

that 122 million Americans who have insurance do not have these same patient protections.

In my home State of Texas, we passed health care legislation similar to the Patients' Bill of Rights, which has proven to be very successful. However, we still have 8 million insured people in Texas who fall under ERISA, which preempts Texas law, who do not have these basic patient protections.

This is not about politics, it is about fairness, protection and accountability. The American people deserve a Patients' Bill of Rights that eliminates gag clauses, open access to specialists, external and timely appeals, coverage for emergency room care for families to go to the closest emergency room, and accountability for medical decisions.

□ 1015

Mr. Speaker, the American people cannot afford any more delays. We need to support the Patients' Bill of Rights. Let us sign that discharge petition today.

U.S. MILITARY FORCES FALLING UNDER SEVERE STRAIN

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

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, we Republicans are the first to urge government to do more with less. However there are limits, and the United States military has reached them. More and more experts are becoming alarmed at the level of funding available to meet our defense needs. U.S. military forces are being called to perform more and more missions, but they are being given fewer and fewer resources to accomplish them.

Mr. Speaker, while precious resources are being diverted to the Balkans, our critical missions in both Iraq and Korea are falling under severe strain. Our forces are short on ammunition, and our force levels have been reduced to dangerously low levels. Since 1989, the Army and Air Force have been cut by almost 50 percent, the Navy by 36 percent, and the Marine Corps by 12 percent. All while our commitments overseas have increased some 300 percent.

This mismatch must not continue, Mr. Speaker.

WE NEED A PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

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

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the Patients' Bill of Rights.

As my colleagues know, health care in America works real well until we get sick or until we grow old. Then HMOs begin to tell us, "Well, your concerns

don't meet our criteria," or "We're not going to refer you to the specialist that you need to see," or "The person who is reviewing your case is not in; he's on vacation." Then our system breaks down critically.

People are concerned about access to specialists. Sixty-two percent of the American population say they have a problem with HMOs because they cannot get access to needed specialists. "Your specialist is not in our network." That is what we often hear.

We need a Patients' Bill of Rights. We need to guarantee access to specialists. We need to guarantee redress in the courts when HMOs make decisions that hurt our health. We need to have a deterrent which says if they deny people access to specialists, if they deny people access to care, then they can be brought to a court of law, and they can be made to pay for it. That not only gives the victim a remedy, it gives the HMOs a strong incentive to provide high quality care.

SUPREME COURT SHIFTS POWER FROM FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BACK TO THE STATES

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this morning we hear the hue and cry of big government liberals everywhere, and what are they languishing over today? Not once, not twice, but three times yesterday the Supreme Court struck down overreaching Federal laws and uplifted the concept of State federalism. This was like a punch in the nose to those who relish more and more federal laws. They are now staggering under the blow.

Mr. Speaker, what is their nose bent out of shape about? The Supreme Court shifted power from the Federal Government back to the States. More importantly, it said that the Federal Government has no business in usurping State sovereignty by placing layers and layers of Federal statutes on them.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Supreme Court rightly halted decades of presumption and arrogance by the Federal Government, and they are right moving the powers back to where it belongs, outside the Beltway and back to the people.

Three cheers for the checks and balances.

UNIONS IN AMERICA

(Ms. SANCHEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the unions of America.

Unless someone is a member of a union or unless they grew up in a union household they may not understand the advantages in the workplace that have been made because of unions for the American worker.

Like many Americans, I know how hard it is to earn a paycheck. I worked my way through college as a clerk at a Sav-on Drug store in Anaheim, and I was a member of the Retail Clerks Union in Orange County.

If someone is a worker in America and they have a pension, they should thank the unions. They understand about dignity and retirement. Thank the unions for their efforts to secure the 8-hour workday, the 40-hour work week, overtime pay and compensatory time off. Unions have been instrumental in obtaining health benefits for workers. We all know how expensive health care is, and without the unions' efforts think of how many workers and families would be without health insurance.

Quality of life; unions understand this.

Today I thank the unions for all they have done to make our country better.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET LIBERALS OUTRAGED?

(Mr. SCHAFFER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, what would it take to get Congress outraged over high taxes, a tax code that looks like it was designed by Saddam Hussein and an IRS less accountable than the weather man? Is there anything at all that would provoke liberal Democrats to denounce the greedy hand of government, the insatiable force of government and the government's sponsored erosion of our liberties?

If they knew that Taxpayer Freedom Day, the day when Americans are finally finished paying Uncle Sam was May 12, would that outrage them? If the White House knew that average middle class families pay somewhere around half of their income to the government, would that outrage them?

If they knew that most Americans pay more in payroll taxes than they do in Federal income taxes, would that outrage them? If they knew that the tax code was so complicated that even Members of Congress on the House Committee on Ways and Means have to hire professional help to figure out their tax forms, would that get anyone's attention around here?

If they knew that the IRS is simply incapable of reforming itself, would that spark their outrage?

Mr. Speaker, just what does it take?

REPUBLICANS PREVENTING DEBATE ON HEALTH CARE REFORM

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a watershed day. I never thought I would pick up the Washington Post and have it read: AMA Votes to Unionize Doctors.

