

Schools Action Kits. As you can see, this is a very fine kit and has lots of wonderful things to help schools. I mailed it to all 236 schools in my district, elementary through high school, public and private. These kits provide explanations and suggestions for identifying air quality problems and suggestions for their improvements.

Now, why is indoor air quality important? This is from the EPA: "The EPA studies of human exposure to air pollutants indicate that indoor level of pollutants may be two to five times and occasionally a hundred times higher than outdoor levels." Of course, most of people spend their time indoors. So here are our school children and our teachers captive inside a building all day, charged with building the foundation for their future, the children's future, potentially trapped in a state of dusty or moldy or other respiratory discomfort.

This kit walks a school through setting up an indoor air quality program to make the school an environment of comfort and well-being for all the children and all the adults inside. Let me share the contents of this kit. To begin with there is a video tape with two short episodes. Hosts from the award winning PBS home improvement series, "This Old House," show how one school successfully implemented this kit and explains the importance of healthful indoor air quality and properly maintained school ventilation systems. They point out that many indoor air quality problems can be easily and inexpensively prevented or solved by school maintenance professionals using basic techniques outlined in this video.

Moving along, there is an IAQ coordinator guide check list and sample memos to the school, parents, contractors, and the media. There are also insightful start-up hints. To be most successful, a school would want to assemble a multidisciplinary IAQ team. This might include the school nurse, maintenance staff, teachers, food service staff, housekeeping, air conditioning and heating contractors and someone from the school district or superintendent's office. There is an IAQ problem-solving wheel. It combines identification of symptoms (blue), type, severity, and frequency and timing with environmental factors to finger through on the chart: odors, temperature or humidity problems, exhaust problems, grounds or building sources such as recent paint or pesticides, to arrive at instructions most applicable and helpful.

I am glad to report that most of the suggestions in this kit are inexpensive to implement. Often just planning and organizing can make a monumental difference to indoor air quality in our schools. Finally and encouragingly, the kit reminds the IAQ coordinator that "implementing an IAQ management program is an ongoing process and not an overnight miracle. Be patient, stay consistent, organize and never forget that you are doing something important for staff and students in your school."

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to our children and their teachers with asthma who also have allergies to ensure that our schools do not worsen their condition. I am pleased that my schools have this tool at their disposal and hope that they might give me some feedback to the progress in implementing it. If any Member would like information on obtaining these kits for your district schools, please contact my staff who will be delighted to help.

Finally, I think something worth checking out, a recent book has come to my attention called "My House Is Killing Me," the home guide for families with allergies and asthma by Mr. May and Mr. Samet is available. It is chock-full of extraordinary information. This is just one of many books. Let us all resolved to help overcome indoor air quality challenges.

Mr. Speaker. I rise to share with all members that May is Asthma Awareness Month. Last Wednesday, May 1, we held an entire day of related activity, including a hearing and free screenings. We heard from physicians, a respiratory therapist, and a school nurse, all experts in diagnosing and treating asthma. We heard from a professional in air quality, from the Environmental Protection Agency, who discussed issues of air quality, dust, mold and other contributors to respiratory distress. We listened to an overseer of the States' Medicaid program to talk about drug formulary and disease management program issues with us. Most importantly, three courageous asthma sufferers came to relate their stories: two enthusiastic school children, Kyle Damitz and Allison Smith, and one hardy NFL football player, Jerome Bettis of the Pittsburgh Steelers. I think my colleagues that participated found it rewarding and informative.

As you may know, some 15 million Americans have asthma, and also 50 million suffer from allergies. The incidence of asthma is increasing at an alarming rate, doubling over the last decade and a half. Of particular concern is that the group diagnosed with the highest increase of asthma is children under five years old. I hope that we in Congress can all do our part by promoting knowledge about some simple steps that can be taken to alleviate suffering of asthma and allergy symptoms in our Nation's schools.

I myself have experienced bothersome allergy symptoms for much of my adult life, so I understand how critical it is to assess and modify, if necessary, your environment, and to have knowledgeable, reliable professionals on your healthcare team. I think many of us will agree that it can take patience, creativity, family support, and a sense of pure resolve to tackle your asthma or allergy symptoms, and find the regimen of medication, exercise, household adjustments and overall lifestyle that works for you.

