

Mr. Speaker, I urge this House, the rest of my colleagues in this House, to join me in sponsoring the Blind Empowerment Act. I am confident Congress will do the right thing and restore fairness and trust by reestablishing this historic link and return to the blind the vital economic freedom which will empower them to provide for themselves and their families and contribute to the health of this Nation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WAMP). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FILNER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. OSE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

RECOGNITION OF JUNIOR ROTC PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, recently in my home district, I was invited to participate in a special banquet sponsored by the high school leaders who are members of the Junior ROTC program. The program is administered by a retired military officer and the instructors are usually retired senior noncommissioned officers.

That evening, Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed with the discipline, decorum and the conduct of these young high school students. These young Junior ROTC cadets learn about honor, duty and responsibility to their families, to their communities and to their nation. These young people learn also what it means to live as a free people, to understand and appreciate more what democracy and freedom is all about.

But what impressed me even more, Mr. Speaker, was that as part of the opening ceremony, three candles were brought forth and placed on the head table. The candles were lit, and then the young cadet started explaining that these three candles represented Staff Sergeant Andrew Ramirez from Los Angeles, California; Sergeant Christopher Stone from Smith's Creek, Michigan; and Specialist Steve Gonzalez from Huntsville, Texas. These three soldiers are currently being held captive by the Serbian Army of Yugoslavia. The young cadet then reminded her cadet corps members and the entire audience that on behalf of approximately 1,000 Junior ROTC cadets and all the young people of American Samoa that we should all pray for the safety and welfare of these three soldiers and a special prayer for their families and loved ones.

And I want to thank Major Ernest Logoleo and his administrative staff for doing an outstanding job with the JR-ROTC program in Samoa. And I also want to commend our JR-ROTC instructors for their commitment to excellence and teaching these young people the importance of living under a democratic form of government. Our instructors are—from the Samoa High School . . . CW3 Vasaga Tilo, MSG Afiafi Tinae, MSG Roy Peeble, and SFC Willie Togafau; from Leone High School . . . 1SG Mikaele Talioa, 1SG Ben Laussen, MSG Tasiga Tofili, and SFC Vainuupo Nuusa; from Fagaitua High School . . . MSG Fatuesi Fatuesi, SFC Ofisa Asoau, and SSG Ernest Misaalaafua; from Tafuna High School . . . MSG Lorn Cramer, MSG Arona Gabriel, and MSG Fesili Bryant; from Manu'a High School . . . 1SG Siaosi Asalele and SFC Mose Mata'utia.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to commend the student cadet leaders from their respective high schools for their demonstration of leadership and example among their peers—Cadet Colonel Fatherday Sele of Samoa High School; Cadet Colonel Diamond Otto of Tafuna High School; Cadet Colonel Bert Fuiava of Manu'a High School; Cadet Colonel Rea Vele and Jason Poyer of Fagaitua High School; and Cadet Colonel Jessica Afalava of Leone High School.

Mr. Speaker, as I was preparing my remarks for this special order, I had a difficult time trying to say with some sense of certainty, how the current debate now pending before the House Floor, is going to end—the options on whether Congress is going to officially “declare war” against the Republic of Yugoslavia, or whether Congress is simply going to pull the plug and tell the President of the United States to take our military presence completely out of Yugoslavia; or, that the President is not to move an inch until and unless the Congress says otherwise. Mr. Speaker, these options do not paint a very pretty picture for our nation and to our NATO Allies, let alone the lives of the three American soldiers that are now being held at risk. And Mr. Speaker, whether it be three American soldiers, 30,000 or 300,000—this begs the question how does America value the lives of our men and women in uniform? whether it be three, 3,000 or more? Mr. Speaker, I consider the life of any American soldier just as important as 3,000 or more.

Mr. Speaker, how is it possible for this Congress to declare war against Yugoslavia and then decide to take our armed forces out of that country? The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, we already have committed our soldiers to Yugoslavia by keeping the peace in the State of Bosnia and already has cost our government some \$9.4 billion to maintain the peace in this area of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Speaker, there have been some arguments made that our Nation is not the “policeman of the world,” that this matter of Bosnia and Kosovo is not in our national interest. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues may have already forgotten the fact that we did say that the Balkans is a European issue, and it should be handled by the Europeans. In fact, as I recall, President Chirac of France was quite specific about this matter, saying to the effect, “You Americans stay out of this controversy. We in Europe will handle this.” Well, we did. After 3 years of utter failure by France, England, Germany and other leading European countries to solve the crisis in Bosnia, our President was then asked to step in and the Dayton negotiations resulted in where we are now maintaining the peace in Bosnia.

