

challenged by women's groups because they do not discriminate. The proportionality requirement in the proposed federal legislation is similarly gender-neutral.

Phyllis Greenberger, Executive Director of the Society for the Advancement of Women's Health Research, testified before the Senate Commerce Committee in the 104th Congress that U.S. companies are shying away from the contraceptive market because of the unpredictable nature of litigation combined with the enormous cost and limited availability of liability insurance.

INCREASE FUNDING FOR PELL GRANTS

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to include extraneous material.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the 12 national organizations who recently wrote this Congress endorsing H.R. 744, a bill I introduced in February to increase Federal funding and eligibility for Pell grants.

The McGovern bill increases the maximum Pell grant from its present level of \$2,700 to \$5,000, which brings the award to the level in which it was created adjusted for inflation. My bill permits more students from modest income families to access higher education and allows more middle-income families with multiple children in college to qualify for financial aid.

□ 1415

I would also like to commend over 40 of my House colleagues from both sides of the aisle who have signed on as cosponsors of H.R. 744. As the drive to pass this bill continues to gain momentum, I am confident that many more of my colleagues will join the effort to make college more affordable for working families across this Nation. In today's competitive global economy, education is the key to America's success. My bill will help lead the way toward a stronger economy and a brighter future for our children. Let us pass it today.

I include for the RECORD a letter signed by more than 12 major national organizations urging passage of the McGovern-Pell-Grant bill.

APRIL 21, 1997.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: We write to express our strong support for HR 744, The Affordable Higher Education Through Pell Grants Act. By restoring much of the value of Pell grants, HR 744's passage and funding offers this Congress its best opportunity to narrow the college participation gap between low-income students and students from affluent families. This gap threatens not just the well-being of the individual students who, due to high cost, will be denied access to higher education and the opportunities that it offers; it also jeopardizes our collective future as a democracy that promotes upward mobility through education and effort.

The gap in college participation rates between the poor and the well-off is growing. Between 1980 and 1993 the gap in the college-going rate of students in the lowest income quartile and of students in the three higher income quartiles grew by 12 percent. Thus, 18 and 19 year olds from families with incomes in the top income quartile are now three times as likely to be enrolled in college as

those in the bottom quartile. Similar gaps can be found in graduation rates. While nearly 48% of the young adults raised in families in the highest socio-economic quartile obtain BA's, only 7% of those from families in the lowest socio-economic quartile do.

A major cause of the growth in the gap is the soaring cost of higher education coupled with the deteriorating value of the primary form of assistance to low-income students—Pell grants.

Between 1980 and 1994 the cost of tuition, room and board at public postsecondary institutions jumped by 44%. Over approximately the same period, Pell grants lost about 50% of their purchasing power. In FY 1979 the maximum Pell grant covered 77.4% of the average cost of a public university; by FY 1997 the maximum Pell grant covered only 33.2% of those costs.

The unchecked growth of the college participation gap will lock hundreds of thousands of students out of college and into limited lives at the margins of our society. And it will cost our nation dearly. Individuals with only a high school diploma earn only half what college graduates earn, are three times more likely to be unemployed, and are five times more likely to live in poverty than are college graduates. Unless narrowed, the growing gap will make college access a destructive wedge, further dividing income groups, rather than the bridge to greater prosperity and productivity that it has been for so many Americans.

Passage of HR 744 alone is not enough to close the college participation gap, but it will certainly narrow it. Carefully constructed progressive tax policies in addition to HR 744 could narrow the gap even more. However, passage of HR 744 must be the first priority of those who wish to increase access to higher education and narrow the college participation gap.

HR 744 is a modest, common sense step toward closing the gap. We urge you to cosponsor this legislation and to work actively for its passage.

Sincerely,

The American Jewish Committee, The Center for Law and Education, The Education Trust, The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, The NAACP, The National Association of Social Workers, The National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations (NCEO), The National Council of Jewish Women, The National Council of La Raza, The National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc., The Rainbow/Push Coalition, The US Student Association.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

MEDICARE TRUSTEES' REPORT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, last week four Cabinet-level members of the Clinton administration and the rest of the Medicare trustees released their annual report on the future of the Medicare Program, something of great interest to a great many Americans, and

unfortunately the forecast is very bleak. The condition of the part A trust fund has gone from serious to critical, with only a few years left before flatlining altogether in this very important entitlement program. It is time for the White House to get its act together.

