

staffing structure, DOL could review each AHP only once every three hundred years, which is inadequate for these new federally licensed insurance arrangements. The regulatory burden for these AHPs could be up to \$3.2 billion over 7 years, according to a recent analysis by researchers at Georgia State University.

Expose Federal Government to Monumental Regulatory Responsibilities: by transferring regulatory authority to the federal government, DOL would become responsible for regulating the solvency of hundreds of AHPs/MEWAs across the country. MEWAs have a history of fraud and have left thousands of consumers and providers facing millions of dollars in unpaid medical claims. The National Governors' Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners have stated that solvency standards in the proposal remain inadequate to protect consumers.

BCBSA also opposes proposals to apply special rules (i.e., ratings and exemption from mandated benefits) to insured AHPs/MEWAs. These rules would allow insured AHPs to be experience rated instead of pooled with other small groups and individuals. This provides an opportunity for segmentation of the market. The end result: higher premiums, an unstable market and states that are powerless to address the problem because federal law has overridden their authority.

BCBSA RECOMMENDATION

BCBSA believes that the federal government should allow states to retain the authority to regulate the health insurance market. States are the most appropriate decision-makers to craft legislation that expand across without disrupting insurance markets. However, the federal government should take an active role in encouraging small firms to provide health coverage through targeted tax incentives, such as the small employer tax proposal that BCBSA unveiled in February of this year.

[Press Release—Health Insurance

Association of America, September 29, 1999]

NEW "PATIENT PROTECTION" BILLS COULD DESTROY EMPLOYER-SPONSORED HEALTH INSURANCE

WASHINGTON, DC.—Despite the assertions of Congressional sponsors, new so-called "patient protection" legislation would allow employers to be sued over health benefits voluntarily provided to their employees, and could destroy the employer-based health insurance system, according to a new legal opinion released today by the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA).

The new HIAA legal opinion demonstrates that the Shadegg-Coburn bill introduced last week—as well as the "Dingwood" bill introduced last month—expressly authorize lawsuits against any employer shown to exercise any oversight over its health coverage. The opinion also states that the "shield" in both bills—which the bills' sponsors claim would protect employers against lawsuits—would apply only if an employer gives up any involvement with any coverage decision.

Under these bills, even an employer's simple act of choosing health coverage for employees would be considered exercising oversight over health coverage, thereby exposing the employer to the possibility of a lawsuit.

"This legal opinion shows how both bills offer employers who sponsor health coverage a 'Hobson's choice' between the horrific and the horrendous," remarked HIAA President Chip Kahn. "Employers either could pay for higher cost coverage that they cannot control, or retain control and expose themselves to costly lawsuits. Given these choices,

many employers are likely to throw in the towel and simply drop coverage altogether, leaving millions more Americans uninsured."

HIAA's new legal opinion was prepared by Washington, D.C.-based attorney William G. Schiffbauer.

HIAA is the nation's most prominent trade association representing the private health care system. Its members provide health, long-term care, disability, and supplemental coverage to more than 115 million Americans.

[Press Release—Health Insurance Association of America, September 29, 1999]

BOEHNER "CARE" BILL A MIXED BAG

The following statement was released today by Chip Kahn, President of the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA):

Consumers and employers can take some solace that the "Comprehensive Access and Responsibility in Health Care (CARE) Act," offered today by Rep. John Boehner (R-OH), would not saddle them with higher premiums due to expanded liability. Our nation's health care dollars should go toward providing coverage for Americans, and for improving quality—not for lining the gilded pockets of trial attorneys.

Although Rep. Boehner's bill prudently lacks liability, it does contain certain costly mandates and a problematic provision calling for "Association Health Plans" and "HealthMarts." HIAA opposes Association Health Plans and HealthMarts because they would undermine—not enhance—the small employer market by increasing premiums for many, and causing many of them to drop their coverage because it will become too costly.

On the one hand, Rep. Boehner's bill lacks liability, and would make coverage more affordable because it calls for an immediate, above-the-line deduction for the purchase of individual health and long-term care insurance. On the other hand, Rep. Boehner's bill contains expensive mandates and problematic Association Health Plans and HealthMarts. All told, Rep. Boehner's bill becomes a mixed bag of pluses and minuses for American consumers and employers.

