

Mr. Speaker, for more than 40 years, Medicaid has served as the Nation's health care safety net, providing access to health services for millions who cannot afford private insurance in a dynamic and changing economy.

Today, more than 57 million children, poor, disabled and elderly individuals rely on Medicaid for care. The program now serves more people than Medicare, and with the ranks of the uninsured growing, and the threat of an economic recession, the Medicaid program is more important than ever.

Mr. Speaker, hospitals are the backbone of America's health care safety net, providing care to all patients who come through their doors, regardless of their ability to pay. But, hospitals are experiencing severe payment shortfalls when treating Medicaid patients.

Despite these financial pressures, the Administration continues to call for further cuts in federal funds for the Medicaid program that will affect hospitals and the patients they serve.

Despite concerns raised by Congress, CMS continues to take steps to implement these regulations. These rules range from limiting payments for teaching hospitals, public hospitals and hospital outpatient services to reducing school-based services for children and case management for the disabled.

Last year, Congress imposed a year-long moratorium (P.L. 110–28) on two regulations the proposed and final cost-limit rule and the proposed graduate medical education (GME) rule. The moratorium on implementation of these rules expires May 25, 2008.

CMS's regulatory budget-cutting policies will have a devastating effect on my home State of New Jersey's Medicaid program, along with the hospitals and physicians serving our Nation's most vulnerable population—poor children and mothers, the disabled and elderly individuals. Much of Congress has expressed opposition to these rules.

This bill would delay implementation of regulations affecting: CPEs; IGTs; GME; coverage of rehab services for people with disabilities; outreach and enrollment in schools, in addition to specialized medical transportation to school for children covered by Medicaid; coverage of hospital outpatient services; case management services that allow people with disabilities to remain in the community; and state provider tax laws.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that CMS's regulatory budget-cutting policies will have a devastating effect on my home State of New Jersey's Medicaid program, along with the hospitals and physicians serving our Nation's most vulnerable population—poor children and mothers, the disabled and elderly individuals.

Mr. Speaker, we need to pass H.R. 5613 today. I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill legislation.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5613, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

WORLD GLAUCOMA DAY

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 981) recognizing March 6, 2008, as the first-ever World Glaucoma Day, established to increase awareness of glaucoma, which is the second leading cause of preventable blindness in the United States and worldwide, as amended.

The Clerk read the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 981

Whereas glaucoma is a progressive disease of the optic nerve, robbing individuals of both peripheral and central vision;

Whereas glaucoma affects all age groups, including infants, children, and the elderly;

Whereas glaucoma disproportionately affects underserved minority populations, with African-Americans having a three times greater risk of developing this disease than White Americans, and it is the leading cause of irreversible vision loss in African-Americans and Hispanics;

Whereas glaucoma is the second leading cause of preventable vision loss in the United States, afflicting 2,200,000 Americans, and it is the leading cause of permanent blindness worldwide, afflicting 67,000,000 persons;

Whereas awareness is absolutely crucial, as glaucoma often has no symptoms until vision loss occurs, and it is estimated that, in the United States, more than half of the individuals with glaucoma are unaware that they have it and, in developing countries, 90 percent of individuals with glaucoma are unaware that they have it;

Whereas with early diagnosis and ongoing treatment, 90 percent of the cases where blindness occurs can be avoided and awareness is crucial, so that individuals with known risk factors for glaucoma and those over the age of 40 should have regular, comprehensive eye examinations that include careful evaluation of the optic nerve and measurement of eye pressure;

Whereas the National Eye Institute ("NEI") within the National Institutes of Health ("NIH") has been a worldwide leader in glaucoma research, elucidating the genetic basis of different types of the disease (including risk factors) and the potential for gene therapy approaches, identifying factors that can protect the optic nerve from damage, evaluating the potential for optic nerve cell regeneration, and better understanding how elevated intraocular pressure leads to optic nerve damage and how pressure-reducing drugs ultimately developed from NEI-led research can reduce glaucoma progression;

Whereas it is the role of the NEI to support research to prevent, diagnose, and cure glaucoma-related vision impairment and blindness, which disproportionately affects underserved minority populations; and

Whereas the public needs to know the insidious nature of glaucoma, that there are means for detecting and treating it to save sight, and the importance of compliance associated with those treatments, and the first-ever World Glaucoma Day is an observance planned to increase global awareness in that regard: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the United States House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the first-ever World Glaucoma Day;

(2) supports the efforts of the National Eye Institute within the National Institutes of Health to continue research on the causes of glaucoma, including genetic and environmental risk factors, glaucoma prevention, the relationships between damage to the optic nerve and loss of vision, societal and individual impacts, diagnostics, and treatment to save and potentially restore sight; and

(3) congratulates the American Glaucoma Society for its efforts to expand awareness of the prevalence and economic burden of glaucoma.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H. Res. 981, recognizing March 6, 2008, as the first-ever World Glaucoma Day. As a co-sponsor of this resolution, I am proud to speak out in favor of greater support for glaucoma awareness and prevention.

