

good for part of the premium for private coverage. Medicare beneficiaries could use this voucher to buy into the fee-for-service plan sponsored by the Federal Government or to join a private plan.

To encourage consumer price sensitivity, the voucher would track to the lowest cost private plan; Medicare privatizers tell us that seniors could then shop for the plan that best suits their needs, paying the balance of the premium and extra if they want higher quality care. The proposal would create a new, private system of health coverage but it would abandon Medicare's fundamental principle of egalitarianism.

Today, the Medicare program is income-blind. All seniors have access to the same level of care. The idea that vouchers would empower seniors to choose a health plan that best suits their needs is simply, Mr. Speaker, a myth. The reality is that seniors will be forced to accept whatever plan they can afford.

The goal of the Medicare Commission was to ensure the program's long-term solvency. This proposal will not do that. Supporters of the voucher plan say it would shave 1 percent per year from the Medicare budget over the next few decades. That is still not enough to prevent insolvency, and it is based frankly on overly optimistic projections of private sector performance. Bruce Vladeck, a former administrator of the Medicare program and a commission member, doubted the commission plan would save the government even a dime.

Efforts to privatize Medicare are, of course, nothing new. Medicare beneficiaries have long been able to enroll in private managed care plans. Their experience, however, does not bode well for a full-fledged privatization effort. These managed care plans are already calling for higher government payments. They are dropping out of unprofitable markets and they are cutting back on benefits to America's elderly.

Managed care plans are profit driven and they do not tough it out when those profits are unrealized. We learned this lesson the hard way last year when 96 Medicare HMOs deserted more than 400,000 Medicare beneficiaries, including in Lorain and Trumbull Counties, Ohio, because the HMOs did not meet their profit objectives.

Before the Medicare program was launched in 1965, more than half the Nation's seniors were uninsured. Private insurance was the only option for the elderly, but insurers did not want seniors to join their plans because they knew that seniors would actually use most of their coverage. The private insurance market has changed considerably since then, but it still avoids high risk enrollees and, whenever possible, dodges the bill for high-cost medical services.

The problem is not necessarily malice or greed. It is the expectation that

private insurers can serve two masters, the bottom line and the common good. Logically, always looking to the bottom line, our system of private insurance has left 43 million uninsured individuals in the United States. If the private insurance industry cannot figure out how to cover these people, most of whom are middle-income workers and children, how will they treat high-risk, high-cost seniors?

If we privatize Medicare, we are telling America that not all seniors deserve the same level of quality health care. We are betting on a private insurance system that puts its own interests ahead of health care quality and a balanced Federal budget.

The Medicare Commission wisely disbanded without delivering a final product. Premium support proponents must realize that they cannot make Medicare privatization look like an equitable, fair alternative to the public program upon which 36 million seniors in this country depend. Premium support backers also have repeatedly tried to scare America's seniors by predicting that Medicare will go bankrupt.

Congress would not let Medicare go bankrupt any more than it would let the Department of Defense run out of money.

The goal is simple. Let us keep Medicare the successful public program it has always been.

TROOPS TO TEACHERS PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. HEFLEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the Troops to Teachers Program Improvement Act of 1999. This legislation will enable retiring military personnel to find rewarding second careers as teachers in our Nation's public schools.

As we all know, our schools and students are in desperate need of more high-quality teachers. This bill, which I am introducing with the support of my colleagues, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HILL), will help provide those teachers. This bill not only reauthorizes Troops to Teachers, but also strengthens and improves the enormously successful program.

Troops to Teachers was created in 1994 to assist military personnel who were affected by military downsizing find second careers in which they could utilize their knowledge, professional skills and expertise in our Nation's schools. The program offers counseling and assistance to help participants identify teacher certification programs and employment opportunities.

Since its authorization in 1994, Troops to Teachers has helped over 3,000 active duty soldiers enter our Na-

tion's classrooms and make significant contributions to the lives of our students.