[Press Release—Health Insurance Association of America, September 29, 1999]

WELL-INTENDED HASTERT PLAN HAS PLUSES AND MINUSES

The following statement was released today by Chip Kahn, President of the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA):

Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL), along with Reps. Jim Talent (R-MO) and John Shadegg (R-AZ), clearly recognize the need for increasing the number of Americans with health insurance. The proposal that they released today is a step in the right direction because it would allow a 100 percent tax deduction for individuals and for self-employed Americans. Also, it would provide a similar deduction for private long-term care insurance, and allow people to set up Medical Savings Accounts (MSAs).

In this respect, their proposal is similar to HIAA's "InsureUSA" proposal. HIAA also commends the Speaker and Reps. Talent and Shadegg for recognizing that expanding liability provisions undoubtedly will increase costs and force employers to drop coverage for their employees.

Two provisions in the plan announced by Speaker Hastert are well-intended, but are cause for concern. HIAA opposes the plan's call for Association Health Plans and HealthMarts because they would hurt many small employers who provide coverage to their employees. This, in turn, will cause many of these employers to drop their coverage because it will become too costly.

OZONE POLLUTION IN MAINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. BALDACC) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BALDACC. Mr. Speaker, the issue that I and other Members in the chamber are going to be talking about tonight is ozone pollution. Primarily it is pollution coming in from the Midwest from utilities and smoke-stack emissions that is, through the weather patterns, ending up turning Maine into the tailpipe, so to speak, for the Nation, and where you are sitting there at Acadia National Park, one of the most beautiful national monuments, and watching the lighthouses and lobster boats and recognizing that this past summer we had 12 days where there was an ozone problem and we have no industries, no industrial manufacturing of any kind, but it is coming in because of this ozone transport from utilities that are burning coal to generate power and going along in a weather pattern and pollution created all throughout that region.

Now, this issue had been addressed in the Clean Air amendments that were passed in 1992 and these utilities were given exemptions because they were told at that particular time that they would be no longer in business. But because of improvements that they have been able to make in terms of their longevity, they are still going on and they are still polluting the air.

Not only is this something that further undermines the competition for the region, because in the Northeast and in our State of Maine we have made the improvements to the industrial manufacturing sector and they have reduced the amount of pollution that the industries within our State and within our region make, but at the same time, because we have had to expend that money to clean up our air and our water and the region in the Midwest has not had to go through that where they have an economic competitive advantage.

On top of that, the pollution that is created from this ozone transport is damaging the young people and their lungs, older people with asthmatic conditions. It is damaging our agricultural crops.

The other ways that these emissions can harm our environment is that the nitrogen deposit into watershed contributes to the over fertilization of coastal and estuary water systems. Too much nitrogen in these water bodies result in increased algae growth, which limits the oxygen available to sustain fish and other aquatic life.

Although contributions from the years vary from place to place, according to the EPA's Great Waters Report, an estimated 27 percent of nitrogen entering into the Chesapeake Bay can be attributed to air emissions. These nitrogen deposits over-fertilize the land; and when this happens, nitrogen can no

longer be stored in the soil and used by plants.

□ 1430

Instead, it leaches into the ground and surface waters, potentially contributing to elevated nitrogen levels in drinking waters. So we are seeing where it not only affects the health of young children, where it affects the health of people suffering from respiratory and asthmatic conditions, but it is also impacting upon our watersheds and environmentally impacting on our agricultural lands and action must be taken.

EPA has the authority, it has been challenged in court in terms of their abilities, but still the underlying law has not been challenged and they have the ability under the 1-hour transport rule to be able to enforce these States, these industries that are not cleaning up their act and that are polluting our waterways and polluting our airways and further hampering the abilities of not just Maine but the Northeast, their business opportunities from being able to compete on a level playing field with industries wherever those industries may happen to be. This is the impact.

