

level of care for them leaves much to be desired as well.

It is because of these and many other grave health statistics that we are asking Congress to pass comprehensive health care reform, understanding that none of the diseases causing disparities can be successfully managed without sustained universal access to health care.

This week, the Democrats will introduce three bills to do just that: the Family Care Act, the Medicare Early Access Act, and the Small Business Health Insurance Promotion Act. There are also other bills that have already been introduced, of which I am proud to be a cosponsor, by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT).

This week we will take up H.R. 660, the Association Health Plan proposal, which poses, in my opinion, a serious threat to our existing employer-based health insurance system. It would exempt small employer plans from important State regulatory protections, and there is no reason to believe that eliminating these protections will help small employers expand coverage.

Instead, AHPs will be able to design services to cover industries and sectors with the healthiest employees and leave out small businesses with older or sicker workers, those who most need coverage. This ability to cherry-pick would drive up the cost of coverage for small businesses with less healthy profiles of workers who will then be left in the insurance pool by themselves. AHPs would be able to offer less generous benefit packages in order to bring down the costs of coverage. The CBO has already estimated that 80 percent of workers would be worse off under AHPs.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to put politics aside in addressing the issue of coverage as well as in malpractice reform, and the other health care bills we will be considering this week. Let us not opt for the short-term fix that is really no fix at all. Let us not support proposals that do not provide substantive remedies for these problems which affect the life and death of those we represent. And, above all, let us commit ourselves, this week and always, to do no harm.

#### DISTURBING EVENTS AND DISTURBING REMARKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I must say that I was not only quite disturbed, but concerned about the President's remarks yesterday at the Pentagon, and it goes as so: "Mr. Secretary, thank you for your hospitality and thank you for your leadership. You

are courageously leading our Nation in a war against terror. You are doing a superb job. You are a strong Secretary of Defense, and our Nation owes you a great debt of gratitude."

I must say that it is good to give commendations and thumbs up when it is time to give a thumbs up. But in the light of what is going on in the Department of Defense right now and in light of congressional hearings that are ongoing in the other body, I think the question mark of our true sincerity, being against the pictures, being against the acts that were carried out on individuals that were being questioned by members of our military in prison in Iraq, that I could say that the statements that are made by the Commander in Chief and also statements that are made by Secretary Rumsfeld and others could and will stimulate additional terrorism.

Now, to say that you are leading our Nation against terror, well, that question is the question of the week and of the month. As the Pentagon admits, Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers, that we have had knowledge of the ungodly acts that took place in mid-January, and that it was reported from Central Command that this was a big deal, this was a big deal, and that Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers both admit that they meet 3 to 4 times, maybe 5, using Secretary Rumsfeld's number, a day, and that they meet with the President at least once a week to talk about what is going on in the Pentagon; that anyone that might have seen or heard about these pictures or the acts that were being carried out, that they did not rise to the level of the Presidency of the United States.

Not only were these pictures and this investigation that the Pentagon had within the Pentagon, but the fact that it was not shared with the American people is even further disturbing.

□ 1300

Some folks say, well, Members of Congress are upset because they were not told. We are representatives of the people of the United States of America. Serving on the Committee on Armed Services, seeing week after week Pentagon brass coming before us, Secretary Rumsfeld coming before us and never once mention that something fundamentally wrong, we are investigating it, is going on in Saddam Hussein's prison in Iraq, not only the prison that the President spoke of as it relates to the terror and rape and things of that nature that were going on in that particular prison but including the Secretary of State and Secretary Rumsfeld, he mentioned 18,000 cases that are being heard by the Pentagon a year, 18,000. Well, 18,000 in that particular prison, not 18,000 in the theater of war.

One may say, well, if the Secretary steps down, then the terrorists win. I beg to differ. I feel that it will stop terrorists from recruiting young men and women to carry out acts of terror

against Americans abroad and here on the homeland. It will show a true commitment of the fact that we are taking an about-face on what took place.

Some of my colleagues have shared with us that there are six or seven individuals at fault here. I hope that is the case, but I can tell my colleagues that there is a building tide of evidence that proves different. Contractors, we may very well have to bring CEOs of companies before Congress to ask them what role did they have over commanding our American troops. That is disturbing in itself, the fact that a whole branch of our military or the Army unit that was over this particular prison was not trained for doing what they had to do; the fact that we knew and that the Pentagon was called in mid-January to say this was a big deal, not a little deal but a big deal; the fact that we were not informed. I will tell my colleagues the reason why Congress was not informed was because we would not have tolerated the suppression of this information.

At the highest levels of our military, it is very, very important that this information is shared with the American people. At the highest levels of our military, including the Secretary of Defense, it is very important he shares this information.

I will tell my colleagues, let us not stand and say things that will stimulate terrorism. Let us not take one step forward and three steps back.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the House continues to move forth. I, for one, feel that Secretary Rumsfeld stepping down will save American lives and will allow our Pentagon to move forward the courts martial that are before it.

#### ELIMINATE THE "YES, BUT" MENTALITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PENCE). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I came to the well today because I am starting to hear something that I think the American people do not want to hear, and that is, that these terrible things were done by a few individuals in Iraq, but. All too often I am hearing the word "but" creeping in.

