

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to go out of order to give my special order.

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

There was no objection.

ADDRESSING THE NATION'S HEALTH CARE PROBLEMS

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, according to a poll taken just this month in June 2003 by the Winston Group, nearly 50 percent of Americans believe that the uninsured and the high cost of health insurance are one of the biggest problems facing our country today. With skyrocketing health costs and a recent Census Bureau figure showing that 41.2 million Americans lack health insurance coverage, this information does not come as a surprise.

There are, Mr. Speaker, some free market and tax incentive initiatives that could increase health care coverage for a significant segment of the population, making this health care more available and less expensive. I am confident that there is legislation that has been introduced, and indeed the House passed overwhelmingly just a few hours ago, H.R. 660, that will address some of the root causes of these serious problems.

There is a bill, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1236, the Securing Access, Value, and Equality Health Care Act, that seeks to end the tax discrimination that makes it difficult for low-income families and individuals to purchase non-employer provided health insurance. H.R. 1236 does away with this discrimination by making prepayable, refundable tax credits available to all Americans for the purchase of health insurance regardless of their employer or their employment status.

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Under this bill, an individual could claim up to a \$1,000 tax credit, \$2,000 per married couple, and \$500 per child to a maximum of \$3,000 per family. By giving low-income individuals and families the purchasing power to meet their health insurance needs, the number of Americans without health insurance could be dramatically reduced.

Another bill, H.R. 2114, a bill that I introduced, a bill that enjoys bipartisan support, the Health Access and Flexibility Act, would increase access to medical savings accounts to all Americans and grant States the flexibility to provide Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program recipients health care coverage under a

medical savings account model. The bill removes the cap on medical savings accounts and allows MSA holders to fully fund their accounts.

Additionally, the bill would give States the ability to create medical savings-like accounts for Medicaid or CHIP recipients, and we have called these Medical Freedom Accounts.

By providing Americans with incentives to hold down medical spending through an MSA and giving them more flexibility on how to spend their own money on medical costs, the cost of health care can be contained and individuals will be able to achieve a higher quality of health outcomes.

And, Mr. Speaker, just today just a few hours ago, H.R. 660 passed this House, the Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2003, which allowed the establishment of association health plans. This bill allows businesses to pool their employees with other businesses that are part of the bona fide trade or business association to purchase employer-based health insurance. This gives small businesses this option, and this will be a powerful tool that will drive down the cost of employer-based health insurance making health insurance more affordable for small businesses and coverage more available to employees. With the passage of this bill, Mr. Speaker, we are one step closer to providing much needed relief to the uninsured.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to address the increasing cost of health insurance and the decreasing access to health insurance; but, Mr. Speaker it is my hope that this House can continue to work to improve the health and well-being of all Americans by taking up these last two measures and provide a robust solution to our Nation's health care problems.

PRAISING AND CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANKS of Arizona). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, before I begin my tribute, as a Texan, I would like to join with my good friend from San Antonio and around the State of Texas to be able to congratulate those fantastic San Antonio Spurs. As the Members well know, coming from Houston there is absolutely one basketball team that we all believe is number one, the Houston Rockets. But as Texans, we always rally around our friends and neighbors, and so I am delighted to congratulate the San Antonio Spurs. I am glad I did not make any wrong bets and to particularly appreciate David Robinson for his years of the kind of playing with integrity and character that we can all be proud of, the David Robinson School in San Antonio that he committed to with his own resources, the

spirit that he generated for that team, the outstanding work of most valuable player, Tim Duncan, and as well the fact that Steve Kerr came from the wonderful State of Illinois, but we have got him now, came off the bench and propelled the San Antonio Spurs to where they are today. My hat is off and I look forward to working with him and the team as we work to make Texas and the Nation a better place.

Today, I believe, Mr. Speaker, is a very good day and I have the honor of commemorating this day. It is Juneteenth, and we look forward to Juneteenth becoming a national holiday of commemoration to the extent that all of America is aware of the importance of this celebration. It is, in fact, June 19, today, that we are able to stand to pay tribute but also to solemnly acknowledge the importance of this day. I am very proud to have been able to join many of my colleagues, including the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY), and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN), and many others as we stood in the Mansfield Room in the United States Senate, the other body, paying tribute to this important day as well as being with Dr. Myers and others who believe that this is a historic time.

What is Juneteenth? Juneteenth is a statement of freedom. Juneteenth is the unshackling of a body of people. Juneteenth is the freeing of slaves in the State of Texas. Juneteenth is the renewing of one's character, integrity, spirit, and ability to achieve one's greatest opportunities. It was Juneteenth or June 19, 1865, some 2 long hard years after the Emancipation Proclamation, that the people of Texas, the slaves of Texas, I might say, were able to realize their freedom. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19 that the Union soldiers led by the courageous Major General Gordon Granger landed in Galveston, Texas, with the news that the Civil War ended and that the slaves were now freed, the end slaves were freed. The Emancipation Proclamation became official, however, on January 1, 1863. Nevertheless, aside from that sad fact the people were already in a state of bondage, they did not get the word because there were not enough Union soldiers there to enforce.

So, Mr. Speaker, we heard these words when Major Granger landed on that Galveston shore and freed or removed the bondage from those who were seeking to empower themselves, and he said, "The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer." What important words for today, Mr. Speaker.

And I say that because the Tulia 12 has just been freed in the State of Texas, and I want to announce to this Congress that the Committee on the Judiciary, I hope, will be holding investigatory hearings on what happened to hold those individuals when there was no basis and a sense of a lack of fairness in the judicial system. We want to make sure that the Tulia 12 will be free for all America to know, and we expect to hold those hearings.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we want to acknowledge that we are still fighting for that relationship of equality and so Juneteenth becomes more important because the Supreme Court will render its decision in the next week on the question of affirmative action, the right of equality and access to opportunity in this country, and I pray that Juneteenth will be commemorated in reality by a decision that upholds the University of Michigan's case.

