

Early Access bill. The new version provides tax credits to help more individuals 55 to 64 to buy into Medicare or to purchase COBRA continuation coverage.

The mechanisms for providing more individuals age 55 to 64 coverage has not changed. Our bill would enable people 62 to 64 and displaced workers 55 to 64 to pay premiums to buy into Medicare. It would require employers who drop previously promised retiree coverage to allow early retirees with limited alternatives to have access to COBRA continuation coverage until they reach age 65 and, thereby, qualify for Medicare.

To make these initiatives more affordable, this legislation would establish tax credits equal to 25 percent of the premium for participants in the Medicare buy-in and individuals eligible for COBRA coverage. Our legislation provides uninsured individuals between 55 and 64 an opportunity to buy into Medicare since the private market surely has failed them. And it restores some measure of fairness to individuals who have paid for employer-sponsored retiree coverage paycheck after paycheck only to have it terminated when they actually need it.

Some individuals perceive of Medicare expansion as a backdoor means of establishing universal coverage. Expanding Medicare is not a backdoor means of moving towards universal coverage. I would say we are using the front door. Medicare works. We need universal coverage, and if expanding Medicare will help us put an end to the inefficient, gap-ridden patchwork of private and public health plans we are living in now, then I am all for it.

The United States needs universal health coverage. Nothing short of that can assure security, fairness, or economic efficiency. We need a system that does not discriminate against the very individuals that it is supposed to protect. Until we get there, it makes sense to take this step.

CINCINNATI'S SAINT XAVIER BRINGS HOME ANOTHER STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 3 minutes.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, Cincinnati's Saint Xavier High School went to Columbus over the weekend and returned home with the Ohio State Division 1 basketball championship.

Our hardest congratulations go out to Coach Scott Martin and all the players whose hard work and dedication made it possible. Their families, their fans, and their community are very proud of them.

Saint X's victory marked the school's second State title this year. Just last month, the Bomber swim team also notched the State champion-

ship. It has been quite a year for one of Cincinnati's top schools and a stalwart in the GCL.

Madam Speaker, as a graduate of rival LaSalle High School, I must admit I am slightly envious. Hopefully, next year my Lancers will be back on top. But in the meantime, I tip my hat to the scholar athletes from Saint X.

On a sad note, players and students learned Sunday that assistant principal and teacher of some 30 years, Tom Meyer, who was known as Saint Xavier's number one basketball fan, had succumbed to cancer just a few hours after his favorite team won the title. Knowing he was near death, the players had specially made warm-up suits designed to honor their friend, Mr. Meyer, as they made their final run at the State championship. The back of the shirts had the following message, each of them: "May his pain be comforting knowing that he has touched the lives of so many. Thank you, Mr. Meyer, for carrying your cross for us." A very touching message for a man loved by many.

To all the Bomber players and coaches and families and friends, our hardy congratulations. And to the family of Saint X's number one fan, Tom Meyer, our most sincere condolences.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 4 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, to You we commend ourselves as Your servants and fit instruments to accomplish Your holy will on this day You have given us. Without You, we can do nothing. With Your guidance and grace, we can accomplish great things, because You alone are holy and good. In You, we find wisdom and power. To You alone belongs the glory.

Bless this assembly today. On this new day, bless Your servant whom You have called to minister to the Members of this House. Fill all of us with Your Spirit of love, forgiveness and peace.

May our prayers be broad and deep. May our words spring forth from hearts purified by Your spirit and our actions manifest Your power taking root in us. In all we say and do, may we grow in awareness that You alone live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. 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.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan 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.

THE EDUCATION SAVINGS AND SCHOOL EXCELLENCE ACT OF 2000

(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, this week the House is considering H.R. 7, the Education Savings and School Excellence Act of 2000.

For years, we have watched as our education quality has gone way below the standards set by other nations. For example, the U.S. 12th graders currently test among the lowest among the industrialized nations in math and science.

If our Nation is to continue setting the standard for the rest of the world in science, research, and technology, then we must take steps now to help ensure that each child learns to their maximum ability.

Mr. Speaker, this education savings account will allow a Roth-type IRA for investment to help assure the best possible education for academic tutoring, for books, for fees, computers, special education services and other education need.

I understand Vice President GORE has now supported tax credits, tax deductions for contributions that will go into political campaigns, but he has denied support for this bill that allows families to have some kind of tax incentive for savings to help assure the best possible education.

CENSUS BUREAU OUT OF CONTROL

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

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, the Census Bureau is literally out of control. Check this out: Reports now say that the Census Bureau is, quote/unquote, willing to sacrifice a true head count of American citizens for more personal detailed information. Unbelievable. Forms with questions about your bank account, your cars, how many bathrooms you have, your job. What is next, Congress, your sex life?

The Constitution mandates a simple head count by a Census taker, not an audit by some bureaucratic intrusive nincompoop. I yield back the manipulations of both American citizens and our great Constitution by the Census Bureau.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF LON FOLGER, JR.

