

in the direction of correcting and assisting in this very major social problem.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about a minute today was a report that I saw in the newspaper about the failure of the administration to seek or to report to us about seeking assistance on repaying for the Kosovo operation.

We all know, I think, that, in this Congress for sure we know, it has cost us billions of dollars in Kosovo. We have shelled out probably easily 75 to 90 percent of the cost of that operation. It was really an American operation under the guise of NATO.

I think it was well founded when we put in the legislation that we sent to the President that he signed, that he agreed to report to us his efforts in trying to get contributions from our allies who took so much credit for what was done there and yet paid so little of the cost of that. I think that it is important that this administration come up with the report that is already now 2 weeks late.

Let us know what they are doing, make efforts to be sure that we get some assistance. As we go around the world, as we do our share of keeping peace in the world, we want to do that as American citizens. I do not think as American citizens we want to be taken advantage of, that we want to pay for all of that when there are others in this world equally able to share in that burden.

So I say to the administration, let us have the report. Let us know what they are doing. We should be able to do easily as well as we did when President Bush was President and we got \$53 billion reimbursement for the Persian War, which was a very nice shot in the arm for the American budget and the American taxpayers.

So I say, Mr. President, let us know what you are doing. We really, really need your report on this.

NATIONAL TECHIES DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. WILSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I am here this morning in recognition of the first ever National Techies Day to bring attention to the lack of adequately trained and educated workers to fill the many information and technology jobs that are available today.

Reports estimate about 350,000 Information Technology or IT jobs are currently unfilled in America with an expected 1 million jobs over the next 10 years.

The goal of National Techies Day is to match technology professionals with students, to encourage their involvement in science and technology with particular emphasis on children and disadvantaged communities.

Many of these communities are still without access to the Internet. We must work together to ensure that this digital divide will be eliminated. With Federal initiatives such as the E-Rate to wire all of the Nation's public schools and libraries, we are definitely on the right track.

So I am pleased to support National Techies Day and applaud organizations like the Association for Competitive Technology, the Kids Computer Workshop, and Be Healthy Lifestyles for reaching out to children in urban areas and opening their eyes to the endless possibilities of theirs.

LIBERALS DO NOT CARE ABOUT FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. RILEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 1 minute.

Mr. RILEY. Madam Speaker, here we go again. Yesterday we debated whether we should allow Federal funding to be used to pay for offensive art exhibits. Last night the Democrats offered a motion to instruct conferees to agree to increase the funding for the NEA and NEH.

I said it then, and I will say it again; under the Constitution, expression must be government protected, but there is no requirement that it be government funded.

Madam Speaker, liberals just do not grasp that concept. What makes the motion even more insulting is that it comes at a time when Congress is fighting to maintain fiscal responsibility and protect the Social Security Trust Fund.

Madam Speaker, this motion only proves what we have been saying all along, liberals do not care about fiscal responsibility. They do not care if American families get a tax cut. They do not care about what the American people want in general. They only care about raiding the surplus to protect their unjustified and often unneeded social programs.

Madam Speaker, it's going to take all of us working together to live within a balanced budget and we will never be able to do so until we set priorities in this Congress.

Social Security is a priority.

Funding obscene art is not.

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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. Madam Speaker, we are expecting that tomorrow we will have a debate on the Patients' Bill of Rights on HMO reform. We do not have the rule yet coming out from the Committee on Rules, and I have expressed many times on the floor of the House

my concern that this rule, this procedure that may be adopted would allow the Republican leadership in the House to add poison pills, extraneous issues to the Patients' Bill of Rights in an effort to defeat it.

But I do not want to dwell on that today because I am still hopeful, still optimistic that that will not be the case and we will be allowed to have a clean vote on the Patients' Bill of Rights and provide for patient protections for those Americans who have their health insurance through HMOs or managed care.

But I am concerned, Madam Speaker, about the fact that, in the last few weeks and certainly the last 2 days, we have had a barrage of ads and articles that are basically put out by the HMO industry, by the insurance companies in an effort to defeat and spread erroneous information about the Patients' Bill of Rights, about the bipartisan Norwood-Dingell bill.

One that I think that we have basically disputed effectively but keeps coming up is the argument that, under the Patients' Bill of Rights, there will be too many lawsuits because now patients will be able to sue their HMO if they suffer damages; and, secondly, that the cost of health insurance will skyrocket because of the fact that there will now be the ability to sue the HMO as well as the various patient protections that are in place.

I think that the Texas law which has been on the books now in the State of Texas for 2 years, very similar to the Norwood-Dingell bill, effectively disputes the cost argument as well as the HMO liability or ability to sue the HMO argument.

Over 2 years now in Texas, there have only been four lawsuits filed against HMOs. In addition, the costs of health insurance premiums for those in managed care have not gone up at all. In fact, Texas rates have actually been less than a lot of other States. The increases have been actually less in Texas than a lot of other States where they do not have patient protections, where they do not have the Patients' Bill of Rights.