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of preventable vision loss in the United States and the leading cause of permanent blindness worldwide. It afflicts 67 million people by some estimates. While glaucoma affects all age groups, it is of special concern to me because it disproportionately affects underserved minority populations, particularly African Americans over age 40 and Mexican Americans over 60.

The resolution before us supports the observance of World Glaucoma Day, which would raise awareness about glaucoma on a global scale. Awareness is especially important since nearly 90 percent of individuals with glaucoma are unaware that they have it. Moreover, regular comprehensive eye exams can lead to early diagnosis and treatment that can lessen the impact of this devastating disease.

The resolution also supports the efforts of the National Eye Institute and its commitment to continue research on the causes of glaucoma. By learning more about the causes of this insidious disease, we may one day find a cure.

The resolution also congratulates the American Glaucoma Society for its efforts to raise awareness about the prevalence of the disease. The American Glaucoma Society helps to preserve vision by supporting glaucoma specialists and scientists through the advancement of education and research.

I also wish to thank the Friends of the Congressional Glaucoma Caucus Foundation, a nonprofit foundation funded in part by the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention, for its outstanding contributions in providing free glaucoma screening for 200,000 people from 2001 to date, while administering the programs that include follow-up and treatment services across the country. Further, I must point out that I am a cosponsor of H.R. 3005, the Glaucoma Screening Act of 2007. This measure was introduced by Representatives SERRANO and BOOZMAN and Mr. MENENDEZ of the Senate. I urge my colleagues on the House Energy and Commerce Committee to hold a hearing on this bill soon.

Finally, I want to thank my colleague, Congresswoman TAMMY BALDWIN, for her leadership on H. Res. 981, which recognizes March 6, 2008, as the first-ever World Glaucoma Day. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of its adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) will control the time of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON).

There was no objection.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to start by thanking my colleague Congresswoman BALDWIN for introducing this legislation along with 100-plus additional Members who have signed on as cosponsors to this important resolution. I would also like to praise the extensive grassroots effort made by numerous eye disease and prevention groups to ensure that this bill passes today in the House of Representatives.

It is an honor for me to speak in favor of this legislation today. This bill recognizes March 6, 2008, as the first-ever World Glaucoma Day. This day was established to increase awareness of glaucoma, which is the second leading cause of preventable blindness in the United States and worldwide. I can speak from personal experience regarding the importance of eye health and getting the appropriate screenings throughout a person's lifetime.

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that cause progressive damage of the optic nerve at the point where it leaves the eye to carry visual information to the brain. This disease robs individuals of both peripheral and central vision. If left untreated, many types of glaucoma progress towards gradually worsening visual damage and could and may lead to blindness. Once incurred, visual damage is irreversible.

It is estimated that glaucoma affects 2.2 million Americans and 67 million people worldwide, that 4.5 million people globally are blind due to glaucoma, and that number will rise to 11.2 million by 2020.

There are several types of glaucoma. Some may occur as a complication of

other visual disorders, but the vast majority occurs without any known cause. Glaucoma affects all age groups, including infants and children. In most cases, however, glaucoma appears later in life, and its frequency increases with age.

There is no cure for glaucoma yet, and vision loss is irreversible. Therefore, early detection is essential to limiting visual impairment and preventing the progression towards severe visual handicap or blindness. With early diagnosis and treatment, 90 percent of cases where blindness occurs can be avoided.

My colleague from New York just said this important fact: This is a preventable disease. Individuals with numerous factors and those over the age of 40 should have a regular comprehensive eye exam. World Glaucoma Day is one of the many efforts to increase awareness of the importance of eye health. There are several ways to detect and treat glaucoma to save sight, and it is essential that the message reaches every single person.

I'm honored to support this legislation and to work for its passage. But today, Mr. Speaker, we have a message that is there for all Americans and the world to hear, and that is glaucoma is preventable. Awareness is something we should all have and be mindful that we can work towards a cure in the very near future.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This is very important legislation to me. In the early part of my life, I worked for the Industrial Home for the Blind, which is now referred to as the Helen Keller Foundation. I had the opportunity to see and to talk to people, in many instances who were blind because they did not get the attention at an early stage and as a result they lost their vision.

So I think what we are doing here today is so important, that we pass this legislation which encourages people to seek treatment, encourages people to get eye exams. I think that is the thing we need to do. Because as my colleague indicated, early detection sometimes can prevent this.

On that note, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I too join my colleague from New York in talking about not only the importance of what we are doing here today, but also to thank the many groups from around the country that have taken time to touch base with their Member of Congress about the importance of not only treatments of glaucoma, but the awareness of glaucoma.

Today, we are on the floor for the first ever opportunity to say we are going to highlight this important effort and battle that we are doing, and we are going to make progress on that.

