

today and paying into Social Security is 1.9 percent. If you let somebody earn more than 1.9 percent on their retirement savings, then consequently they end up with more at the end of the day and can retire with more, again have more each month day in and day out in their retirement years which is what I hear from most people working today as something that they would very much like.

Another benefit that I think is worth mentioning is that you can choose for you when you want to retire. In my home State of South Carolina, we have a fellow by the name of STROM THURMOND who wants to work until he is 100. I say go for it. Yet I have got a lot of other friends who say, "You know, work is fine, MARK, but fishing is even better. I would like to retire when I'm 50."

With a personal savings account, you could do that. Why should a Congressman or a Senator or a bureaucrat in Washington choose for you when you want to retire? Yet with a pay-as-you-go system, that has to happen, because for one person to retire early while the other person was working would mean one person subsidizing the other and that could not happen.

Or, for that matter, another benefit, I think, of personal savings accounts would be moving it off the political playing field. Right now seniors very intently listen to all those political ads as one politician points his finger at the other saying what the other one is going to do with his Social Security check for good reason and, that is, Washington controls it. If you move that control out of Washington again back to the individual, you would not have to listen to those ads.

Another great benefit again of personal savings accounts. Let me stress here, what we are talking about is a voluntary program. I do not believe that you should go out and yank the rug out from underneath seniors. What we are talking about is leaving Social Security the way it is for people that are retired and simply giving people the choice. If one wants to stay on existing Social Security, do that and if you do not, that is fine, too. But by doing that, another one of the benefits would be saving more. We have a very low savings rate in this country. It is around 3 percent. In China it is around 40 percent. In Singapore it is in the mid 30's. In Chile it is about 30 percent. It is actually about 29 percent. A host of places around the globe have higher savings rates which means that they can invest more in, whether it is a chain saw or whether it is a plant that makes American workers more productive, and that is something that we need to be cognizant of and watch out for.

Again, this is not anything that is going to happen anytime soon in Congress. It is not even being talked about in Congress. But I think for us to avoid the avalanche that is coming our way, we need to begin talking about it.

Again what we need to begin talking about is a way of transitioning from Social Security and leaving seniors alone. I do not think we should ever yank the rug out from underneath seniors, but again transitioning to a system that would allow young people the choice.

HEALTH INSURANCE FOR CHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, for several weeks now I have been coming to the House floor on a daily basis to talk about the need for this Congress to enact legislation that would ensure every child in the country has access to health insurance. Many of my statements have focused on how the Republicans were blocking progress on the various Democratic proposals to provide health insurance to the Nation's 10 million uninsured children. I stress that again, 10 million uninsured children in this country.

It is now 3 months into the 105th Congress and literally we have really barely done a thing. Today was just another indication of that. Just last week, the House Republicans basically put together an agenda. It appeared in the Washington Times, and I talked about it a little bit this morning. Again, much of this agenda is just a rehash of what the Republicans had been talking about since they took control of the Congress back in 1994.

Most importantly, nowhere in this 12-point agenda is there a plan to pass a health insurance plan or a health coverage plan for children. Despite the fact that these 10 million children remain uninsured, despite the fact that the congressional Democrats have expressed a willingness to work with the Republicans to fashion a bipartisan agreement, the GOP still could not find it in its heart to make children's health insurance a congressional priority.

I do not know why they left this out of their agenda. I find it truly disturbing. I will continue to mention it. Over the last several weeks there has been a steady stream of studies, visits by children's organizations, and media reports detailing the problem with the lack of health insurance coverage for children. Yet, still nothing from the Republican leadership.

This week we had 4 different children's organizations, the March of Dimes, the Children's Defense Fund, the Child Welfare League, and the National Association of Children's Hospitals, had been and are still making visits to congressional offices all over the Capitol. They are not limiting their visits to Democratic officials. They have, Mr. Speaker, been urging all Members of Congress to do some-

thing about the growing number of children who do not have any kind of health coverage at all.

With respect to stories in the newspapers, and they continue to grow, in yesterday's USA Today there was a lead story on the front page which really did a very good job of outlining the problem with the 10 million kids in the country that lack health insurance. The article talks about various proposals floating around the Congress that address the problem. It provides many details about the nature of the problem, including the observation that 86 percent of uninsured children live in families with one working parent, 63 percent live in two-parent families, 500,000 of the uninsured are infants younger than 1 year old, and 65 percent live in families with annual incomes of \$25,000 or less. A lot of interesting information here that shows increasingly that this is a problem that affects primarily working families, two-parent families, people whose incomes are not as low as one might expect.

