

long-term care can quickly wipe out the assets of even those who have worked and saved for a lifetime.

For example, the average cost of nursing home care is now over \$38,000 a year. If you happen to need such care, your options are limited under the current system. Only about 2 percent of long-term care costs are handled by private insurance. Normally, everyone else pays out of pocket or is forced to Medicaid, to the degree that nearly 40 percent of Medicaid costs are swallowed by long-term care components.

This bill now includes the language that allows tax deductions for long-term care services, as is allowable for medical services. I urge the support of this amendment and the support of this bill.

URGING PASSAGE OF THE KASSEBAUM - KENNEDY - ROUKEMA HEALTH CARE REFORM BILL

(Mr. OLIVER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OLIVER. Mr. Speaker, American families are losing their health insurance every day because of corporate downsizing. The original Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance bill was bipartisan common-sense reform that gave families a few simple protections. It cut down on denials due to preexisting conditions, it helped people get individual coverage when they lost group or COBRA coverage, it began chipping away at job lock, where fear of losing health insurance keeps people from changing jobs.

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But the House Republican leadership is turning straightforward reform into a goodie bag for a privileged few. Medical savings accounts, a payoff to a fat cat contributor to the majority. Limits on malpractice awards to people whose lives and dreams have been ruined.

The Republican leadership has demonstrated once again they just do not care about average working people. We should pass the Kennedy-Kassebaum-Roukema bill and not a special interest spinoff. It is the very least we can do.

CHANGE THE RULES ON OIL

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it has been 5 years since the gulf war, and we have done nothing to end our dependence on oil, foreign oil.

Today the United States imports more than 50 percent of its oil from foreign countries, not because we want to, but because our laws have forced us to. When we mandate that all companies have to get 1,000 permits and regulations to drill just one well, anytime we increase the regulatory cost by \$37 billion, when we close off their access to

oil-rich land and when we support a destructive tax code that contains provisions like the alternative minimum tax, we are just asking for lost jobs and foreign dependence.

Is it any wonder our oil companies have lost over 500,000 jobs since 1972, closed half of their refineries and moved to Vietnam, China, and Russia?

Mr. Speaker, we must change the rules to allow our oil industry to flourish, create jobs and provide a strong and secure America for us and our children.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

(Mrs. KENNELLY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, today we have a choice. We can take a simple, single step to ensure people who can change their jobs or lose their jobs that they can take their health insurance with them. Or we can let this simple, necessary piece of legislation get totally complicated in a maze of complications.

It cannot be said too often. Everybody agrees that individuals who change their job should be able to take their health insurance with them. People who are in a job should not be locked in that job because they are afraid they will lose their health insurance. The President agrees. He said, I will sign Kennedy-Kassebaum, it is a good first beginning in health care reform. The other body agrees. They have passed a bipartisan piece of legislation. The House Democrats agree. We will offer a substitute today that contains the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill. It is a clean, a good bill. Even some House Republicans agree. The substitute that we will introduce today was introduced originally by a Republican.

Mr. Speaker, there is one problem. Some people are not satisfied with fixing this problem. They want to add 10 new provisions in health care reform, 10 new insurance provisions that are too complicated. Pass the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill, begin health care reform.

NOT IF BUT WHEN

(Mr. ISTOOK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ISTOOK. Mr. Speaker, no nation can be secure if it depends on another nation for its economic lifeblood. Five years ago, we sent 500,000 American troops to the Persian Gulf to fight for oil. In 1991 we imported 45 percent of our oil. Today, we import 52 percent, 9 million barrels per day, annually \$60 billion going out of the country to buy oil.

The number of producing wells in this country has declined by 11 percent since the gulf war. Instead of becoming less dependent on foreign oil, we are

more so. No nation can be secure with such dependency, and because 60 percent of America's oil wells, 60 percent, Mr. Speaker, are developed not by major oil companies but by independent producers, it is in America's national interest to do all that we can to preserve America's independent producers of petroleum.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the house for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, today we have a golden opportunity to pass health care reform which, in fact, will be a first step to improving the lives of hard-working Americans. People that I hear from every day in my community say to me they are scared to death that, if they change their jobs, they will lose their health care or, if they or their children have had an illness which they have managed to survive, that in fact insurance companies will deny them insurance because of a pre-existing condition.

The piece of legislation that we talk about today, a bipartisan piece of legislation, can help begin to change that fact in the lives of working families today. What is stopping this event? The Republican leadership has decided to load this up with special goodies for their special interests.

Mr. Speaker, let me just quote the Washington Times. Do not take my word for it. The Washington Times, not a liberal newspaper, says that riders imperil health reforms. That is what this is about.

My Republican colleague of the Committee on Commerce, Mr. BLILEY, the chairman, said yesterday, and I quote, "The more you load the wagon, the heavier it is to move."

Do not let them pass this bill with these riders. It will end health care for working families in this country.