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

Mr. BURR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of a great man, Mr. Alonzo Folger, Jr., of Rockingham County, North Carolina, who passed away this morning. Lon was the son of one of my predecessors and the nephew of another.

His father, Alonzo Folger, Sr., represented the 5th District of North Carolina from 1939 to 1941, and his uncle, John Folger, represented the district from 1941 to 1949.

Lon Folger was a family man, an attorney, a community leader, a political activist, and a friend to many. I will never forget the support he, a leading Democratic figure in North Carolina, gave me, a Republican, when I ran for Congress in 1994. Lon not only supported me in that election but, from that time until his death, he was always willing to serve as an adviser to me on many issues we dealt with here in Congress.

Lon Folger was the type of person whose word was his bond. A handshake could be counted on to be a valid written contract. Lon was honest and forthright. He was fair in his dealings with people, even those who he disagreed with.

Lon was a leader in his community and, over the years, involved himself in numerous efforts to make his hometown, Madison, North Carolina, a better place to live. He could always be counted on to answer the call when there was a need, and he consistently devoted his time and energy to helping others.

If we are fortunate enough in our lifetimes, we have the occasion to cross paths with a handful of very special people who teach us and are willing to help us understand where they have been before us. Lon Folger was that type of special friend for me, and I will always be grateful for the opportunity to have sought his counsel, knowing that I could trust his judgment.

I extend my sympathy to his wife Elizabeth and to the rest of the family on their loss. Lon Folger's death is a loss not only for his family but for the community and the State he loved so much, and he will certainly be missed by all who knew him.

INTERNATIONAL ABDUCTION

(Mr. LAMPSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell the story of Robert Marquette and his children, Ben and Rhea. Their story is the ninth in a series of 1-minutes on more than 10,000 children who have been taken, abducted, to foreign countries.

In 1997, Robert Marquette's ex-wife, Rose Marie Marquette, abducted Ben and Rhea from Irving, Texas, and took them to Germany. Although Robert's home was named as the primary residence, Robert subsequently filed a Hague Convention petition through the State Department. His petition was heard by a German judge who violated the Hague Convention by refusing to return Ben and Rhea. He has filed numerous appeals, but they have all been denied.

On June 15 this year, it will be 3 years since Robert has seen his children or spoken with them. The German authorities refuse to tell him where they are.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to help me reunite parents with their children and to support the resolution that I introduced, along with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), which urges signatories to uphold the Hague Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction. We must bring our children home.

MISGUIDED LEGISLATION ON ILLEGAL GAMBLING

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, legislation has been introduced in this Congress that calls for preempting the State laws of Nevada and closing down legal sports wagering entities.

Certainly the problem of illegal gambling and the results of illegal gambling are serious and must be addressed by this Nation. However, banning the highly regulated and closely supervised legal sports betting located in Nevada is not the solution.

According to FBI experts, the strict regulations on sports betting in Nevada have helped law enforcement officials in their efforts to stop illegal sports betting. Mr. Speaker, legislation banning legal sports' wagering is simply not the solution to stopping illegal betting.

I have introduced H.R. 3800, which calls for the U.S. Justice Department to analyze illegal sports gaming and make recommendations in combating it. Enforcement of our current laws is the solution, outlawing a law that enforces these laws is not a solution.

SUCCESS IN AMERICA BEGINS IN THE CLASSROOM

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

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, every American child has a right to a quality education. Yet our education system, as a whole, has been failing to deliver, particularly to minorities.

For example, 63 percent of nonurban fourth graders can read at a basic level, while only 43 percent of urban fourth graders can meet the same standards. And the dropout rate for African American students is about 15 percent, while the Hispanic student dropout rate is between 30 and 35 percent.

Republicans believe educational opportunities should be the same for all children regardless of race, religion, or economic background. That is why I support H.R. 7, the Education Savings and Excellence Act. This legislation helps parents put aside money tax free for their children's education. This money may be spent on tuition, a computer, or even a tutor. Best of all, 76 percent of all the children who will benefit from the ESAs currently attend public schools.

Success in America begins in the classroom. Let us give all children an opportunity to achieve the American Dream. Let us pass H.R. 7.

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

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

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, 2 years ago we approved legislation which allows parents to put aside \$500 each year in education savings accounts, where the money can be invested in order to grow tax free and where it can be added to each year so that it can grow enough to help pay for college tuition.

Ever since we managed to get education savings accounts enacted into law, we have been trying to raise the amounts parents are allowed to put into their children's accounts each year. We have been trying to extend education savings accounts so that parents, grandparents, or other interested parties will be able to use them to prepare for private or parochial, elementary or high school expenses.

If a family were able to put \$2,000 in an education savings accounts every year, from the time a child was born, and if the account averaged 7½ percent interest annually, it would hold \$14,500 by the time the child got to 1st grade. If nothing were withdrawn and annual savings continued, that amount would rise to \$46,500 when it was time for high school.

President Clinton vetoed an extension of education savings accounts last September, but I am confident that most of us in the House think parents should be encouraged to save for their kids' futures and that is why we are going to try again.