catch malaria.

One important lesson of the study is that protecting H.I.V.-positive people from malaria would also limit the spread of AIDS. They need insecticide-treated bed nets to sleep under, and should take a daily dose of the antibiotic cotrimoxazole. Combining bed nets and cotrimoxazole with antiretroviral therapy reduced malaria cases in H.I.V.-positive people by 95 percent in one study. Cotrimoxazole is cheap, but is not yet widely used in poor countries.

The findings should add extra urgency to the fight against malaria, which has always lagged far behind AIDS in both money and attention. Last week President Bush convened a forum on malaria, but the fact that more than a million people — most of them under 5 — die each year from a disease that is easily preventable and curable speaks volumes.

The study also sheds light on why Africa’s AIDS rates are so much higher than elsewhere: Africans’ health is poor, and they are more likely to suffer from diseases — malaria, genital herpes and others — that make H.I.V. more transmissible.

Donors eager to fight AIDS have shown less interest in improving Africa’s health systems, training health workers and equipping clinics. The biggest lesson of the new study is that it is all one fight.

Appropriate Appropriations

The incoming Democratic chairmen of Congress’s appropriations committees announced last week that a big chunk of the federal government will operate next year under 2006 budgets. That will allow Congress to focus on programs where needs are great — and rising — like veterans’ health care, education, research and preparedness, among others.

 Republicans, sparked by President Bush, who trumpeted a funding limit that was so low that many Republicans were unwilling to support it openly. The delay dragged on as Republican leaders refused to hold difficult votes before the midterm elections. Then, during the lame duck session, they

Death Penalty Revisited

To the Editor:


Now that the public appears evenly split as to whether the death penalty or life without parole should be retained, it is hard to see how our government can continue to impose the death penalty as a punishment for murder.

The current system is both expensive and wasteful. It is estimated that the cost of a capital case is over $1 million, and the average capital case takes over 10 years to resolve. The system is also inefficient, with over 70% of all capital cases being overturned on appeal.

Moreover, the death penalty is not a deterrent to crime. In fact, research has shown that the death penalty is often used as a political tool to divert attention from the systemic problems that contribute to violent crime.

Finally, the death penalty is a form of racism. Studies have shown that black defendants are more likely to be sentenced to death than white defendants, even when the crimes they commit are identical.

It is time for our government to recognize that the death penalty is a flawed punishment that does not serve the public interest.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]