

These provisions are not abstract, legal, or political. These are real protections that make a real difference in saving people's lives. I hope my colleagues will consider how vital specialist care is for those who do not have access and join me in supporting H.R. 526, the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1187

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name withdrawn as a cosponsor of H.R. 1187.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Vermont?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WOLF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DETENTION OF 24 CREW MEMBERS IN CHINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, 24 Americans are currently being detained in China under circumstances that are unacceptable. Today, the Chinese ambassador has said that the crew members are in China because the investigation is going on, and China's foreign minister has asked for an apology. The Chinese news agency, Xinhua, reports that the American ambassador was admonished and told that the U.S. has displayed an arrogant air, used lame arguments, confused right and wrong, and made groundless acquisitions against China.

America has nothing to apologize for. Our aircraft was operating in international air space when Chinese interceptors came close to investigate it. They came too close and caused a mid-air collision.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that sometimes in international politics, state-

ments are made for internal consumption rather than for the ears of other powers. But the Chinese government needs to understand that here in Congress we are listening and watching. Their action or failure to act has consequences. This is an unusual situation in which an American military aircraft had to make an emergency landing on Chinese soil. I am supportive of the President's desire to keep this accident from becoming an international incident, but every hour that goes by without the return of our crew makes the likelihood of continued good relations between our two nations less achievable.

I have supported free trade with China and engagement with China's people. That and more is at risk, and not all of it is under the control of the President and his administration. In the coming months this House may consider China's access to the WTO, arms sales to Taiwan, military to military, cultural and scientific exchanges, as well as an array of other issues important to China.

We have allowed the Chinese government time to do the right thing. We know the difference between right and wrong. Now it is time for our servicemen and women to be returned home.

CRITICAL ISSUES FACING AMERICA'S NURSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to address critical issues facing America's nurses, which have a tremendous impact on the quality of this Nation's health care system.

As many of my colleagues know, we face an unprecedented, dangerous shortage in the number of nurses in our hospitals, extended care facilities, community health centers, nursing education, and ambulatory care settings. This shortage is due in large part to the aging nursing population, which is not being replaced by younger entrants into this field.

Moreover, data on the nursing workforce shows that staffing shortages are already occurring and recruiting new registered nurses is becoming a looming obstacle which we will not be able to overcome without swift congressional action. The current shortage will soon be compounded by the lack of young people entering the nursing profession, the rapid aging of the nursing workforce, and the impending health needs of the baby boom generation.

That is why I am proud to be an original cosponsor of legislation to improve access to nursing education, to create partnerships between health care providers and educational institutions, to support nurses as they seek more training, and to improve the collection and analysis of data about the nursing workforce.

I congratulate my colleagues in both Chambers for their hard work in

crafting this comprehensive legislation, and I urge both Chambers to bring this legislation to the floor as expeditiously as possible.

An equally vexing issue concerning our hard-working nurses is mandatory overtime. Last week I joined the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) in introducing legislation to prohibit mandatory overtime for all licensed health care employees beyond 8 hours in a single workday or 80 hours in any 14 day work period except in cases of natural disaster or declaration of an emergency by Federal, State, or local government officials, or when it is voluntary.

The practice of mandatory overtime tears at the fiber of many hard-working families. Instead of punching out at the end of an already lengthy shift and traveling home to their families, many nurses are forced to remain at work. But more than a family or labor issue, this is a fundamental public health problem with far-reaching consequences. Exhausted health care workers can inadvertently or unintentionally put patient safety at risk. A report by the Institute of Medicine on medication errors found that safe staffing and limits on mandatory overtime are essential components to preventing medication errors. An investigative report by the Chicago Tribune also found that patient safety was sacrificed when reductions in hospital staff resulted in registered nurses working long overtime hours and being more likely to make serious medical errors.

Mr. Speaker, these studies confirm the grim stories I hear from my constituents on a regular basis. In fact, last October 1,900 people participated in a 1-day strike at Rhode Island Hospital which illustrated the magnitude of this problem facing Rhode Island nurses, hospitals and patients.

I understand that hospitals need an ample supply of nurses to safely administer patient needs, and they are not to blame for our Nation's nursing shortages. But with nurses within the Lifespan Hospital network in my State working 180,000 hours of overtime, the equivalent of 22,500 extra 8-hour shifts last year, I cannot understand why Congress does not act now to stop this injustice which risks the lives of thousands of Americans each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, what happened in Rhode Island is happening across America. That is why I urge my colleagues to join the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS), the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), and me in ensuring expedient passage of both of these bills to help our hard-working nurses and to improve the kind of quality of health care that Americans expect and deserve.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HYDE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUNNINGHAM addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ESTATE TAX RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today as a strong supporter of reforming estate tax. In the past 2½ years, I have voted for estate tax reform almost every time it was offered on this floor. I even voted to override President Clinton's veto of the bill.

