

is before us today. We are facing a medical malpractice problem. We are also facing a medical malpractice insurance problem. But rather than addressing those issues, this bill would actually make both problems worse. The Institute of Medicine study, "To Err is Human," reported that between 44,000 and 98,000 Americans die each year from medical errors, making medical malpractice the 8th leading cause of death. More people die from medical errors than from automobile accidents, breast cancer or AIDS. We also know that a handful of physicians and facilities are responsible for the lion's share of medical malpractice cases. Does this bill do anything about improving health care safety? Does it make it easier for patients to avoid dangerous physicians or facilities? Does it require that those with bad medical records—like bad drivers—get charged higher malpractice premiums while safe providers—like safe drivers—get discounts? No.

We also know that we have a medical malpractice insurance problem. Just as businesses and health care consumers are complaining about double digit premium increases, so, too, are providers. Once again, the evidence suggests a solution. Medical malpractice insurance companies made bad investments—now they are raising premiums to pay for their mistakes. Studies show that there is usually no connection between premiums and payouts—with no or little regulation, insurers are free to charge what they want. Does this bill do anything about medical malpractice insurance practices? Does it even require that the federal government monitor premiums to determine the effect of this bill on premiums and make sure that insurers don't just pocket any savings instead of passing them through lower premiums? Do the authors of this bill have any evidence from the insurance industry that premium rates will come down or moderate if we pass H.R. 4600? No.

Instead of addressing medical malpractice or medical malpractice insurers, this bill is a plain and simple assault on the rights of consumers—health care patients and their families who have already been injured once would be injured again and again because of this bill. There is not a single provision in this bill that strengthens the rights of consumers or improves their access to quality care. But there is not a single provision in this bill that doesn't erode consumers' legal rights to win compensation for their injuries and to send the signal that dangerous medicine does not pay. This bill doesn't just affect physicians. It provides a broad liability shield for drug companies, nursing homes, medical device manufacturers and suppliers. This bill may well increase health insurance premiums to small businesses and individuals because it says that, if you are fortunate enough to have health insurance, your policy may have to pay your costs even if you prove malpractice in a court of law. And most disturbing of all, this bill puts a \$250,000 price tag on the life of a child. The authors of this bill say that we shouldn't worry about caps on non-economic damages. After all, they say, there are no caps on economic damages. But there are no economic damages to compensate for the loss of an infant or a grandmother, for the loss of sight or mobility. This bill tells all those families who suffer those losses—through proven malpractice—that their losses are worth a paltry \$250,000. I urge this body to reject this anti-

consumer bill. I also urge my colleagues to read the attached letter, sent to me by USAAction, regarding this important issue.

US ACTION,
Washington, DC, September 24, 2002.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of our twenty-four statewide organizations, I want to express our strong opposition to H.R. 4600, the so-called HEALTH Act, and ask that you vote no when it is considered on the House floor this week.

H.R. 4600 is a direct assault on the rights of consumers. Instead of addressing the root of the premium problem—the insurance industry—it attacks medical malpractice victims themselves. Nursing home residents, prescription drug and medical device users, and other patients would all lose rights that they have had since the beginning of our nation. Yet, there are absolutely no indications from the medical malpractice industry that this harsh, anti-consumer legislation would result in any reduction in premium rates or greater accessibility of malpractice insurance.

At the same time that more and more FDA-approved drugs are being pulled off the market because of safety concerns, this bill would immunize drug or medical device manufacturers if their product had been approved by the FDA or is "generally recognized as safe and effective." While more and more families are concerned about nursing home quality, this bill would limit the liability of nursing homes that knowingly put their residents at risk. Under H.R. 4600, Congress would place a \$250,000 limit on the loss of a child or sight or the ability to walk. These are just a few of the most outrageous provisions of this bill, which would put more consumers at risk and shield dangerous manufacturers and practitioners from full liability for their actions. And it does so without any guarantee that malpractice rates would fall or even any provision that the federal government would monitor those rates to determine their appropriateness.

Again, I urge you to protect health care consumers by voting against this irresponsible and dangerous bill.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM McNARY,
President.

—
FIRST LADY OF TAIWAN CHEN
WU-SUE-JEN

—
SPEECH OF
HON. ROBERT WEXLER
OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 24, 2002

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Speaker, last week we witnessed an historic event in the long-standing relationship between the United States and our ally Taiwan. On Wednesday, September 25, 2002, the First Lady of Taiwan Chen Wu-Sue-jen addressed a bipartisan gathering of Members of Congress to express her heartfelt support for U.S.-Taiwan relations and a common commitment to freedom, democracy and human rights. I have included a copy of the First Lady's speech to be entered into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

As a strong proponent of our nations' unbreakable bond with Taiwan, I want to thank Madame Chen Wu for her statement in support of the American people and our war against international terror. All Americans greatly appreciate President and Mrs. Chen's heartfelt message of unity and solidarity with our nation

in our greatest time of need. Additionally, I want to express my admiration for Mrs. Chen Wu, whose undeniable courage in the face of adversity has helped create a future filled with prosperity and hope for her people.