So EPA has the authority under the existing laws and we are asking them through a Dear Colleague signed by Members of this body to the EPA to do their job. They have done a good job, we want to pat them on the back, but at the same time we want to make sure that they continue to do their job because people's lives and health depend on them enforcing this law. This is not something that we can wait until next year or the year after or until another Congress or until another executive is in office. It is something that needs to be done now. The people of Maine are suffering because of nothing that they have done, it is just that the weather patterns move from west to east, and the ozone that travels through those tall smokestacks have emitted into the Northeast and have created ozone conditions where, as I referred to, Acadia National Park in Maine has had pollution levels this year on par with Philadelphia. The Jersey shore and industrial Newark have had the same number of bad air days so far this year. Cape Cod's national seashore has had higher pollution levels and more bad air days than Boston and Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the remote Door County in Wisconsin and the Great Smokey Mountains National Park. This is a problem that has to be confronted.

There was a negotiation that was going on between governors in the Northeast, and that has fallen apart, because the compromises that were being put forward were too compromising and pollution was not going to be able to be greatly impacted. So now what we are confronted with is basically having EPA do its job, enforce its laws and the regulations that it already has on the books.

I recognize a colleague of mine, my good friend the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) who has addressed many national issues in his terms in Congress and been a very effective Member of this body, has also sponsored legislation to get at this particular issue and other issues to make sure that our environment, our air and our water are cleaner, because the real determination and the real judgement that is placed on each of us as stewards is to make sure that the Earth and the resources that we have are in better condition for the next generation than they were for us, and I would ask him to make comments in regards to this legislation.

I was reading a book that was provided by Richard Wilson and a few other editors, it is called "Particles in the Air." In it, it talked about our first environmental stewardship that had taken place. It actually had taken place, it is not anything new and it is not anything radical, but it actually had taken place in 1272 when Edward I, who was an early environmentalist, banned the use of carbon from London because of the problem that the carbon pollution was having on the community in London. And then Edward II and the early history of the sea coals that were being burned to generate a fuel which was causing pollution.

And so pollution control and cleanup is not something new, it has been something that has been going on for well over 400 or 500 years. There have always been these attempts to make sure that the air and water are cleaner because of the health impact, because of the impact on our natural resources, and to make sure as far as equity, making sure that we are not being treated any worse than any other region and our industrial manufacturers have an opportunity to compete, and they are being asked to clean up and they have cleaned up. They are asking to compete, and they have had to install environmental equipment, pollution equipment and other industries in other parts, the Midwest in particular, have not had to do this. It has put us at an economic disadvantage.

I yield to my colleague who is here from Maine, a very effective Member of this body.

Mr. ALLEN. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I really appreciate the gentleman from Maine calling this special order and giving us a chance to talk about what is an extraordinarily difficult and complicated problem for not just those of us in Maine but the entire Northeast.

Basically to go over a little history which he may already have touched on, but in November of 1997, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed a rule to control the interstate transport of nitrogen oxides, which are a precursor to ozone smog. This call for State implementation plans, usually referred to as the NO_x SIP call, was based upon the recommendations of the Ozone Transport Assessment Group

which consisted of the 37 easternmost States and the District of Columbia. So that this proposal is not just New England or the Northeast but the 37 easternmost States and the District. The SIP call required the 22 downwind States to submit State implementation plans to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions. Maine was not one of the States that was covered, but our governor pledged to achieve the same reduction of nitrogen oxides as required in the SIP call States.

In May of 1999, the D.C. Circuit Court struck down the NO_x SIP call, if we can continue to speak in some jargon, by ruling that the Environmental Protection Agency did not have the authority to issue the regulations. But the Court cited a doctrine, described as the nondelegation doctrine, which had been dormant for almost 60 years. That is why I think there is good ground to believe that this decision could be overturned on appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Negotiations between the Northeast States and the Midwest States to find a compromise in lieu of the NO_x SIP call have broken down without an agreement.

Now, in Maine we know that smog is not just an urban problem. We know that in the State of Maine, we are a rural State, we are not heavily developed, we only have 1.2 million people. We are as large as the rest of New England combined. Millions of tourists visit Maine every year, and we welcome them, and most of them come to enjoy our pristine natural resources. They come to hike, fish, boat and simply take in the majestic views of the Appalachian Trail or Acadia National Park. Imagine their surprise when on occasion they go to Acadia National Park and find the air is dirtier than what they left behind in the city.

During the summer ozone season, southern Maine often exceeds EPA's health standard for ozone smog. In fact, this past summer, the 3 million visitors to Acadia National Park would occasionally find that pollution levels there were on a par with those in the city of Philadelphia. And further down the Gulf of Maine, the Cape Cod National Seashore had twice the number of days where the ozone level exceeded standards as did the city of Boston.