Now I graduated from medical school in 1963, and the thought of being in a

union or being an employee of an insurance company never ever crossed our minds. But this world has changed, and doctors are frustrated.

This was not the leadership of the AMA that came forward with this. This came from the grass roots, and the reason it came is that as HMOs have taken over the control of the health care industry in this country, they and the patients have lost control.

Now the Republican party gets total control, and they get total everything for making this happen because they would not have a debate on a Patients' Bill of Rights. The longer they push and prevent us discussing this issue, the more they drive the doctors into the arms of the Democratic party and the labor unions, and they destroy the health care system we know.

Bring up health care debate.

THE MIRACLE AND GIFT OF HUMAN LIFE

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, today I want to draw attention to an amazing scientific and medical breakthrough that has received little attention in the press. It should cause each of us to pause and ponder the miracle and gift of human life.

Little Neal Borkowski is still a tiny baby, yet he differs from most because he already has undergone brain surgery, not since his birth, but while he was still in his mother's womb. It was discovered as young Neal was only 20 weeks old and in utero that he had a condition of fluid on the brain.

Without corrective measures he surely would not have survived, so at such a critical stage of development doctors opened Neal's mother's uterus, and brain surgery was performed on this unborn baby so that fluid could not collect on his brain.

Mr. Speaker, when will we, as a Nation, begin to see this unborn life as sacred and valuable and protected as it deserves? Let us bring our children and grandchildren into the world where they know that all human life, born and unborn, is a miracle and gift from God.

Not a sermon, just a thought.

WE MUST PASS AN EFFECTIVE PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Mr. WATT of North Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WATT of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) has pointed to the headline in the Washington Post this morning that says the AMA Votes To Unionize Doctors, and that comes at the same time that we are considering in the Committee on the Judiciary granting an exemption for doctors to ban together and not be subject to antitrust laws.

The question I ask is: How do we pass those rights to patients? How do we get them together to assert their rights? HMOs can do it, doctors will be able to do it, but who will be speaking for the patient? Mr. Speaker, that is where the Patient Bill of Rights comes into play.

We have got to pass an effective Patients' Bill of Rights in this body so consumers and patients will have the rights that are being bargained for by doctors and already given to HMOs in the health care system.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. STEARNS. I would say to my colleague from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) I do not think the doctors are ever going to run to the Democratic party because they do not want to have socialized medicine.

Now when it comes to education, Mr. Speaker, Republicans and Democrats have different visions. We differ on our assumptions, and that leads to very different policy choices. Democrats start with the assumption that what ails public education is more money. We need much more money.

Republicans do not agree. If money were the problem, and given that Congress has increased federal spending on education every single year since 1960, the schools would long ago have improved. However, both parties agree smaller class size, better teacher training, writing, wiring classrooms for the Internet; that will improve education.

But here is the main point, my colleagues. What it needs is more accountability for the money that is already spent and discipline in the classroom. Democrats believe that competition is bad and that the public school monopolies are good. Republicans do not agree. Competition produces excellence and requires, Mr. Speaker, accountability.

But we do have exactly the same goal: better schools for our children.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS WANT GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION

(Mrs. TAUSCHER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, last week's failure by this Republican-led Congress to deliver commonsense, practical gun safety legislation disappointed working families and law enforcement officials of both parties in my suburban district in San Francisco's East Bay.

I would like to call attention to the reaction of a Republican law enforcement official in my district. Saying he had enough, Alameda County Sheriff Charles Plummer, a life long Republican, switched his party registration away from the Republican party. These are Sheriff Plummer's words:

I was coming back from a meeting Friday and listening to a couple of Re-

publicans on the radio talking about gun rights saying this legislation is not needed. I went ahead and changed my registration after being a Republican for 47 years.

Sheriff Plummer said that gun safety, and I quote, "has to be solved nationally . . . Even in the hunting country where I was raised, my friends think if someone needs an AK-47 to kill a deer they are not much of a sportsman."

Mr. Speaker, I could not have said it better myself.

CLOSING THE LOOPHOLE

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

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I was going to make some comments on the Republican agenda and the best program on where we go on saving Social Security, and our best defense, our excellence in education and tax relief, but after the previous speaker, I want to mention my disappointment that we have not closed the loophole in a vote by this House on what happens at gun shows. And for the information of those that voted against the loophole closing bill the other day, I just want to explain what happens if an individual lies on the form in the application to buy the gun and they do not find out that he has committed a felony until maybe 2 days later or 3 days later.

What happens is the FBI and the ATF call local law enforcement because this individual has now committed two felonies, one in lying on the application; second, taking possession of the gun. They go after him.

□ 1030

They do that immediately. They take him, they prosecute him, they confiscate the weapon.

Additionally, States have the right to impose restrictions as they see fit. I am disappointed on that side of the aisle that we did not move ahead with closing the loophole.

HOUSE SHOULD ALLOW DEBATE AND VOTE ON DEMOCRATS' PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

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

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I joined my Democratic colleagues in signing a discharge petition to force the Republican leadership here in the House to bring the Democrats' Patients' Bill of Rights up for debate and a vote. The Republican leadership refuses to permit debate and a vote on the Democrats' Patients' Bill of Rights.

The Democrats' Patients' Bill of Rights is based on a revolutionary idea that managed care should be more