As Co-chairman of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus, I am hopeful that we can build on Madame Chen Wu's visit, which will only serve to enhance and strengthen U.S.-Taiwan relations and cooperation.

FRIENDS INDEED

(By Madam Chen Wu, Sue-jen)

Honorable Members of Congress, the best friends of Taiwan: It is a most honorable and warm moment for me to be able to come to the Capitol Hill, in the capacity as the First Lady of Taiwan, to meet so many good friends in the U.S. Congress. Standing here, I feel a strong sense of affinity and goodwill.

Although my husband cannot come with me on this trip, you should know that after 27 years of marriage, what I say here today should not be objectionable to him!

What I mean is my husband cherishes my opinions. If he were coming here to give a speech in person, he would certainly consult me beforehand and put my ideas into his remarks.

You might think that I am joking, but don't forget, when I was elected a Legislator in 1986, President was my legislative assistant, and I was his boss!

The first thing I would like to say is that the friendship between Taiwan and U.S. is very strong and everlasting. The fact that I am here to see you in the Congress is a sure sign of this. Indeed, in Taiwan there are countless government officials, university professors, and high-tech professionals who received higher education in the U.S. They brought home not only advanced knowledge and skills, but also the American values of democracy, freedom and human rights. Thus these values stimulated not only our economic advancement, but also our democratization.

In 1979 this great democratic institution passed the Taiwan Relations Act, which explicitly affirms that the U.S. will help Taiwan defend itself and expresses the American concern for Taiwan's commercial development and human rights. The Act even states that "the preservation and enhancement of the human rights of all the people on Taiwan are hereby reaffirmed as objectives of the United States." Thanks to such support, we are able to enjoy such remarkable political and economic achievements today, and it is easy to understand why the Taiwan people deeply appreciate the U.S. standing here in the Congress, which represents all the American people and their democratic system, I would like to say thank you to all of you from the bottom of my heart.

Through our political reforms over the past years, Taiwan has become a democratic country that fully embraces the values of freedom and human rights. As a result of the 2000 presidential election, Taiwan undertook the unprecedented challenge of the first democratic transition of power in its history. Now we are proud to say that Taiwan is a genuine, consolidated democracy. This undeniable fact will enable Taiwan to sail stably into the future on the sea of democracy.

Today you can hear all kinds of opinions in Taiwan, and sometimes the controversies seem quite serious. However, if you ask the Taiwan people whether they would like to go back to the old days when the freedoms of speech and ideas were deprived of, I don't think you will get a single positive answer. Simply put, the concept of democracy and freedom upheld by the Taiwan government

today is: "Even though I don't agree with you, I swear to protect your freedom of speech."

Out of that spirit, political leaders such as President Chen and Vice President Lu, even though they previously suffered as political prisoners, hold no grudges or hatred. Likewise, some people might think that a person like me confined to a wheelchair should be angry about the past. But, on the contrary, we are all filled with joy at Taiwan's democratic achievements. In fact, because of our opportunity to help bring about Taiwan's democracy, the little sacrifice we made became a reward in itself.

Many political scientists wonder why Taiwan was able to experience the democratic process more peacefully and smoothly than many other countries in the "third wave" democratization. I think the main reason is that the current political leaders have the magnanimity to sow the seeds of love in the place of hatred.

People in Taiwan believe in the universal values of freedom, democracy, and human rights. Taiwan's security is more enhanced than before as a result of its progress in democratization. It is also for the same reason that we have so many good friends in the United States of America. And not only here, but also in other democracies; for example, the European Parliament recently passed a resolution expressing strong support for Taiwan. The beautiful smile of democracy is indeed the best protector of Taiwan's security. A basic mission of Taiwan's democratic government is to handle cross-Straits issues with a responsible attitude as well as to participate in international affairs in ever more positive ways.

A year ago, the American people suffered the terrible attacks of September 11. The Taiwan people felt the same shock and sadness. Since this tragedy, Taiwan has tried hard to cooperate with the United States and the International community to play an active role, for example through exchanges of anti-terrorism intelligence and efforts to counter money laundering. Taiwan's government has also cooperated intensively with nongovernmental organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to the innocent people of Afghanistan, to cultivate love and hope in the devastated Afghan mountains. We will continue to work with the international community to help Afghanistan and enable the Afghan people to put disaster behind them and rebuild their sense of hope.

On the anniversary of September 11, the Taiwanese people continued to feel sorrow for the attacks. Two weeks ago, President Chen called together all our top government officials to review Taiwan's actions in combating terrorism. He also delivered an anti-terrorism declaration reaffirming his support to the American-led global coalition against terrorism.

Taiwan is a true friend of America. We stand with America now and we will stand with America forever!

Although my husband is not able to visit you this time, I bring his greetings to you. It will be my pleasure to bring your goodwill back to President Chen, to the government and to the people of Taiwan.

