

last year, when 96 HMOs deserted more than 400,000 seniors because the business did not meet their profit objectives.

Before the Medicare program was launched in 1965, private insurance was the only option for seniors, and more than half of them were uninsured. Insurers did not want to sign seniors up because they tend to actually use their health care coverage.

The private insurance market has changed a good deal since then, but it still avoids high-risk enrollees, and tries not to pay for high-cost services. The fact that 43 million Americans under age 65 are uninsured and the broad-based support for managed care reform in this Congress and all over the country should at the very least give us pause when we consider turning over the Medicare program to the private sector.

Medicare Commission leaders would also save Medicare money by raising the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67. It is interesting timing for such a proposal, given the growing number of uninsured in the 55 to 64 age range. These individuals cannot find an insurer now who will take them, and they were certainly a better risk as 55- to 64-year-olds for insurers than 65- and 66-year-olds.

Shell games simply do not work in health care. Someone still has to pay the bill when a person not yet eligible for Medicare becomes sick. Delayed care received in emergency rooms does not serve the individual or the public.

What is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the Medicare Commission likely proposal is what it does not tell us. It does not tell us how we could make the current program more efficient while still maintaining its egalitarian underpinnings and its orientation in providing the right care to everyone, rather than simply the least expensive care.

The bottom line is this, Mr. Speaker. If we privatize Medicare, we are telling America that not all seniors deserve the same care. We are betting on a private insurance system that may not save us any money in the long run, and certainly minimizes care by avoiding individuals who are health care risks.

All this is to avoid the difficult questions. Selling off the Medicare program, privatizing Medicare, turning over America's best government program to insurance companies may be easy, but it is simply wrong.

AMERICA'S SALMON STOCKS

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

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an issue of great importance to me and to my constituents in Washington State. I have long been deeply concerned about our salmon

on stocks. I spent two summers working on salmon rehabilitation in Alaska more than 50 years ago. This little salmon pin that I'm wearing was a symbol for the organization my father started in 1949. I have not come just lately to an interest or commitment to salmon recovery.

Recently the Pacific Northwest salmon runs have drawn national attention as the Puget Sound chinook salmon has been proposed for listing as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act later this month. This listing could have a devastating impact on the economy and lifestyle we enjoy in the Northwest if we do not use our technology and common sense. Disaster can be averted if we are granted enough funding to make salmon recovery measures effective, and if we can continue to engage local communities in the fight.

Of course, we must utilize all of the available science and technology in our efforts to restore salmon populations. The people of the Northwest have been around salmon all their lives. I believe the will exists in our community not only to save but to enhance the salmon runs.

Grass roots organizations have sprung up all over the region to deal with this problem, and local governments in the area are forming their own recovery plans. As long as citizen involvement remains a part of the process and we rely on sound science and proper use of technology available, I am confident that salmon runs can be shepherded back to historic levels.

Federal dollars are absolutely essential if we are serious about restoring salmon runs. The President has included \$100 million in his budget to help the salmon recovery. While I am encouraged that the administration is turning its attention to this issue, the amount of money the President has announced is wholly inadequate to address the problem.

We cannot afford to waste time or money with small, ineffectual measures. A large investment is necessary now if we want to avoid larger costs in the future. It will be up to the Pacific Northwest to spend our salmon dollars wisely, to make good on our commitment to restore salmon runs.

Many people focus only on habitat restoration and natural spawning when talking about this issue. These are vitally important, but we must not lose sight of other elements in salmon recovery. Sound science and technology must play a crucial role in any plan. We cannot use 1924 technology to solve a 1999 problem.

During my lifetime we in the Pacific Northwest have developed salmon technology that has been successful around the world to accomplish miracles in salmon production in Japan, Chile, and Scotland. It would be foolish not to use it now in our own State. We know how to successfully use remote egg boxes, spawning channels, over-wintering sloughs, culvert mitigation, small

stream rehabilitation, the downstream migration of salmon stocks, returning adult salmon, and predator control, and, yes, hatcheries. We have the technological knowhow to avoid the pitfalls of the past. Thoughtfully and carefully, we can bring the salmon back if we use all the tools that are available.

Finally, our research into the life cycle of the salmon must continue. We do not know all the factors that have led to a decline in salmon populations, but we do know that more research is needed on the subject. More data must be included on the GIS maps. Research is needed on a variety of ocean and near-shore issues.

Bringing the salmon back to robust levels will not be an easy task, but with the determination of the citizens of the Northwest, combined with state-of-the-art technology and the proper level of Federal support, we will be able to accomplish our goals with minimal impact.

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY, AND WHERE WE SHOULD GO FROM HERE

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, let me join my colleague who spoke earlier to acknowledge Texas Independence Day, today, March 2nd, 1999. But as my 7th grader said, who has the challenge of studying Texas history, what a difference a century makes. I am very proud that we can stand before us today acknowledging Texas Independence Day, in a State that is diverse and recognizes all of the contributions that all of the citizens have made to this great State.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about where we should go from here. The impeachment process is over and the Constitution has been preserved. Although this week we will see a number of confessions and testimonies on television, I believe the American people want us to move forward. Now is the time for reconciliation and healing, mending and building relationships that were damaged that can be replaced.

Furthermore, I am ready to begin working toward enacting legislation that will enhance the quality of life for all Americans. The President's behavior, yes, was unacceptable, but they were not impeachable offenses of treason, bribery, and other high crimes and misdemeanors. To dwell on that, Mr. Speaker, does not get us where we need to go.

I would simply like to ask us to get on with the people's business. There is great responsibility in saving social security and preserving Medicare. Social security is an obligation that Congress must protect now and in the future. Millions of Americans are depending

upon this program and its benefits. Social security is a lifeline for older Americans. It is time to get on with the people's business. It is time to address the crises in America.