But since then there have been significant changes in our economy and in the tax proposals before this body. This administration, the Bush administration, has put all of its political muscle behind a \$1.6 trillion tax cut. The House has already used \$958 billion of this amount by approving income tax rate cuts, and we have used an additional \$399 billion to fix the marriage penalty and phase in an increase in the child tax credit. Together, these bills have chewed up more than \$1.36 trillion, 84 percent of the total tax cut proposed by the President.

Mr. Speaker, I will say right now that I think the administration's overall proposal is too large. It is too large because we do not know whether today's surpluses will be there tomorrow, and there are other tax changes which are sure to come before this body which will cost billions more.

What are we going to do to correct the problems associated with the alternative minimum tax? What are we going to do about making permanent the R&D tax credit? What do we do about fixing other unfair aspects of the Tax Code, like reinstating the sales tax deduction?

If we want to talk about real unfairness, let us reinstate sales tax deductibility to establish fairness for Washington State residents and the residents of six other States who have no income tax but pay sales taxes and cannot deduct them from their Federal return.

Today's bill should also be about fairness. The estate tax should not burden small business, small farms and individuals who have accumulated sizable assets through years of hard work. I am frustrated that some in Congress are playing numbers games because this bill that we passed today does not solve the problem quickly enough for many folks in my district. The bulk of the estate tax bill that we passed today will not be felt for 10 years. Then what

happens in 10 years? The baby boom generation retires, and we have increases in our needs for Social Security and Medicare.

□ 1645

It is unclear to me why the majority has not and will not look at other legislative proposals to solve the estate tax problems. I am frustrated with the "my way or the highway" approach that they have taken. That is why earlier today I voted against the rule on this bill. We should have had more and better options to choose from. It should not just be a coin toss.

The Democrats put forward a bill that would take care of the estate problem today for more than 99 percent of all Americans. I do not think that bill was perfect, but I think it contained some good ideas. And I do think if we took the best parts of the Republican bill, the best parts of the Democratic bill, cleaned up some problems, we could have had something we all supported. But that does not seem to be the way we do business around here these days.

When I came to this body, we elected a Speaker who pledged bipartisan; we elected a President recently who pledged bipartisanship, but we are not seeing it. Here was an opportunity for true bipartisanship, to get together, draw the best of both bills from both parties and come up with a real solution.

Mr. Speaker, this takes a personal note for me. A month and a half ago my father passed away. One of the last things he said to me, quite literally one of the last things, was, "Son, I'm concerned about repealing the estate tax. I worry that we risk concentrating wealth too heavily in this country."

Two days ago I met with the owners of a Toyota dealership who told me, "Congressman, we are concerned that if we have too exorbitant an estate tax, we won't be able to pass our dealership on to our kids and their families." I met with George and Peggy Thoeni, family farmers in my district, who have worked their whole life to build a family farm, and they want to pass that on to their children.

Mr. Speaker, my father was right. So are George and Peggy Thoeni, and so are Marvin and Shirley McChord. We desperately need to reform the estate tax, but we must not do so in a way that concentrates wealth inordinately in our country and jeopardizes our financial future.

Today, I voted for both the Democratic alternative and for final passage on the final bill, but we could have done better, Mr. Speaker. In true bipartisanship we could have come together, before the bills came here, and we could have crafted something that protects family businesses and small farms today, not 10 years down the road; that does not add new burdensome regulatory complications to the Tax Code; that does not allow the very, very wealthiest people in this country

to pass their estates on with no tax burden whatsoever. We could have done that, but we did not.

I would hope that before this bill finally becomes law, we do come together in genuine bipartisanship. In so doing we would honor the wishes of both my father, of George and Peggy Thoeni and the McChords. Let us do this together, and let us do it right. The people deserve our doing so.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GRAVES). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ROHRABACHER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. BIGGERT addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ROHRABACHER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SPY PLANE STANDOFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, the South China Sea has always been an area of constant stress for our men and women in military uniforms, especially the cat-and-dog fights that have gone on, really for many of the past years. That is why an accident was bound to happen.

China believes the U.S. plane caused the collision by making an abrupt turn while two Chinese fighter pilots shadowed it. Give me a break. The EP-3 is a lumbering turtle, while the Chinese J8s respond like nimble jackrabbits. Colin Powell has stated, "A tragic accident took place. We regret that the Chinese plane did not get down safely. We regret the loss of life of the Chinese pilot, but now we need to move on. We need to bring this to a resolution."

Make no mistake, the planes were operating in international airspace. By international law, the EP-3 is sovereign U.S. territory.