One point I would like to address is how, unfortunately, occasionally works of fiction or media portray the suffering of asthma in a negative light, or a reason for exploitation of a character. For example, in the classic book "The Lord of the Flies" a boy who is overpowered by other young men is identified as asthmatic, among other traits, and is therefore thought weak. Also, in a feature movie out last year, "Pay it Forward," schoolyard bullies beat up on a child who helplessly watches his in-

haler fly from his pocket. Finally, I understand from the most recent newsletter of the patient advocacy group Allergy and Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics that a character in the animated movie "Jimmy Neutron, Boy Genius" is similarly exploited and mistreated by his classmates. All of us can help promote awareness and understanding of this physical ailment so as to combat any stereotyping about it. To that end, I would like to end my statement marveling at how one young asthmatic schoolboy conquered his labored breathing and went on to a wonderful role in history. I like to call this a story of "respiration inspiration." It is about a little American boy in the 1870's who had very severe asthma. Back then, there were no inhalers or other medicine as we have today. He was often sick and generally very weak as a young boy. Well, he wanted to grow up and go to Harvard University and to hunt and to be in the military and to do many great things with his life. Luckily, he had a wise doctor and loving parents, who suggested he exercise his body along with his mind. His parents installed a sort of "home gym" for him, and he devised a strenuous regimen for himself. Today, we can read in a "Sporting Calendar" preserved, that from August 21 through December 11, 1871, this young fellow competed with his brothers and make cousins in "fifteen athletic contests—running, jumping, vaulting, wrestling, and boxing—and won fourteen of them, drawing the other one." [From *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, Edmund Morris, 1979.] He still suffered some asthma attacks, but less frequently, and less fearfully. This little boy grew up to become the governor of New York, and the leader of the most famous cavalry unit in the Spanish-American War, and finally, the President of the United States: Theodore Roosevelt. I think that with the attention to medical access, environment, and lifestyle that our hearing will showcase, that any of the children here with us today might follow in Teddy Roosevelt's footsteps. Let asthma slow no-one down!

AMERICAN HEALTH SECURITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I was sitting over in my office looking at today's calendar and could not help but get up and come over here.

In 460 B.C. the father of medicine, Hippocrates, wrote: "Healing is a matter of time but it is also sometimes a matter of opportunity."

Now, for 2,500 years we have been talking about this opportunity or in modern times access to good health care coverage in our country. For decades now we have been talking about improving access to health care coverage, yet the problem continues to grow. We argue about how best to provide the coverage; but no matter what you say, uncovered people are one of the biggest economic and human problems in our society.

Many people are locked into jobs. They would like to change jobs, but

they cannot because they cannot give up their coverage. They are there because they have to have coverage for some chronic illness. But we are on the brink of things getting exponentially worse and they can. If we have any kind of downturn in the economy we will have a worse situation.

Now, I started in 1972 as a physician advocating for a health care system that was universally available, never could be taken away, and every American would be in it no matter what their circumstances in the society. I introduced bills in the Washington State legislature and started the Washington Basic Health Plan.

When I came to Congress, I introduced the American Health Security Act in 1992. This act is the gold standard that provides universal coverage for all Americans, and it does it through a single-payer mechanism. Now the American Health Security Act offers a fair and fiscally responsible way to deliver high-quality and cost-effective health care to all Americans. It provides for a highly decentralized system that is federally financed from Washington, but state-designed; and it delivers the health care through the private health care system. It guarantees universal coverage, comprehensive benefits, costs containment, the freedom to choose your own employers, and accountability. Every citizen should be entitled to that kind of coverage in this society.

The reason I came over to talk about this is that today we are being treated to one of those events that begins the campaign season when people start putting out press releases in the form of resolutions. This one is H. Con. Res. 271, expressing the sense of the Congress that public awareness and education about the importance of health care coverage is of the utmost priority, utmost priority, and that the national importance of Health Care Coverage Month should be established to promote these goals. So we will have a whole month for people to get up here and tell you how everybody ought to have health insurance.

But the question you have to ask yourself is, Where is the proposal that would provide health care coverage for everybody? Where is it? We can put out these press releases.