But, today, I hear another argument which I think needs to be effectively refuted as well, and that is that, somehow, employers, not the HMOs, but employers are going to be liable to suit under the Norwood-Dingell bill and that because employers will be sued, a lot of employers will drop health insurance, and the ranks of the uninsured will increase. Well, nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact of the matter is that under the Norwood-Dingell bill, under the Patients' Bill of Rights, we have specific language that shields the employer from being sued in almost every circumstance. An employer would actually have to actually be involved in the very decision about whether or not one is going to have a particular operation or be able to stay in the hospital before they could be liable for suit, which is simply not the case.

In every case, the insurance company or a third party administrator handles those decisions for employers pursuant to their insurance policy. We have very effective shield language in the bill that effectively precludes the employer from being sued.

Now, I want to say I thought there was a very interesting article in today's Washington Post, an op ed by Anthony Burns where he tries to say and he admits that we do have shield language in the bill that would effectively preclude an employer from being sued.

But it goes on to say, essentially, in the article, and this is sort of a new twist on this theme, that even though the shield language is there, it will not matter because crafty trial lawyers will find a way to get around it.

He talks about, first, that plaintiffs could argue that insurance companies or third-party administrators are merely the agents of the employer, or a crafty lawyer could argue that, by selecting one health-care provider over another, the employers' discretionary decision played a role in a decision or an outcome with regard to patient care. Well, that is totally bogus.

Any trial lawyer, of course, can make any argument, and anybody can be sued and make an argument. But the bottom line is, if one has effective shield language, those arguments are not going to work.

One of the things that disturb me the most is that, if one sees what is happening around the country, one will see in a recent Illinois Supreme Court decision, or even a case that is now being obtained by our own U.S. Supreme Court, that the courts increasingly are getting around the prohibition on the right to sue.

But just because that is happening does not mean that we, when we pass legislation, which we are hopefully going to consider in the next few days, that if we put specific language in that says the employers cannot be sued, that should be sufficient for those who are concerned about this issue. Because any lawyer can make any argument. Any court can overturn any decision or any Federal language. But the bottom line is that we are putting that protection in the bill. I think that that should be sufficient. It is a recognition of the fact that the employers cannot be sued.

Please support the Norwood-Dingell bill. Do not be persuaded by these false arguments.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 27 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU) at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

O gracious God, we profess that You are the creator of the whole world and yet when we look at that world we see so much pain and suffering, wars and rumors of wars, and we become distressed. We affirm that You have created every person in Your image and yet in our communities we see alienation and estrangement one from another.

Almighty God, teach us that before we can change the world or our communities we need to change our own hearts and our own attitudes so that Your spirit of faith and hope and love touches our souls and the work of our daily lives. This is our earnest prayer. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Chair's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. VITTER led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain 15 one-minute speeches on each side.

FEDERAL TELEPHONE ABUSE REDUCTION ACT OF 1999

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

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, a report released in August by the Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General revealed hundreds of cases in which Federal inmates used prison telephones to commit serious crimes, including murder, drug trafficking, witness tampering, and fraud.

Although the Federal Bureau of Prisons has been aware of this problem for some time, it has not taken sufficient steps to address the abuse of Federal prison telephone systems.

To help the Bureau undertake immediate and meaningful action to correct these problems, I am introducing the Federal telephone abuse reduction act. My bill requires the Bureau of Prisons to implement changes to efficiently target and increase the monitoring of inmate conversations. It will also refocus officers to detect and deter crimes committed by inmates using Federal telephones.

I urge my colleagues to join me in squarely addressing what appears to be widespread inmate abuse of prison telephones and cosponsor the Federal telephone abuse reduction act.

REPUBLICANS REJECT GOVERNOR BUSH'S ADVICE ON PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

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

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, there is good news. The House Republicans have apparently yielded on their cruel plan to defer the earned income tax credit for working families, a plan deplored by Governor George W. Bush as, in his words, "balancing the budget on the backs of the poor."

But there is also bad news. The Republicans are so out of touch with the needs of American families that they have rejected Governor Bush's advice on the Patients' Bill of Rights that we will be debating tomorrow.

Our Lone Star State has been a national leader on reforming managed care. Although Governor Bush initially fell victim to the same old tired insurance company rhetoric upon which our House Republican friends now rely, he permitted our Texas Patients' Bill of Rights to be signed into law. And last week his office declared it has "worked well." Who could say otherwise with only five lawsuits from 4 million Texans over 2 years in managed care.

Governor Bush's insurance commissioner has declared it "a real success story," "one of the leading" consumer protection measures in the country. If the Republican leadership will get out of the way, we will do the same for all of America.

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

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

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the remarks of my colleague on the left from