Mr. Speaker, last night I was listening to Michael Savage. Hundreds of stations around the country carry this man, and he was not just saying "yes, but." He was saying, well, these people are Muslim; Islam is a religion of war, and we have to understand they have always been involved in war and they only understand violence and they only understand this. This is why Saddam had these torture chambers because that is the only way to make them understand.

When I heard that said on national radio, I realized that the "yes, but"

cannot be tolerated here on the House floor or in the other body or on K Street or on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is extremely important that we in this body today eliminate that "yes, but" mentality. There is no "yes." We must be above torture. We must be above violating the Geneva Conventions, but we must understand that these individuals may not be "conventional combatants." Mr. Speaker, that is not the way America stands for freedom. It is not the way we were brought up. There is no "but" after "yes."

Yes, we will honor the Geneva Conventions. Yes, every soldier, sailor and Marine in Iraq, in Guantanamo, in Afghanistan and around the world understands or should understand that we hold them to a standard that we would want for ourselves, not the standard that the other side may subject us to. No matter what happens anywhere in the world to Americans, not in Somalia, not in Iraq, not in Afghanistan and not in the Twin Towers of New York, justifies us treating other human beings in a way differently than we would want to be treated.

Mr. Speaker, to me this is the most important message for America to send. Mr. Speaker, I hope in this body, at least from this time forward, there will be no "but" after "yes." We hold Americans to high standards.

#### RHETORIC OF WAR CRUSADE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the previous speakers have talked about the attitude of the American soldier and the American public, and the rhetoric of war is what really gets us to where we are today in the situation in Iraq. When you dehumanize people, you can then do anything to them.

It is my firm belief that this attitude starts at the very top. When we have someone who leads us who says that the leader of the other country is Hitler, raising all those images of a Holocaust and all the rest, or talks about the issues of being on a crusade, which raises all the issues of the various crusades that went through the Middle East back in the 11th and 12th century, we realize that the stage is being set psychologically for everyone in this country.

I was reading the British press. One of their articles started, "The media in this country is politely shocked at photos of Iraqis being tortured and humiliated by U.S. and British troops. A BBC1 news presenter says the picture seem to have been 'merely mementos.'" Something one would laugh about in the family and then paste in the family album.

Now, those young people, and I have been watching the hearings over in the

Senate, the effort to limit this and say it is just seven or eight young people and perhaps a couple of lieutenants up the line but really it is a rogue operation, is simply not true. It runs all the way to the top.

The decisions here have to be signed off. Anybody who has been in the military knows about the chain of command, and somebody does not sign off down at the lieutenant level and not bother to send it up to the captain or to the colonel or to the general. They all go up the line. They have all been signed off, one way or another, or somebody at the top said here is a blank check, do whatever you want, which of course they would deny. They would never say that, but then how do you explain that this behavior went on through this period of time?

Another excuse that I hear thrown around here is that, well, they are not as bad as Saddam. Look what Saddam did. Well, since when is our standard Saddam Hussein? That clearly is not the standard by which we operate; but unfortunately, the attitude of the people who took us into this, the neo-cons in the administration, right next to the President, couple of them, Ken Adelman, Paul Wolfowitz, have spoken of snakes. If you want to talk about Iraqi people as snakes, I guess you can, but you pay a price in your own soul when you think of another human being as a snake or you talk about going over and draining the swamps in uncivilized parts of the world.

The Arabs invented arithmetic. They invented the zero. They were some of the earliest astronomers. Do not tell me they have no civilization. But when you start to dehumanize them and put them down at this low, low level, then you send the message out verbally, nonverbally, whether it is in a memo, whether it is in written form, whether it is how you talk to your troops, you are giving permission to do what was done and to take pictures.

Now, you do not take pictures of this to take home to your family album. Those pictures were done to humiliate. Everybody says, wait a minute, let me comb my hair before I have my picture taken. Everybody knows what a picture does because it grabs the moment in a way that you cannot change it. So when you take a picture of one of these events, you know what you are doing. You are doing it because somebody told you to do it or somewhere you have got the idea that what you were doing was already one or the other. Either that was an order to take those pictures, or else the atmosphere was such that people felt that they could take these pictures.

We have a moment here in this country in which we can examine our own souls and our own hearts about how we let this happen. We all bear responsibility for it. Our leadership from the top on down, they always dehumanized.

I remember during the Vietnam War, we had a lot of names for people who were from Vietnam, not very nice

names. You would not use them today; and when that starts happening at the top, it goes down and we cannot end with putting seven soldiers in the brig. That will not be justice.

#### RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 12 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:

In scriptural times, when the psalms were still being written, and their original melodies were being sung, Your people, O Lord, would gather at the city's gates to hear the news and sort out matters of justice.

Lord God, be present in the assembly of the House of Representatives today. Here is the sampling of this Republic. Here the laws of the United States are made. Here is the gate that protects, yet ushers in an understanding of who we are as a Nation and how we interact with others. Where there is vision and no action, it is only a daydream. When there is action and no vision, it is a nightmare. So grant your people wisdom once again.

For we have been warned: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep vigil. It is vain for you to work day and night only to gain immediate satisfaction when the Lord blesses his beloved even while they sleep."

Grant us wisdom that we may be Your beloved now and forever. 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 Texas (Mr. LAMPSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. LAMPSON 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.