Mr. Speaker, it is not easy to be king of the mountain, the leader of the free world and the most powerful nation on this planet. I remember once mentioning to a foreign diplomat here in Washington that the United States is getting tired of being the world's policeman. This gentleman turned to me and said, “So you would prefer China and Russia filling the vacuum? You would now prefer that we negotiate with China or Russia the global issues that will affect the life and death struggles of many nations that look up to America as their last hope for freedom and for economic and political stability?” Mr. Speaker, I had to think again about what this diplomat said to me and wondered what would this world be like if America was not the premier leader of the free world, if America was to take the third or fourth seat down the line and allow China or Russia to lead the world on issues that affect the lives of every human being living in this world.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to stay the course, let the President lead this Nation, and that we should support his efforts to resolve the crisis in Kosovo. And if it becomes necessary that we utilize whatever force of arms to bring Milosevic to properly negotiate a peace agreement in that area of the world, so be it. And let us remember those three soldiers who are now held as hostages in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Major Logoleo and his administrative staff, the instructors of the Junior ROTC program, and more especially some 1,000 high school cadet students who participate in this program. My only hope is that in the future the program will continue to give these young people excellent training in leadership, organization and a love and appreciation of the principles that our Nation was

founded upon, equality, freedom and democracy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MANAGED CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, 5 years ago the Republicans defeated President Clinton's health care reform bill. They claimed it would allow the Federal Government to interfere with the doctor-patient relationship. Yet when the same relationship was threatened by a corporate bureaucracy, Republicans last year offered legislation that did nothing to protect the sanctity of choices made by doctors and their patients.

It is the same story in the 106th Congress. Democrats have been waiting 2 years to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights. Right now we are ready to work to improve Americans' access to quality health care. Right now, today, we are ready to make consumer protections real for all Americans. Although many States have passed legislation making patchwork protections State-by-State, this patchwork does not provide a good fix for over 160 million Americans, Americans who need health care reform.

While there are many fine managed care organizations in my own district, and they are good, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, on the leading edge of health care reform, too many horror stories are all too well known across this country. Doctors tell us real-life horror stories about how they are gagged by insurance companies that dictate what they can tell their patients about treatment options. They tell us that a patient's treatment decisions are often overruled by a clerk and that patients are denied a specialist's care. Or they tell us that patients are shuttled out of a hospital before recovery is complete.

Americans know better. They want better treatment. Americans are demanding that the Republican leadership take real action on health care reform. But instead, the Republican legislation does not ensure that patients have the right to even see a specialist. Nor does it prevent insurance companies from continuing to send women who receive mastectomies home early, against the advice of their physician. Lastly, under the Republicans' bill, if patients are denied care, they would not have the right to a meaningful external appeal. In other words, they will not be able to sue.

In the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, the Republican bill will do little to prevent medical decisions from being made by insurance company clerks instead of by doctors and their patients.

What our health care system needs is the Democratic Patients' Bill of Rights. This legislation will make sure that doctors and patients are free to make decisions about patient health. The Patients' Bill of Rights will ensure that patients have the right to openly discuss with doctors their treatment options, have the right to receive uniform information about their health plan, have the right to go to the emergency room when the need arises, have the right to see a specialist, and seek remedy from the courts when claims have been unfairly denied.

It is time to put doctors and patients back in charge of our health care system. I urge the Speaker and my colleagues to support the Patients' Bill of Rights. I plead with the Republican leadership to bring HMO health care reform to the House floor for debate.

CONGRESS IRRESPONSIBLE IN DEALING WITH KOSOVO ISSUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, over the last month this Congress could not have been more irresponsible in the way it has dealt with the issue in Kosovo if it had taken lessons. I would like to walk through with you the quaint way in which this institution has stumbled-bummed its way through its efforts to try to deal with our constitutional responsibilities.

First of all, it gratuitously decided to vote on the question of whether or not the President could use peacekeepers in Kosovo. That is not a constitutional prerogative of the Congress. The President as Commander in Chief has the prerogative of deciding where to use troops in noncombat situations.

Then, having gratuitously decided to support the placement of those peacekeepers in Kosovo, when the war began this institution then did not step up to its responsibilities to vote on whether or not the combat should proceed. The Senate did. They passed, I believe, the McCain-Warner motion which indicated their support for the ongoing military operation in Kosovo.

Then, further compounding its backwards approach to this issue, this House decided today that it was going to stipulate that under no circumstances could ground troops be used in Kosovo. Again, that is not a congressional prerogative. Once you are in a combat situation, it is the President and his military advisers who have the constitutional obligation to determine what the best way is to proceed militarily, whether it is through the use of ground forces, whether it is through the use of air power, whether it is through the use of

naval power or a combination of the three.

The Congress has the right and an obligation to address the question of whether military activity should proceed, but when they are proceeding it has no right to try to micromanage the combat situations. That is a responsibility of our military leaders and the President.

Then, having compounded the confusion by gratuitously getting involved in that issue, it then proceeded to turn down, by one vote, the endorsement of the McCain-Warner language, good bipartisan language with Republican leadership in the other body. It then turned down our obligation to support troops in the field. I just find the way this institution has approached this to be mind-boggling.

And now, tomorrow, after they have turned down their authorization for what is going on in Kosovo, we will be marking up the supplemental appropriation bill in the Committee on Appropriations. And guess what? The same crowd that voted "no" on authorizing this military operation today will be going into that committee and demanding that we double the amount of money that the President asked to spend on it, taking it from \$6 billion to over \$13 billion and creating an opportunity to pork up the next year's defense bill in the process.

Never, never in the 30 years that I have served here have I seen less vision. Never have I seen less leadership. Never have I seen more confusion. And never have I seen the national interest being left in the dust the way it is tonight. I want to see how many Members of the majority party who today voted against authorizing this operation will tomorrow then demand that we double the amount of spending for the supplemental. It is very clear to me, based on the votes taken here today, that that supplemental appropriation is dead.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GANSKE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. NAPOLITANO addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SHADEGG addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)