Mr. Speaker, 2 years ago, for the first time in the history of the program, the trust fund paid out more in expenses than it received in revenues. That was a pretty good indicator something was wrong. Last year the program lost \$25 million a day every day and \$9 billion over the course of the year, another indicator something might be wrong. This year that figure will climb to at least \$40 million a day lost and almost \$14.5 billion for the whole year. We are on the fast track to bankruptcy, with only a small window of opportunity to avoid a serious disaster in Medicare part A which so many Americans depend on.

While this projection is undisputed, the call to action from the White House has not been forthcoming. Yes, the President has moved toward us in terms of raw numbers, but he has avoided making the tough choices necessary to truly reform and improve Medicare. In fact, the President's prescription involves no heavy lifting at all. It just ambushes the American taxpayer down the road with higher taxes. Where have we heard that before? By switching the home health portion of Medicare to Part B without a corresponding increase in the premium to pay for it, this administration has signaled that its intention is not to save the program but, rather, to continue to play politics with the numbers and raise taxes.

But there is good news, and that is why I am here. The good news is that we can save Medicare as this Congress has done recently. But it is not going to happen with accounting gimmicks, misguided customer providers, or vetoes from the White House. Instead we should take a hard look at what is driving the soaring costs and address them head on.

We need medical malpractice reform to assure that our precious resources are not being wasted on defensive medicine. A Stanford study found that States that have passed some kind of tort reform, like my home State of Florida, have seen incredible savings in even the most complicated medical areas. The study confirms what many of us already knew, excessive litigation serves the trial lawyers primarily, not our senior citizens.

We can and must increase the number of options available in the Medicare Program. Every senior should have choices to go beyond the fee for service or an HMO, options that include things like provider-sponsored networks and medical savings accounts. Individual choice should be the hallmark of any reform plan.

Of course, we should always keep our eye on the fraud and abuse that still

plagues our system, regrettably. In the last Congress we instituted tougher penalties for those who cheat the system, and we should pursue identified ways to do more of that. Representative QUINN's legislation to establish an inspector general for the program I think is a fine first step. I hope that we will continue to deter and punish those who drain our Medicare resources by cheating.

Mr. Speaker, the campaign is over. The demagoguery, the distortions, the cynical misdirections might have served a political purpose in the last Presidential campaign, but they did not do anything to save the Medicare trust fund. The effect dramatically of it in this year's report has been to exacerbate the problem. As the trustees note, and again there are Cabinet members among them, "it is misleading to think that any part of the program can be exempt from change." We have to fix it.

It is time we heed the trustees' warnings. It is time for structural reform that saves Medicare not merely until the next election, but well into the next century because a great many Americans are counting on it.

Mr. Speaker, I served on the Kerrey commission. We talked about the entitlement, the well-being of the entitlement programs in our country, and we discovered that we were on unsustainable trendlines, and this is just the first of others that are going to follow unless we have reform of our entitlement programs.

I am proud that Congress did its job. We passed the strength of the Medicare Act bill in the last Congress. The Senate passed it. President Clinton vetoed it. Since that veto we have lost almost \$20 billion in revenues in trust fund part A. This adds up to real money, but more important, it adds up to real anxiety for our senior citizens.

It is time we heard from the White House on this program. The Cabinet members have spoken, the committee has spoken, Congress has spoken. Will the President speak?

EXPRESSING PROFOUND GRATITUDE OF THE PEOPLE OF NORTH DAKOTA FOR OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT FROM THE COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Dakota [Mr. POMEROY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, as North Dakota's sole Member of this body, I rise on behalf of the people of North Dakota to express the profound gratitude that we feel toward the outpouring of support demonstrated in this Chamber and across the country as North Dakotans deal with the unprecedented disasters that have afflicted our State, most particularly the city of Grand Forks.