Another disturbing trend noted in this article and others within the last few weeks is the decline in employer-based coverage. Between 1985 and 1995 the percentage of children covered by private employer-based coverage has dropped 12 percent, from 65 percent to 53 percent. This decline in worker-based coverage is an indication that working parents are finding it increasingly more difficult to purchase insurance for their children.

I think a lot of people increasingly, or many people think that if you are working, particularly if both parents are working, that they are going to be covered through their employer by a health insurance policy for the kids. Increasingly, that is simply not the case.

The article in USA Today also provides examples of those struggling to live without health coverage for their kids. I like to use examples because, as much as we talk about statistics, it is always better to have specific examples where you can bring the problem down and show how it affects an individual.

I wanted to mention in the USA Today article a person named Dee Sweat of Liberty, MT. She works at a salary of \$14,000 a year. She does not have health insurance for her 15-year-old daughter. Paying out of pocket, in the last year she paid \$1,700 or 12 percent of her yearly salary for medical treatment for her daughter. She has not been able to take her daughter to the dentist for 5 years. Five years without going to the dentist. I repeat that. She simply cannot afford health insurance. I wonder how many in this body have gone 5 years or would even contemplate letting their children go 5 years without going to the dentist.

The working parents that are mentioned in this USA Today article, who oftentimes earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford health insurance for the kids, are the individuals the Democrats are

essentially trying to help. If you and your children qualify for Medicaid, we will work to get you enrolled. For those who do not, we will continue working to convince the Republicans that the time to act is now.

Every day that goes by is a day that another parent stays up late at night suffering through the hard reality of not being able to provide for a sick child. As a parent myself, Mr. Speaker, I can think of few things that could be more difficult to confront.

In the coming weeks, Democrats will be redoubling their effort to jump-start this process. We have asked Speaker GINGRICH for a date certain for consideration of legislation that would ensure that every child in America has health insurance.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about the issue and about what I think should be the basic principles of a kids' health insurance proposal. As far as the issue is concerned, the figure of 10 million American children has been mentioned several times. The number of kids with no health insurance coverage reached an all-time high of this 10 million figure in 1994, according to a recent General Accounting Office report, and that is one out of seven children.

Again, the problem is getting worse. According to the Children's Defense Fund, 3,300 kids get dropped from private health insurance coverage every day. If this trend continues, there will be 12.6 million uninsured children by 2000.

Again, this is a problem of working families. Nine out of 10 children without insurance have working parents. Medicaid helps the poorest children, and families who are well off can afford private coverage. But millions of working parents are trapped in the middle, unable to afford health insurance for their kids. Again, many of these parents, I am sure, are staying awake at night worrying about what would happen if their child fell seriously ill.

Also, what we really need is preventative care. It may be that when a child gets very sick, that they can go to the emergency room and have access to care. But children deserve to see family doctors and not go to the emergency room. Many children without health insurance never see a family doctor. The only time they get health care is when they are so sick that they need to be taken to the emergency room, where they often get treated for medical conditions that could have been prevented through regular care at much less cost.

For those who talk about the cost, I think they have to continue and should realize that in the long run the lack of preventative care, the lack of having a child being able to visit a doctor on a regular basis, in the long run only costs more when the child gets sick and has to have more serious care that involves hospitalization or other kinds of institutionalization.

□ 1845

Well, I think it is important when I continue to talk about the problem of our Nation's children, or 10 million of them not being insured, that I have to basically say what we would do about it; what would be the outlines, if you will, of a children's health bill. And basically if you think about the basic principles the Democrats have been talking about, we have been saying that a children's health proposal must first make health insurance available for every uninsured child up to at least age 18; second, make insurance generally affordable for all families; third, give all uninsured children access to policies that provide for the range of appropriate benefits; fourth, provide for prenatal care for uninsured pregnant women; and, last, build on, not replace, the current employer-based system, Medicaid and public private programs that already exist in a number of States.

The Children's Defense Fund has done an excellent job of putting together a fact sheet that basically gives some further details about the nature of the problem, and I do not want to read the entire fact sheet, but I just wanted to highlight some of the things that they brought out because they have been going around visiting with Members of Congress this week, as I mentioned before, and I think they basically summarized the nature of the problem very well.