So what we have got here is an environmental issue but also an economic issue and a public health issue, because smog increases the instances of asthma in children and severely affects all people with respiratory problems. Even highly conditioned athletes experience a 25 percent reduction in lung function on days that do not meet EPA's health standards for ozone. Some studies have shown that emergency room visits for respiratory problems double on bad ozone days, creating a greatly increased burden on our health care system.

Now, the wind blows west to east. It always has, it always will. That is really why the pollution technology that is

adopted in the Midwest and the South affects those of us in the Northeast. As long as the wind blows west to east, New England will have an enormous stake in the smog that is created in the South and in the Midwest. If there is any area where we know that State action is not enough, it has to do with air pollution. We have no way of controlling the air that comes across our borders. Maine is doing everything it can to clean up its own air and water and make sure that on mercury, for example, where the State has taken action, but there is only so much we can do. This is a national problem. It calls for a nationwide approach to controlling air pollution.

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is so accurate in terms of information and why this is a national issue, and to further reinforce that issue, when we talk about the prevailing winds and the emissions from unregulated power plants in the Midwest and South, it is estimated that they are responsible for approximately 30 to 40 percent of New England's background pollution. So we end up having to clean up our own industries, spending our own taxpayers' resources to make sure that we are in compliance, and then we end up having to shoulder the load that we are not even responsible for. So we end up getting punished more than twice in terms of health, the natural resource impact and the impact on the competitiveness of our industries because of this issue and because of its national nature.

We are also putting forward a Dear Colleague to have the EPA do its work. The gentleman has legislation because this is a national issue. Maybe he wants to explain that legislation.

Mr. ALLEN. I would be glad to do that. Again, I believe the gentleman is right. We have to encourage the EPA to take action. We have to encourage the Northeastern States and the Midwest States to continue to try to come together. But we also need a change in law.

I have become convinced that it is irresponsible of this Congress to leave this critical environmental, economic and public health issue to be decided by these long dormant legal doctrines, long battles in court, battles in the EPA over the extent of its authority. Congress can and should deal with this issue now.

Tomorrow, I am going to introduce legislation that I believe will take a major step forward. It is called the Clean Power Plant Act of 1999. It deals directly with the largest source of industrial air pollution in the country, fossil fuel-fired power plants. In the Northeast, States have taken steps to reduce pollution from electric utilities, but nationwide the problem of utility pollution is overwhelming.

Nearly three out of every four power plants in the U.S. are grandfathered from having to comply with the full standards of the Clean Air Act. These plants legally pollute at four to 10

times the rates that are required for new plants. When Congress passed the Clean Air Act 30 years ago, and then the Clear Air Act Amendments 10 years ago, it assumed that these grandfathered plants would be replaced, that they would become obsolete and new plants would be constructed that would be covered by clean air regulations. Well, it has not happened. What has happened is this: Because those plants do not have to meet new source performance standards, because they can pollute more than other plants, they have an economic incentive to stay in business, to keep running.

Dirty power is often cheap power, and the economic advantage gained by these grandfathered plants has allowed them to survive much longer than Congress ever expected. Most of the power plants in the U.S. began operation in the 1960s or before, which is hardly surprising when we consider that their operating costs are often half as much as the cost of running a new, clean plant.

If we are going to control air pollution, whether it is smog, mercury emissions, acid rain or greenhouse gases, we must close the grandfather loophole that allows these ancient plants to continue polluting.

Tomorrow, I will introduce the Clean Power Plant Act of 1999, a bill that will set uniform standards for all utilities no matter when they began operation. It aims to replace or upgrade the oldest and dirtiest plants in the country and level the economic playing field so that new, clean generation can compete in a deregulated electricity market.

My bill sets the same emission standards for nitrogen oxides that EPA included in its SIP call.

□ 1445

It covers four pollutants:

Nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxides, carbon dioxide, which is a major greenhouse gas and which we need to contain over time, and it is setting no higher standard there than was accepted by the Bush administration in the Rio negotiation; and finally, it covers mercury. Mercury is a pollutant, a heavy metal which is emitted into the air. It comes down hundreds of miles away from the source and has very serious effects on our fish, fresh water fish, and wildlife that consume fish; and so there are now 40 States in this country which have mercury advisories primarily advising pregnant women and children not to eat fresh water fish.