The city of Grand Forks, a city of 50,000, has established a benchmark in terms of flooding disasters for a com-

munity of this size. Never before have we seen a city of 50,000 so completely inundated, so completely devastated by a flooding river. The river in this case, the Red River of the North, which flows normally at 16 feet, maybe 15 feet on a summer afternoon, flood stage: 28 feet; the flooding waters of 54 feet in depth ultimately reached the dikes and inundated this city. It was the flood of record. They are now saying a flood of 1,000-year-event dimensions.

As if the resulting inundation city-wide was not bad enough, fire broke out in the downtown business district, and as so many watched in the television footage of the event, a fire department who normally has water as its best ally in fighting flames was rendered powerless by the fact that they could not even get at the hydrants because they were literally under the flooding Red River water that was coursing through the streets of the town.

Now as we deal with the aftermath of this unprecedented disaster, we have seen an outpouring of support from across this country that has truly touched us and gives us a great deal of assistance and moral support as well as financial support in moving forward to pick up the pieces and rebuild this community.

Examples that have occurred just in my own experience include a 7-year-old boy, who in his car noted that he was 2 years old when Hurricane Andrew devastated their family's home, brought by a box of food supplies for me to take to the people of Grand Forks. The shoe shop located in the base of the Longworth House Office Building has devoted 10 percent of its proceeds for 2 weeks on shoe repair to assisting the people of Grand Forks. Phil Jackson, famous coach of the Chicago Bulls basketball team; I am proud to say North Dakota native, graduate of the University of North Dakota, and he was a star for the Fighting Sioux basketball team, has agreed to cut a public service announcement which will inform people across the country of how they might help the people of Grand Forks recover from this disaster.

Now, Mr. Speaker, at a time when the outpouring across the country has been so significant, I also want to let my colleagues know about the outpouring that has occurred across both parties within this Chamber at a time when people, I think, are very cynical in terms of whether we have a political system that can quit its partisan bickering long enough to respond to problems. We have seen exactly that occur within the past week.

Five days after the dikes were breached, the President of the United States was there to encourage and comfort the flood victims with promises of additional assistance. Six days later the White House brings up to the Hill a supplemental assistance package. Six days after the dikes breached, Chairman BOB LIVINGSTON, the major-

ity chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, had additional assistance inserted into the disaster supplemental bill being considered by the appropriations body. Not enough, not configured exactly how we want, but, as he indicated, more needs to be done, this is a work in process, the first crack we had in Congress to help the people of Grand Forks. Thanks to the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. LIVINGSTON] they were assisted in action by his committee.

A day later, the Speaker devoted a Friday evening that otherwise had been scheduled for familytime to come to North Dakota to see the devastation. I was very pleased to travel along with Speaker GINGRICH, as well as the gentleman from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE], the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT], and the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. RAMSTAD], to visit with the people of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks and see the extent of the devastation. I am extraordinarily grateful to the Speaker and know that his presence in our area meant an awful lot to people as they deal with the unpleasant dimension of pumping out basements, assessing whether homes can be saved, and trying to pick up the pieces of their businesses.

On Monday, just 2 days later, majority leader DICK ARMEY also came to North Dakota, bringing with him a number of our colleagues including the gentleman from California [Mr. ROGAN], the gentleman from California [Mr. KIM], the gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO], the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. SOUDER], the gentleman from Kentucky [Mrs. NORTHUP], and the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. SABO].

□ 1815

Again, both political parties, heavy representation from the majority leaders of this body, as well as the majority Members of this body, coming to our area to extend their concern and see how they could help.

The people of North Dakota will never forget the conscientious extending of the hand of help and concern that occurred this week, and I am very proud to serve in this Chamber with the Members of both political parties that have shown how deeply they care and how much they want to help.

RENAMING THE DUBLIN, GEORGIA FEDERAL COURTHOUSE IN HONOR OF FORMER U.S. REPRESENTATIVE ROY ROWLAND

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROGERS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. NORWOOD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker and fellow Members of the House, we find ourselves today in a period of great debate as to what constitutes bipartisanship. I believe now that true bipartisanship is honorable compromise for the good of the country.