THE LINE-ITEM VETO

(Mr. SOLOMON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, today is perhaps the most exciting day in my 18-year career here in this Congress, as it is for another former President, President Ronald Reagan. President Reagan, I hope you are listening. You said in your book entitled *Autobiography* by Ronald Reagan, on American life with the following paragraphs, you said: And yet, as I reflected on what we had accomplished, I had a sense of incompleteness, that there was still work to be done.

We need a constitutional amendment to require a balanced budget, said Ronald Reagan. He went on to say: And the President needs a line-item veto to cut out unnecessary spending.

Today, the Congress is agreeing, the Senate has already acted. We will act in the next hour, and we will send to the President a true line-item veto that is going to put a dent in this big-spending Congress once and for all, and the American people are going to yell hooray, hooray, hooray.

PREEMPTION OF STATE PROTECTIONS IS A BAD IDEA

(Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today the House Republicans will pass up a golden opportunity to advance realistic bipartisan health care reform when it considers H.R. 3103, instead of sponsoring and passing the Roukema-Kassebaum-Kennedy health reform bill that I cosponsored.

The bill which the House considers today will have disastrous consequences for consumers. Carefully crafted State insurance laws will be replaced by a uniform standard developed and implemented by the Department of Labor here in Washington. That is right. We are taking away States' ability to regulate and move it here to Washington. They want to move it to an agency that one of my Republican colleagues said was led by what he thought was a Communist.

What does this mean to the average American family? State statutes and rules requiring certain benefits be covered by health insurance policies may no longer apply. For instance, many States like Texas, where I am from, have statutes requiring the inclusion of newborn infant coverage in their State law. That will be wiped out if this bill passes today.

Under the Republican health plan, this may no longer apply. This is moving from State control to Washington control. That must have been in the fine print of the Contract With America.

A GREAT DAY FOR AMERICA

(Mr. GOSS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I think that the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON] said it very well. This is a historic day in this body. We are going to pass the line-item veto today. It is something that we have worked hard on and long on, and we finally are in a position where we are going to deliver a version of the line-item veto which works.

This is part of the new majority here. We are getting spending under control. This matters to America, so I hope Americans will stay tuned.

It is also remarkable to me that on the very same day we are doing this historic event, we are also going to be bringing forward the first meaningful

health care reform in many, many a year for the people of this country who need access to affordable health care. That is in the agenda for today as well, and I believe we are going to get that done, too. A great day for America.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

(Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

(Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, today, the House will begin consideration of the Health Coverage Availability Act. As we embark on this very important discussion, I would like to urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle not to pass up on what is a truly golden opportunity to advance realistic, bipartisan health care reform legislation.

History has shown us that past efforts to tackle this issue have failed largely because they tried to accomplish too much. Unfortunately, by giving in to special interest groups, the majority seems to be headed down that same path once again.

Let's keep things simple. The Roukema-Kassebaum-Kennedy [RKK] bill is a sound piece of legislation that has broad bipartisan support. By helping millions of Americans keep their health insurance when they switch jobs, regardless of their health condition, it provides a much needed and relatively noncontroversial solution that a vast majority of the Members of this Chamber can agree on.

The demands of the moment require both Democrats and Republicans to unite behind the RKK bill if there is to be any realistic possibility for health reform during this Congress. Let us pass RKK now. The other issues can be worked out separately and moved separately.

REPUBLICANS PAY BACK TO SPECIAL INTERESTS

(Mr. VOLKMER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Speaker, the Republicans are at it again. No different than we have done in the past here, my colleagues take a good bill, one that everything on both sides really has supported to pass, the Senate supports it, the President supports it. It is known as the Roukema-Kassebaum-Kennedy bill. It provides for portability, it provides for health care for preexisting conditions. And then my colleagues take that good bill and they put a terrible piece of legislation along with it, because they think well, we cannot pass that terrible piece of legislation by itself, and we can only pass it if we tack it on a big one.

Mr. Speaker, this is what they are doing. They are tacking it on. And what is it? It is payoff time. It is payoff time to the special interests of this

House, the people that are paying for the Republicans' campaign. That is what it is.

What does the Washington Times say about it? "Riders imperil health reforms."

So really, do they want to do health reform? No; they want to pass something for their special interests. That is what they want to do. Let us vote them down.

PERMISSION FOR SUNDRY COMMITTEES AND THEIR SUBCOMMITTEES TO SIT TODAY DURING THE 5-MINUTE RULE

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the following committees and their subcommittees be permitted to sit today while the House is meeting in the Committee of the Whole under the 5-minute rule. Those committees are the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, the Committee on Commerce, the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities, the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, the Committee on International Relations, the Committee on the Judiciary, the Committee on National Security, the Committee on Resources, the Committee on Science, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the minority has been consulted and that there are no objections to this request.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3136, CONTRACT WITH AMERICA ADVANCEMENT ACT OF 1996

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Chairman, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 391 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 391

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order (except those arising under section 425(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974) to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 3136) to provide for the enactment of the Senior Citizens' Right to Work Act of 1996, the Line Item Veto Act, and the Small Business Growth and Fairness Act of 1996, and to provide for a permanent increase in the public debt limit. The amendments specified in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution shall be considered as adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, and on any further amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate on the bill, as amended, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and