I come from Texas. Today is its Independence Day. But it does not mean that I rejoiced or was proud of the act, the heinous act against James Byrd, Junior. I am proud of Jasper, Texas. I am proud of the conviction. I am proud of the laws of this Nation. But we need to do more to ensure that these heinous hate crimes are prevented, and that we as a Nation make a national statement against hate crimes.

I want to see the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999 passed by this Congress expeditiously. I have named it after James Byrd, Junior, and Matthew Shepherd. I would like to collaborate with members of the Committee on the Judiciary and members of this House to pass once and forever a Hate Crimes Prevention Act in this country. How can we go forward and say that this was a heinous crime, and yet we do not want to act against it? There is documentation that there are increased hate crimes in America, and we must stand against them.

Just this morning I was in a hearing on Y2K and its relation to the compliance with Y2K needs for the Defense Department. Let me thank the Subcommittee on Technology of the Committee on Science and the oversight committee for looking at this important issue.

Many Americans are listening to disparate thoughts about this. Some say, prepare like it is a natural disaster. I say, get the United States prepared. We must work together in this Congress to ensure that we are not unprepared for Y2K.

The census must be done right, and I hope my Republican friends will join us and recognize that statistical sampling is the way to go. One American should not be left out. We have work to do.

I come from the oil patch, the energy sector. Many believe that the economy is going well, the engine of this country is strong. Let me tell the Members, there are over 50,000 people who have been laid off in the oil patch. We cannot leave them behind. I am appreciative of the Secretary of Labor, who will be working with me.

I look forward to my colleagues supporting the Jobs Protection Initiative Act, to get people back to work. I call upon the administration to make a strong stand to help those who have been laid off by low energy prices, and tell those laid-off individuals that they do count. We are going to work together and make a difference.

Let me also say, Mr. Speaker, that we have a world responsibility. I want to congratulate those who have come back from Nigeria and seen a positive count and democracy growing in Africa. I want us to pass the African Growth and Opportunity Act, to establish business bonds between small and medium minority and women-owned

businesses and Africans. I want to see peace in Ethiopia and Sierra Leone.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me say one thing, as I proceed to the Committee on the Judiciary and a hearing later on this afternoon on the Independent Counsel.

My good friend mentioned the comments of President Clinton about the Independent Counsel being the foundation stone of trust between our government and its citizens. The gentleman is right, he did say that. But all of us say now that unfortunately, this past series of events with Mr. Starr and his activities have broken the bonds of trust.

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I worked under Leon Jaworski, the special prosecutor for the Watergate proceedings. That is the standard of which we can comply. I believe this country can get rid of corruption, but we do not need to have an independent counsel that spends more time abusing the Constitution than supporting it.

Mr. Speaker, I will go on record for looking forward to the independent counsel statute expiring and getting rid of a fourth estate of government and working with the Constitution and beginning to heal this Nation, making sure, of course, that we do not have corruption in government.

INTRODUCTION OF THE BROADCAST OWNERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce that I will be introducing the Broadcast Ownership for the 21st Century Act with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY).

Our bill will broadly deregulate the confining ownership limitations imposed by the FCC on the television broadcast industry. As we approach the dawn of a new century, it is time to reform the antiquated rules and regulations of the FCC that they cling to in an effort to replicate the communications world of the 1950s.

Mr. Speaker, today's entertainment choices are numerous and varied. There is cable. There is direct satellite broadcast. There is Internet. We are moving into high-definition television. Back in the 1950s, we had three, four, five channels; today we have over 200-plus channels, and many of them are digital.

We must allow our American corporations in the broadcast industry to compete in the international area as well. So the objective of our bill is deregulate and allow competition.

The FCC has failed to properly respond to a vastly different marketplace. This agency appears to be consumed with a regulatory model of gov-

ernment rather than the trimmed down, free-market approach that the American people would like and one that the rest of the world is beginning to embrace.

The modern economics of free, over-the-air television is rapidly changing. The local broadcasters and networks continue to see steady decline in viewers who are attracted to cable and satellite programming, or who are using the Internet more and more as an entertainment option.

In addition, the broadcasters and networks are faced with ever-increasing costs for programming, especially sports programming. Profitability and success hinges on their ability to create and own more and more of their own programming.

The broadcast industry has also begun their conversion to digital by beginning to deploy digital facilities. They have already begun delivering a digital signal in America's top markets. The industry will spend the better part of the next decade creating digital programming and transforming their facilities to an all-digital environment. The estimated cost of one digital television camera alone runs into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. When all is said and done, each individual broadcaster will have to spend millions and millions of dollars converting to digital.

Mr. Speaker, if we deregulate this industry, they will be able to compete and succeed. As everyone can see, the economics of the broadcast industry today are based upon increasing costs and shrinking profits. Unless that formula is changed, the era of free over-the-air television will never be the same.

What the American people have come to expect as quality network and local programming may be altered to a world of syndicated reruns and limited original programming. The heart and soul of America's favorite form of entertainment will become one based on pay services.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 attempted to provide relief for broadcast ownership. For instance, the Telecom Act asked the FCC to review all existing rules and regulations and eliminate those that were unnecessary. In addition, the act required the FCC to review the existing duopoly rules, which limit ownership to just one television station in a local market, in order to provide relief when needed. The act also specifically instructed the FCC to grandfather all television local marketing agreements, LMAs.

Well, Mr. Speaker, three years later, the FCC has failed to act and we need to move forward. Let us get the FCC to act today. This bill will provide a great nudge. The Stearns-Frost-Oxley bill will revise the duopoly rules to allow UHF-VHF ownership combinations in the same local market and to allow UHF-VHF combinations in separate local markets that may have overlapping coverage contours, such as in the