This thing reminded me of the reason I came over here and I was sitting there reading this and I thought about the joke of the Methodist minister. He had gotten very ill and so the head of the board of deacons called all the deacons together one night and he called a meeting and they all got together to decide what to do about the illness of the minister. They had a long discussion. Many things were argued back and forth. And finally by a vote of six to five with 20 abstentions, they decided to write a letter to the minister urging him to get well.

Now, that is what this is. This is saying to the American people, why do you people not go out and get health

insurance? What is the matter with you? Do you not know how important that is? As though the American people were stupid or that they would not be doing it if they could.

The resolution is an indictment of itself. It says, "Whereas over 17.3 million of the uninsured are employed, but are not offered health coverage through their employers."

Now, if you are an individual in this country and you work full time and you are not offered it through your job, you are supposed to go out by yourself and find a policy. Anybody who knows anything about that kind of experience knows how ridiculous it is to say to people, you should be aware.

When are we going to take up the issue in real substance and get away from these letters to the American people to get well?

MAKE BUSH TAX CUT PERMANENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I come to the well today to draw attention to an issue which affects over 100 million American taxpayers. This past year because of the leadership of President Bush and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT) and the House Republican majorities, we were successful in enacting a tax cut which benefits and helps over 100 million taxpayers who now have lower taxes. And what we call the Bush tax cut when it was passed into law does a number of things. It lowered rates for everyone. In fact, 3.9 million families with children no longer pay Federal income tax. We have brought fairness to the Tax Code by phasing out the death tax, by eliminating and wiping out the marriage tax penalty, and also providing opportunities for taxpayers to save for retirement, a tremendous benefit for over 100 million Americans. And unfortunately, because of some of the arcane rules that we have in this Congress, that tax cut was made on a temporary basis.

It is always interesting that in this Congress under the rules that the House and Senate operate under, that spending increases and tax increases are easily made permanent; but when you want to lower taxes, you can only do it on a temporary basis, meaning that down the road that those who benefit from elimination of the marriage tax penalties or elimination of the death tax or seeing their taxes lowered because of rate reductions will have a tax increase.

In fact, when the Bush tax cut expires, it will be the biggest tax increase in our country. I want to draw attention to just one example of what the permanency of the Bush tax cut means. There are 43 million married working couples who benefit from the marriage tax relief. And I am one of those who,

like many in this House, particularly on the Republican side, who feel it is wrong that under our Tax Code that 43 million married couples paid higher taxes just because they were married prior to the Bush tax cuts. We passed legislation several times out of this House of Representatives to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, to eliminate that unfair aspect; and unfortunately, President Clinton at the time vetoed it.

But under President Bush we were successful in eliminating the marriage tax penalty, but unfortunately our efforts to wipe out the marriage tax penalty were temporary and means that if we do not make permanent the Bush tax cut, do not make permanent our efforts to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, 43 million married couples will have to pay higher taxes and will suffer once again the marriage tax penalty.

I believe, like I know many of my colleagues do, that it is just wrong that under our Tax Code that anyone should have to pay higher taxes just because they are married, because I believe, and I know Republicans believe, that we have should not punish society's most basic institution.

The marriage penalty occurred in the past because of the complications of our Tax Code. Married couples filed jointly, they combined their incomes, and it pushed them into a higher tax bracket. And they save about \$1,700 in taxes because of our marriage tax penalty relief. The bottom line is let us prevent a new marriage tax. Let us prevent an increase in taxes on married couples.

The House has passed legislation to make permanent the Bush tax cut, to make permanent our efforts to wipe out the marriage tax penalty. My hope is the entire Congress, Democrats and Republicans, will work together and pass this legislation as well. Let us make the Bush tax cut permanent. Let us benefit over 100 million taxpayers who, unless we act, will see higher taxes in just a few short years.

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DOE'S LITTLE SECRET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, we have assumed for some time that the Department of Energy has made an overwhelming effort to prove that their research on the Nation's spent nuclear fuel is based on sound science and safe for Americans. Well, Mr. Speaker, I stand before my colleagues today to ask that despite the DOE's claims that Yucca Mountain is a geologically safe place to store 77,000 tons of the Nation's nuclear waste, that we take a closer look at the truth behind these claims.