Mr. Speaker, it is a looming crisis. We need to do something about it, and the legislation I am introducing tomorrow will be a major step forward. I want to thank my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. BALDACCI), for being a cosponsor of that legislation and for all that he is doing to try to make sure that we have a sensible national clean air policy that adapts to the situation we find ourselves in today, which is that these old grandfathered plans have stayed in

practice, stayed in operation, much longer than we ever expected and are now contributing enormously to pollution in local areas around the country, but particularly in the Northeast where, as I say, Mr. Speaker, the wind blows all those emissions to.

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for offering the legislation, comprehensive legislation that is being offered and that will be made available tomorrow and encourage all our Members of this body to sign on to that legislation and at the same time encouraging the courts and the EPA to continue on in the Dear Colleague letters that have been going through the Senate and the House.

This is going to require sort of an effort in all quarters, and I think that we will be able to recognize that what we are talking about is we are talking about smoke stacks, utilities that are burning in an inefficient way coal; that because of the tall smoke stacks and because of the way weather travels, especially what is happening now with the heat in the summertime and creating an ozone condition, and that is primarily the prime ingredient of pollution and smog in our cities and towns; and what we need to work on to reduce its impact on children, respiratory conditions, asthmatic conditions of many people in talking about what is happening to our watersheds and to our agricultural lands.

I was just looking at a report that was put forward by the New England Council, and in the New England Council's report they recognize that today, to illustrate the point, that all power plants in the Northeast are approximately 2.6 pounds per megawatt hour in terms of their emission while the emission rate from power plants in the Midwest is approximately 6.6 pounds per megawatt hour, nearly three times as much.

You recognize that from the New England Council, business industry group recognizing that its industries in its areas that have made the improvements are being hampered in an unfair competition with industries that have not had to make the changes to clean up the environment. So it is good for business, it is good for the environment, and I believe it is good for the country to recognize that we have got to have comprehensive legislation. We have got to have Members signing on to the dear colleague letter, and we have got to say to the EPA: you have been doing a good job, but we need you to keep doing that job and recognizing that this is an important area issue for a lot more than just Maine, a lot more than the Northeast, but for the entire country. It is in the entire country's interest.

As we talked about it before, in terms of the parks that have been impacted, the health effects that have gone on and to citing in Maine with a population of 1.2 million, one of the most sparsely populated States in the East, and Acadia with the pollution on

par with Philadelphia and in Rhode Island, coastal town of Narragansett, there are 8 dirty days, three times as many as there were in Providence, and even upstate Vermont have not escaped the dirty air this year.

And it is showing impact into areas and communities and into the lives of children and families in that we need to make sure that the legislation that my colleague is offering, is co-sponsored by other Members and that Members are signing this Dear Colleague, that it is going to the EPA and to the administration to do their job and to recognize that they still have the authority in regards to this action as it pertains to the 1-hour rule that was not overruled by the court and to continue to require that these States be brought into conformance and that Maine not end up being the tail pipe for these kinds of inefficient, harmful pollutional industries that have been going on throughout the Midwest in particularly.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN).

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, we have been talking so much about the Northeast because, after all, as my colleagues know, the wind, as I say, does blow west to east, so the Northeast is impacted. But it is worth pointing out, I think, that in many local areas where these grandfathered plants are in existence the local smog, the ozone, is a real health concern, and that can be true in the Midwest, in the South and in the West itself.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for that is that many of these plants have been allowed to engage in what is called the "cap-and-trade approach"; that is, they can effectively buy clean air credits without cleaning up their own plant, and they still get by and meet the existing standards. What I am trying to say in this legislation is that with respect to nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxides, which produce ozone, smog and acid rain, there would not be any provision for capping and trading; so the result will be that many of the dirtiest plants scattered in the Midwest, in the South and the West itself, will have to be cleaned up. That will be an enormous advantage to people who live in those local areas.