□ 1000

These military personnel turned teachers have established a solid reputation as educators who bring unique real-world experiences to the classroom. They are dedicated, mature, and experienced individuals who have proven to be effective teachers, as well as excellent role models. They are also helping fill a void felt in many public school districts. Over three-quarters of the Troops to Teachers participants are male, compared with about 25 percent in the overall public school system, and over 30 percent of these teachers belong to a minority racial ethnic group.

In addition, a large portion of these teachers are trained in math, science, and engineering, and about half elect to teach in inner city or rural schools. Overall, the retention of these teachers is much higher than the national average.

Not surprisingly, Troops to Teachers is winning glowing reviews from educational administrators, teachers and legislators. Education Secretary Richard Riley praised the program as a new model for recruiting high quality teachers.

School principals and superintendents who have employed Troops to Teachers participants are overwhelmingly supportive of the program. In a 1995-1996 survey, over 75 percent of the principals and superintendents rated Troops to Teachers participants as above average or higher.

The authorization of this successful program is set to expire at the end of this year. My colleagues and I have introduced the Troops to Teachers Program Improvement Act in an effort to reauthorize the program and strengthen some aspects of it so it operates more efficiently and more effectively, and targets the educational needs of our students.

I hope my House colleagues will join me in preserving this education success story by cosponsoring the Troops to Teachers Program Improvement Act.

INDIA MISSILE TEST SHOULD BE SEEN IN CONTEXT OF CHINESE THREAT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MICA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, in light of India's test launch of the Agni missile on Sunday, I want to state today or stress today that the U.S. should look at India's action in light of China's threat to the Indian subcontinent. We should view this step by India in the context of the ongoing threat posed by China, and the fact that Pakistan's missile development program has developed so quickly because of Chinese support.

The weekend's developments further demonstrate the need for a U.S. policy with regard to South Asia that turns away from the current stance of confrontation with India and towards recognition of India's legitimate security needs. We should have increased consideration for the prospects of greater Indo-U.S. cooperation in responding to the threats posed by China.

Mr. Speaker, last week's visit by the Chinese premier to Washington also raised important questions about how China, a potential adversary, and India, a potential partner threatened by China, are treated in terms of U.S. policy.

Last week official Washington witnessed the arrival of Premier Zhu with fanfare and ceremony at the White House, suggesting the visit of an international leader who was a trusted friend and partner. But during the premier's visit, as with other high level meetings between the United States and China, we kept hearing of the need for engagement, despite the fact that China has a terrible human rights record and has actually stepped up the pressure on dissidents; despite the fact that China threatens her neighbors, including Taiwan, and provides missile technology to unstable regimes like Pakistan; and despite, and I stress again, despite the growing evidence of Chinese espionage of American nuclear weapons secrets.

Yet, at the same time, when it comes to our relations with the world's largest democracy, that is India, we keep that country at arm's length, ever wary of their intentions and motives.

If pure economics were the only consideration, our policy double standard with the two Asian giants still would not make any sense, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, because India's population is almost as large as China's, and will surpass China early in the next century. India offers opportunities for American trade and investment at least comparable to China, and India does not threaten fundamental U.S. interests, which is more than we can say about China.

Furthermore, India, a country that holds regular elections at the national and local levels, is seriously committed to improving her human rights situation and the treatment of all minority communities, again, much more than can be said for China.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we need to shift our focus from simply condemning India for becoming a nuclear power, which whether we like it or not is a reality, to adjusting our thinking to this new reality and working to promote peace, security, confidence-building, and nonproliferation in South Asia.

Within our U.S.-South Asia policy, our narrow India-Pakistan focus overlooks the role of China. I believe that China is the real threat to India, as well as to U.S. interests and to regional security. It is in this context that India's potential role as a partner for peace and stability should be under-

stood. Even if the current climate for partnership is not ideal, at least we should stop seeing India as a threat.