Mr. Speaker, I close by acknowledging those in my home district tonight as I speak on the floor of the House celebrating Juneteenth, Representative Al Edwards for his great work on making this a holiday; Reverend Greg Patrick of South West Community Church helping to put on this great event celebrating Juneteenth; and Reverend C. Anderson Davis and Mrs. Bertha Davis, our historic and wonderful senior citizens who helped bring the celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation to Texas for all these many years. I thank them and may the celebration live on by the words "we shall overcome."

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of the joyous celebration of Juneteenth. For those of you who ask, "What is Juneteenth," I will tell you. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19 that the Union soldiers, led by the courageous Major General Gordon Granger, landed in Galveston, Texas with news that the Civil War had ended and that the enslaved were now free. The Emancipation Proclamation became official on January 1, 1863. Nevertheless, aside from the sad fact the people were already in a state of bondage, they had to wait two and a half years after President Lincoln's proclamation, to hear the news.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak about Juneteenth and I would like to share with you the letter that Major General Gordon Granger read to the emotion filled slaves. It reads as follows:

"The People of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer."

Prior to June 19, 1865, the Emancipation Proclamation had little impact on Texans due to the minimal number of Union troops available to enforce the new Executive order. Thanks to the meritorious Major Granger and the arrival of his troops, there were forces strong enough to overcome the resistance and to free the slaves.

Many stories have been told about the actual reason for why it took so long for the

news of the Emancipation to reach Galveston, but it is very difficult to say which one is true. The fact still remains that the news did not come to the enslaved Texans soon enough. The reactions to the profound news ranged from pure shock to immediate jubilation.

Upon hearing the news, many of the newly freed slaves went north and others went to neighboring states, such as Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. For those freed men and women, recounting the memories and festivities of that great day in June of 1865 served as motivation as well as a release from the growing pressures encountered in their new territory. The celebration of June 19th was coined "Juneteenth" and it grew with more participation from descendants. The Juneteenth celebration was a time for reassuring one another, for praying and for gathering with family members. This still holds true today because African Americans continue to face many challenges that call for prayer and gathering together with one's family and community.

When the celebration of Juneteenth originated, a range of activities were offered to entertain the masses, many of which continue in tradition today. Rodeos, fishing, barbecuing and baseball are just a few of the typical Juneteenth activities that one may witness or participate in today. One of the more popular activities during Juneteenth celebrations is barbecuing, through which Juneteenth celebrants can share in the spirit and aromas that their ancestors would have experienced during these festivities. For this reason, the barbecue pit is often established as the center of attention at Juneteenth celebrations, and you can smell the sweet smells of barbecue in the air in Houston and in many other areas.

The history of Juneteenth celebrations has its ups and downs. The downs came in the early 1900s when classrooms did very little to teach about Juneteenth. However the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s did much to revive the celebrations due to widespread protests and marches for freedom. On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official state holiday in Texas, largely through the efforts of Al Edwards, an African American state legislator. The passage of the bill was especially significant because it marked Juneteenth as the first emancipation celebration granted official state recognition. Texans had been among the last to hear of the Emancipation but we were the first to distinguish it as a state holiday.

Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and into the new millennium, Juneteenth has continued to enjoy a growing and healthy interest from communities and organizations throughout the county. The future of Juneteenth looks bright as the number of cities and states come on board and form local committees and organizations to coordinate celebratory activities.

Today, Juneteenth celebrates African American freedom while encouraging self-development and respect for all cultures. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this joyous celebration. I wish a very happy Juneteenth to all.

Further, Mr. Speaker I want to salute Rev. C. Anderson Davis and his wife Bertha Davis for their dedicated determined efforts and honoring and celebrating Juneteenth—and their support of the Houston National Emancipation Association.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

COMMITMENT TO WORLD PEACE

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my commitment to world peace and to stress the importance of establishing dialogue and understanding among all people. It is in recognition of this need that on Tuesday, June 24, at 6:30 p.m. in the Rayburn Room B338-340, the American Leadership Initiative will hold a special awards ceremony to honor great Americans from all 50 States who have demonstrated a commitment to peace. Many of my colleagues will join me and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), co-chair, in giving tribute to some of the outstanding Americans from our districts. Members of the clergy, legislators, educators, business and community leaders will be among those honored with the "Ambassadors for Peace Award-Excellence in Leadership." These committed citizens have been working to renew and strengthen our families and marriages, restore our communities, and rebuild our Nation and indeed our world. We are grateful to the founders of Ambassadors for Peace, the Reverend and Mrs. Sun Myung, for promoting the vision of world peace, and we commend them for their work.

These Ambassadors for Peace have become increasingly effective and relevant in their communities since the tragedy of 9-11. They have been working together to promote understanding among all faiths, particularly with Muslim, Jewish, and Christian leaders. With the realization that many of the tensions currently facing the world cannot be addressed without consideration of the religious implications involved, the Ambassadors for Peace have formed an American Interreligious Council. This council seeks to support and advise our Nation's leaders concerning the issues and challenges of seeking lasting peace. The American Interreligious Council is also part of the effort to create an international council of religious leaders. The members of this council will support the leaders of the United Nations as they work to resolve conflicts throughout the world. This body will provide a direct link between international leaders and the various religious peoples in their constituencies. This will help to ensure that peace agreements are embraced by the diverse communities these leaders represent.

Today, though crisis is at our doorstep, we must maintain an unwavering hope for peace. It has become clear that the establishment of a lasting peace throughout the world will only