What they have been saying again is the fact that Medicaid helps the poorest children, but that millions of working parents in the middle cannot provide their children with health insurance.

Again, why are these 10 million children uninsured? Because a lot of people are saying to themselves, you know, how is it that they fall through the cracks? Why are they uninsured? And what we are finding is that increasingly, again, it is the problem of working parents.

Since 1989, the number of children without private coverage has grown by an average of 1.2 million a year. In 1980, the majority of employees at medium and large companies had employers who paid the full costs of family coverage. By 1993, more than three-fourths of these employees were required to help pay such costs. Most employers now require large payments for family coverage. For health insurance that covers the entire family the average employee must pay over \$1,600 a year, \$1,900 in small companies. And when families cannot pay these costs, basically their children go uninsured. Other parents work for employers who offer no health coverage. Self-employed, part-time or temporary workers, independent contractors and parents working for very small businesses or service sector companies often have employers who offer no health insurance. Parents also must pay very high prices, \$6,000 a year or more, if they buy family health insurance on their

own rather than through an employer, and, as many cannot afford these costs, the children go uninsured.

So if a parent is not able to tap into a health insurance policy for their kids through their employer, you can see the level of a premium up to \$6,000 a year or more and why that would simply be unaffordable for somebody unless they are making a very large salary.

Why is it crucial to help working parents buy health insurance for their children? And again this gets into the whole issue of prevention and how providing health insurance for kids in the long run would be saving the government money.

Uninsured children are at risk of preventable illness. Most families with uninsured children live from paycheck to paycheck with little room to spare in the family budget. Many such families must choose between paying the full costs of prescriptions or doctor visits for an uninsured child and other basic family needs, including food and utility bills. So they are sitting there in the house deciding if they are going to pay for health insurance versus the rent versus utilities versus putting food on the table. Essentially it is a game of Russian roulette with their children's health, delaying care and hoping that no harm results.

Again some information about the children with untreated health problems. They are very much less likely to learn in school. Many children with undiagnosed vision problems do not get glasses and cannot even see the blackboard. Children in pain or discomfort may have trouble concentrating. I guess that is obvious. If lead paint poisoning is not detected and treated early, children can suffer permanent mental retardation. Certainly the Federal Government has addressed the issue of lead poisoning from paint and its impact on children, but again without health insurance, without regular checkups, it will not be detected.

And finally taxpayers save money when their children receive early preventative care. Each dollar invested to immunize a child saves between \$3.40 and \$16.34 in direct medical costs. Nine months of prenatal care costs \$1,100. One day of neonatal intensive hospital care for a low birth weight baby costs \$1,000. On average hospital costs for a low birth weight baby are 10 times the cost of prenatal care.

Just an example, and again this is from the Children's Defense Fund, when one rural county in Florida provided all children and pregnant women access to outpatient health care, the rate of premature births dropped by 39 percent, the percentage of children receiving checkups doubled, and emergency room visits were cut by nearly 50 percent. In every industrialized country children get better health coverage than in America in terms of the percentages that are actually covered. Every other industrialized country provides health coverage to all its people.

America does not even cover all its children. The United States ranks eighteenth in overall infant mortality. Only Portugal does worse. If the United States matched Japan's infant mortality rate, more than 15,000 American babies who died before their first birthday in 1994 would be alive. And the United States ranks eighteenth in the percentage of babies born at dangerously low weight. No industrialized country does worse than that.

Now again I do not want to keep coming up here and giving horror stories and talking about all the problems that we face because of the fact that the 10 million kids are not covered. But I think that the magnitude of this problem is such that if we do not do something quickly and if this House and this Congress does not address the problem fairly quickly, the problem only gets worse, the costs only get greater, and from a humane point of view it simply is something that we need to address, and so myself and other Democrats will be here on a regular basis tomorrow, the next few weeks or the next few months until our Republican colleagues on the other side of the aisle agree to take this up in a timely fashion.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 89, REQUESTING THE PRESIDENT SUBMIT A BALANCED BUDGET

Mr. SOLOMON, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-18) on the resolution (H. Res. 90) providing for consideration of the resolution (H. Res. 89) requesting the President to submit a budget for fiscal year 1998 that would balance the Federal budget by fiscal year 2002 without relying on budgetary contingencies, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

A POSITIVE AGENDA FOR THE 105TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FOX] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time for us to have this special order to speak not only of the importance of moving ahead with a positive agenda for the 105th Congress, but also I rise today in the spirit of the Hershey accords, the achievements of our recent weekend in Hershey, PA, to join my colleagues in offering this special order. Probably the most important bipartisan issue we can address for the citizens of this country is the balancing of the Federal budget.