In particular, India has legitimate concerns about China's support for Pakistan's nuclear and missile programs. A Rand study published last year indicated that technical help from China, as well as North Korea, is responsible for the accelerated development of Pakistan's missile program. In addition, China invaded India in 1962, and continues to have designs on Indian territory. Since the U.S. should also view China as a potential adversary, there is a growing convergence of American and Indian objectives for responding to China.

Mr. Speaker, in a previous statement on the Floor of the House of Representatives in February I said that the U.S. should pay attention to the emerging notion of minimum deterrence in the Indian subcontinent, combined with a declared policy of no first use of nuclear weapons.

I have always believed that our goal should be to make India a partner in the American foreign policy goal of minimizing the threat of nuclear war. One way of accomplishing this is to take the long overdue step of accepting India as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. While I recognize there is opposition to this step, we must find ways to make India a partner for peace for purposes of confidence-building, and also avoiding the dangers of isolation.

THE VINDICATION OF SUSAN MCDUGAL AND THE CONFIRMATION OF BILL LANN LEE

THE SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this morning there are several things on my mind that I would like to share with this body. In particular, let me acknowledge and congratulate the vindication of Susan McDougal. When asked the question, what happened in that case and how did she feel, she clearly acknowledged the fact that all of us knew would come to light: Susan McDougal told the truth, that there was no substance in Whitewater to attribute illegal activities to the President and First Lady of the United States. During her tenure, truth was not enough for the special prosecutor and the special Independent Counsel, but a jury in Arkansas has vindicated her.

The same thing with the contempt charge for the President. A sad day, a sad occurrence. But it was what we argued in the Committee on the Judiciary, which was this was a civil matter that would be handled by the civil courts. Today that has occurred, or yesterday that has occurred.

Unfortunately, the tragedy of impeachment proceeded because others

disagreed and felt that matters that could have been handled by the courts were the responsibility of this body to take on the highest act that this body could take in the impeachment of a president.

I am very happy, however, that the people of the United States saw the facts of this situation, and that this individual, the President of the United States, was not impeached, or was not convicted of these particular acts.

With that, let me also bring to the attention of this body the need to move forward with the confirmation of the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Bill Lann Lee. This gentleman has served in this position for almost 2 years as the Acting Attorney General. Yet, it has not been seen fit to confirm him by the other body.

He has worked tirelessly and within the laws of the land. He is an outstanding civil rights attorney. He is a first generation Asian American. He has worked in the civil rights area for some 23 years. He has spent his time with his nose to the grindstone. He has in fact worked very hard, but he has not worked viciously, or with vindictiveness.

I have seen him work in my district, coming to Houston and joining me in a town hall meeting on hate crimes after the death of James Barrett, Junior. He has also worked with cases like the shooting death of Pedro Oregon, so he is concerned about law enforcement, but he is also concerned about justice, as well.

Mr. Lann Lee is someone who brings the kind of practical experience and leadership to the Justice Department that is needed. He has maintained a sense of dignity, and realizes that, although when we talk about civil rights there are those who will raise their voices and say, well, we have already crossed that hurdle, America is beyond that, there is no need to address those issues, and of course people will speak without facts, but I can assure them, with the devastating opinions like that in Texas, which has denied access of Hispanics and African-Americans to institutions of higher learning, with job discrimination against women in the work force, with the lack of equal pay for equal work, I can assure Americans that although they may want to turn their heads and may not want to hear about civil rights, it is important for those of us who uphold the law to not turn our heads, to not be afraid of the truth, but go forward and take the higher ground, and work with those of good will and good faith and ensure that this is truly a land of equal opportunity.

Bill Lann Lee does nothing but follow the law. He is not in any way changing the law. He is not interpreting the law, making the law in his own form. He is following the law of the land, which is affirmative action; not quotas, but the outreach to individuals to give them an opportunity, to give them a helping hand, not a hand-out.