And so this is not just a Northeastern bill; this is a national bill. And I trust that many Members from around the country will be willing to support it, and I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for pointing that out because pollution is a national issue, requires a national solution, and its impact and benefits will be on a national basis. And to be able to make that point, I was just reading where the national parks, the millions of people that visit these particular parks that have been impacted by the ozone transport and increased smog and pollution and health risk, not just Acadia National Park in Maine, but Cape Cod,

the Great Smoky National Park, Shenandoah National Park, Indiana's National Lakeshore Recreation Area, many other of these national parks and outdoor places where 2.7 million, 4.9 million, 9.3 million, a million and a half people, each one has been able to go to those facilities to enjoy the outdoors and that quality of life.

And Tennessee, the cradle of blues, rock and roll, and country music makes tourists in the Smoky Mountains sing a sad song about the smog they thought they left behind; in historic Virginia, George Washington's Mt. Vernon home as well as Colonial Williamsburg are suffering with pollution levels as great as our Nation's capital. Other Southern tourist destinations did not fare much better, Shenandoah's National Park and even remote Mt. Mitchell, and no relation I do not assume, but Mt. Mitchell in North Carolina have had unhealthy levels of ozone.

So those are within the Southeast, within the West. They are talking about Salt Lake City, surrounded by mountains, has been trapped in pollution for 3 days this year. Houston, second only to L.A. in population in the West, also home to chemical and refining industries. It is not geared just to the Northeast, it is the Southeast, it is the West, it is the Midwest, the Midwest home to small town U.S.A., but in addition to agriculture areas is dotted with major industrial cities. Many folks in the upper Midwest spend their spare time recreating in these areas.

So it is reinforcing my colleague's point about the national impact of this legislation, and I yield back to my colleague from Maine.

Mr. ALLEN. As we are having this conversation, I was looking at a recent report, and there is something here that is directly on point. I thought I would mention it.

Within the Ohio River Valley, this report says, there is a large and persistent area of high ozone during the summer months compared to air in other parts of the country, and in this region winds intermingle ozone pollution from different power plant fumes, as well as from other sources. Somewhat surprisingly, people living in the Ohio River Valley are exposed to higher average smog levels over a more prolonged period of time than people living in Chicago or Boston, and that goes back to what we have been talking about, that this is not just about the Northeast. If the smog in the Ohio River Valley, where a number of these plants are located is higher on average than the smog in Boston and Chicago, it is pretty clear we have got a national problem and it needs a national solution.

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, if I can, just to reinforce the impacts of what we are talking about, children are most at risk. Children breathe even more air per pound of body weight than adults because children's respiratory systems are still developing; they are

more susceptible than adults to environmental threats. Ground ozone is a summertime problem because of the heat and the combination of the pollution creating this, and children are outside playing and exercising during the summer months. Asthma is a growing threat to children. Children make up 25 percent of the population, and 40 percent of the cases of asthma are here. We are talking about 14 Americans dying every day from asthma, a rate three times greater than just 20 years ago.

So we are talking about the pollution impacts, the impacts to individuals and communities. And I want to thank my colleague from Maine for introducing his comprehensive legislation and encouraging Members to sign onto it, and signing onto the Dear Colleague and making sure that the administration does its work, the courts do their work and that we do our work.

TEACHING HOSPITALS IMPACTED AS RESULT OF PASSAGE OF THE BALANCED BUDGET ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, during the last several months we have had a tremendous amount of discussion about managed care, patients' bill of rights, different kinds of indicators of disease and problems with our health care delivery system, trying to find a way and trying to find solutions, answers, to many of these problems. Group of us come this afternoon because we want to talk about another problem, and that is a problem facing the hospitals in the State of Illinois and especially facing tertiary care teaching hospitals as a result of our passage of the Balanced Budget Act.

Health care, as all of us would agree, is one of the essential elements of a great society, and unless people have access, have the ability, unless people have the assurances of knowing that they can find the care that they need in times of stress and difficulty and in times of physical pain and disability, then that society is missing something.

As a member of the Illinois delegation, I am going to share some concerns about the fate of Illinois' teaching hospitals and academic medical centers unless we get some form of relief from reimbursement cuts authorized in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act.

While we all recognize that cost containment, trying to manage the cost of health care, is important, all of us recognize the concerns that have been expressed over the years about unregulated, unbridled, unchecked cost overrunning our ability to pay; and so while we recognize that certain sacrifices must be made in order to achieve Balanced Budget Act objectives, we strongly believe that the unintended consequences of the Balanced