Thank you, my dear friends. Thank you!

VISIT OF PRESIDENT LEO FALCAM
OF THE FSM

HON. DIANE E. WATSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 1, 2002

Ms. WATSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the visit of The Hono-

able Leo Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

This year marks the 57th year of the United States presence in the territory of what are now called the Freely Associated States or FAS. The U.S. took possession of many of the islands comprising the modern FAS during WWII and has exercised various forms of political oversight since that time. On July 18, 1947, the U.S. Government began to administer to the FAS as a United Nations Mandated Strategic Trust known as the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The charge to the United States from the United Nations went well beyond administering the Trust Territory Article Two. Article Six of the Trusteeship Agreement added four specific tasks to the U.S. mission: "The administering authority shall promote (1) . . . the development toward self-government or independence . . . (2) the economic advancement and self sufficiency . . . (3) . . . the social advancement . . . and (4) . . . the educational advancement of the inhabitants."

Mr. Speaker, as the former Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia, I was charged by President Clinton to uphold our Compact of Free Association and represent the United States. The FSM became freely associated with the U.S. in 1986. The Compact Agreement is currently being renegotiated, and a new Compact Agreement is imminent. The goal of the new Compact is to provide the FSM with the funding and tools to become an economically independent and viable democratic nation.

Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap are the four states that comprise the FSM. They are located in an area called the Western Pacific, just north of the Equator. Spread across more than a million miles of ocean, the island states are made of 607 islands, but only 65 are inhabited. The total land area of the islands is 271 square miles, with Pohnpei having about half that land area and the rest equally divided among the three states. The FSM's estimated population is just over 100,000 people.

The seat of the FSM government resides in Palikir on the island of Pohnpei. Mr. Speaker, today I have had the distinct honor, along with several of my distinguished colleagues, to meet with the President of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Honorable Leo Falcam.

Mr. Speaker, President Falcam has served the FSM with distinction his whole life. President Falcam served at the highest levels during the Trust Territory days up until now. He has played a key role in the island nation's struggle for self-determination. He was formerly the Governor of Pohnpei, Member of Congress, and now the President.

Mr. Speaker, I especially want to note that the Federated States of Micronesia has always been a loyal friend and staunch supporter of the United States. This bond of friendship is demonstrated by the fact that the FSM has been one of the United States' most reliable friends in the United Nations as well as other international fora.

I also want to note that a number of citizens of the FSM currently serve in the U.S. military and that President Falcam's son is a Marine Lt. Commander, currently stationed in Okinawa—a fact of which I know President Falcam is particularly proud.

Mr. Speaker, a new compact is currently being negotiated by the United States and the

FSM. It is my understanding that many of the issues have been resolved and that a new Compact is close to being approved by both sides. While a number of important issues remain to be resolved—such as the level of funding and decrements and future commitments of FEMA—I am confident that a new Compact will be approved by the Congress and signed by the President in the next year that allows the Federated States of Micronesia to realize their long-term goals of economic and political self-sufficiency.

WELCOMING QUEEN SIRIKIT OF THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES

HON. DANA ROHRABACHER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 1, 2002

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise to welcome the visit of a great friend of our country and our sacred principles of liberty and democracy, Her Majesty, Queen Sirikit of Thailand. Queen Sirikit will arrive in Washington on October 4 to begin a two week visit. Her Majesty will also travel to New York to further her charitable activities. And in Houston, Her Majesty will be presented with the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center Award for Humanitarian Service, recognizing her lifelong dedication, not only for improving the health and well-being of the people of Thailand, but for her international leadership in health and the environment.

I have long admired the Queen and her distinguished husband, His Majesty, King Bhumibol, who has led Thailand to a half century of peace and prosperity. Our long, constructive relationship with the government and people of Thailand dates back to the Presidency of Andrew Jackson whose administration, in 1833, negotiated and signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce. This treaty was the first of its kind that our young Republic had signed with any Asian nation. It ushered in a 169 year period of mutually beneficial economic, cultural and security relations.

Thailand is one of only five Asian countries with whom we have finalized a bilateral security agreement. Each year the armed forces of Thailand join with our own military to stage "Cobra Gold" maneuvers, the largest such operations involving U.S. forces in the Asian continent. And, economically, United States, remains the primary destiny for Thailand's exports, while Thailand itself ranks as high as 22nd largest market for U.S. exports. On all levels, led by the Royal Family, Thailand can clearly be considered our friend.

Queen Sirikit has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of those disadvantaged in society, be they in Thailand or elsewhere. For the past 46 years, Queen Sirikit has served as the President of the Thai Red Cross Society. In this role, her Majesty has been the leading protector of thousands of refugees who have fled turmoil and tragedy in neighboring countries. Her Majesty has paid similar close attention to her own people. To increase the income of the country's rural families, Her Majesty has initiated many projects, such as the Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Techniques, better