I rise here today and will be joined by several of my distinguished colleagues, not least of which is GIL GUTKNECHT, a

Congressman from Minnesota, and urge the President to work with us using the same economic assumptions, meeting the requests made by the Congress following the number of elections and producing a budget that responsibly balances our budget by the year 2002. Once we can see where the President's priorities are in the free market of a balanced budget then we can begin a civil debate over the policy differences among the various proposals.

I just want to say at the outset that my feelings are that having talked to Republicans and Democrats alike this past weekend, our issues of balancing the budget, campaign finance reform, working on things like FDA reform, improving our transportation and working on other issues of common concern throughout the Congress certainly can be accomplished because the bipartisan spirit that I felt and the finding the common ground, I think, was very special.

You know for many of us, who may be one party or the other, we do not meet other Members of the aisle, the opposite Members of the aisle, unless we are on their committee or we come from their State. This particular retreat gave us for the first time in a long time a chance for us to meet on a personal level other Members who we do not serve within the same committee or from the same State, and by that we are able to at least find common ground, and while we do not want anybody to give up their principles, we do not want anybody to give up their agenda, we do want to make sure that we, as Members of Congress, will always remain civil, Mr. Speaker, and to make sure that we can do more and be more productive because we give the mutual respect they each deserve.

I wanted to ask CONGRESSMAN GUTKNECHT, who was an active participant at the conference, what his impressions were before we get into the issues of balanced budget and other items that are on your agenda, and I know how active you have been on your committee work, GIL. Could you tell a little bit of what your impressions were of the retreat and whether you thought it succeeded in achieving the goals that it set out to begin with.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Well, I would have to say it this way, that I was one of those who was not all that eager to go along, and it was guilt that got me to go to Hershey, PA. It may have been the chocolate that kept me there after the first several hours. But I must tell you as the weekend went along it was a very valuable experience, not only for me, but I hope for my colleagues and, most importantly, I think, for the American people.

I think that the American people sent us sort of a message in the last congressional elections. What they said in effect was that we want the Republicans to continue to control the House of Representatives and the Senate, but we want President Clinton, the Democrat, to run the executive branch of

Government, and we want there to be some checks and balances, but what they also said is they want us to work together as much as we possibly can.

And one of the valuable things, I think, that came out of Hershey is we now, all of us who were there at least, have a little better understanding of a sense of history, and if you look at this institution, the House of Representatives, there have been some rather bloody fights on this House floor. I mean there have been Members who have been caned, there have been fist fights, there have been arguments—

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. The caning was in the Senate, the fist fights were in the House.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. But we have had more than our share of fisticuffs that were associated with the debate here on the floor. We have also had periods where there was consensus building, cooperation, and much more agreement and ability to work together in a civilized way.

□ 1900

I think what will happen as a result of what we saw in Hershey is hopefully both sides will begin to reach out to the other side. I think in the end what we really need to do is agree where we can agree, have honest debate where we disagree. And I think the American people expect that, but I think they also expect us to compromise where we can.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that over the next several months and over the balance of this 105th Congress we will see more civilized debate. There has been entirely too much trivializing, too much demonizing, too much personalizing the debate that occurs on the floor of this House.

We are going to have an honest discussion tonight about the budget. We obviously have a somewhat different view of the President's budget and the need to balance the budget perhaps than some of our colleagues. I brought with me some charts, and I am going to walk down there in a few minutes, and we are going to talk about what the President has proposed, what we might dispose. But I think most importantly we need to talk about, what does this mean to the average American family? What is this balancing the budget all about? Is it just some kind of an accounting exercise, or does it really ultimately impact real families and real Americans in homes and in the neighborhoods where they live?

Mr. Speaker, I think as we go through and talk a little bit about this, I think we can demonstrate that this really does have a dramatic impact not only on Americans today but, more importantly, on Americans in the future. We have some very serious problems, but I think, if we approach them in a cooperative relationship, a respectful relationship where we can have a civil and honest debate about the great issues facing our country today, then I think both the Congress and the American people will have been well served by what transpired up in Hershey, PA.