It really comes about through awareness, where people who perhaps are hearing about glaucoma for the first time and understanding about the pressure that is put on the eye that can cause this blindness, but is preventable. I hope that the time that we spend today will find itself in messages to thousands of people who recognize that their time to come to Washington, DC to tell their story about this, really did matter, and paid off.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to notify the gentleman that I do not have any additional speakers, and I will find out if he does. But I would encourage him to run through his speakers.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TOWNS. I do not have any additional speakers. I think we have the right to close.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from New York, Mr. TOWNS, for taking the time to come in a little bit early today to work on behalf of the gentlewoman, Congresswoman BALDWIN, on this important effort. She and I joined together on this effort. We joined together and had the support from some 100 other Members of Congress, who have heard the message, who believe that it is important that we have this resolution on the floor today. We are proud that we have done this. It is a meaningful effort that this entire House of Representatives do this. I will be very proud of what the House does today to pass the bill.

I thank the Speaker for allowing this bill to come to the floor today.

With that, I yield back my time.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague for the outstanding work that he has done. I also would like to thank Congresswoman BALDWIN for her outstanding work as well, who has been detained and not able to get here. But she has worked real hard on this because she understands how important it is in terms of early detection.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 981, which recognizes March 6, 2008, as the first-ever World Glaucoma Day and I wish to thank my colleague, Mr. SESSIONS, for joining me in introducing this resolution.

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of preventable vision loss in the United States. It is a group of diseases that damages the optic nerve and leads to vision loss. An estimated 2.2 million Americans have glaucoma. An additional 2 million have glaucoma, but do not know it, as glaucoma often has no symptoms until vision loss occurs.

If left untreated, glaucoma leads to blindness, which has occurred in about 120,000 Americans. Worldwide, nearly 70 million people are affected by the disease.

Every American over the age of 60 is at risk of developing glaucoma, which also disproportionately affects minority populations. African Americans have a three times greater risk of developing this disease than white Americans, and it is the leading cause of irreversible vision loss in African Americans and Hispanics.

With early diagnosis and ongoing treatment, however, 90 percent of the cases where blindness occurs can be avoided. Awareness is crucial, so that individuals with known risk factors for glaucoma and those over the age of 40 should have regular, comprehensive eye examinations that include careful evaluation of the optic nerve and measurement of eye pressure.

So Mr. Speaker, I am happy today that the House of Representatives is considering this resolution, which seeks to expand global awareness about the incidence and burden of glaucoma.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize the American Glaucoma Society for its efforts to expand awareness of the prevalence and economic burden of glaucoma. Their advocacy surrounding the first-ever World Glaucoma Day has been truly valuable in promoting eye health.

Mr. TOWNS. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 981, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE REEF

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1112) recognizing 2008 as the International Year of the Reef.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1112

Whereas the International Coral Reef Initiative has designated 2008 as the International Year of the Reef;

Whereas the International Year of the Reef is a global effort to raise public awareness of the value of coral reefs and the significance of the threats faced by coral reef systems, and to mobilize action to develop and implement innovative solutions and strategies to protect and conserve these important natural resources;

Whereas over 225 organizations in 50 countries and territories participated during the first International Year of the Reef in 1997;

Whereas coral reef systems provide economic, environmental, and cultural benefits to millions of people around the world and are vital in protecting shorelines and supporting coastal economies;

Whereas coral reef systems are the most diverse ecosystem on earth, supporting at least 1,000,000 known species of plants and animals and 25 percent of all marine life;

Whereas coral reef systems contribute \$375,000,000,000 each year to the worldwide economy;

Whereas over 50 percent of all federally managed fisheries species in the U.S. depend upon coral reefs for part of their life cycle;

Whereas coral reef systems provide for one-fourth of the total fish catch in the developing world;

Whereas coral reefs around the world are confronted by many grave threats, including destructive fishing methods, damage by marine vessels and divers, development, pollution, ocean acidification, increasing sea temperatures, bleaching, and invasive species; and

Whereas increased public awareness, as well as public and private investment, can prevent the further degradation of the world's coral reef systems in order to preserve this precious resource for future generations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the United States House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the International Year of the Reef;

(2) supports strong programs in environmental and marine research at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other Federal agencies to better understand the threats faced by coral reef systems;

(3) supports the efforts of the International Coral Reef Initiative to promote public awareness and encourage public stewardship of the world's coral reefs; and

(4) encourages further research and development efforts to preserve coral reefs around the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) and the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H. Res. 1112, the resolution now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am very pleased to be here today to speak in support of H. Res. 1112, a resolution I have introduced with my friend from Illinois, MARK KIRK. The resolution expresses the support of the House of Representatives for the International Coral Reef Initiative designation of the year 2008 as the International Year of the Reef, and for strong environmental and marine research efforts that will allow us to better understand the threats facing the planet's coral reef systems.

From the Great Barrier Reef that spans over 1,600 miles just off Australia's northeast coast, to the coral reefs found within the Red Sea, to the coral reef system that began forming off the Florida coast nearly 7,000 years ago, coral reefs are among the most vibrant and diverse ecosystems on the planet. Known as the Rain Forest of the Sea, these important treasures are not only the source of food and shelter to millions of sea creatures, they also provide environmental, cultural, and

economic value for people around the world.

However, coral reefs across the planet are in peril and face an uncertain future. Global estimates suggest that 10 percent of the earth's coral reefs have already been seriously degraded, and an even greater share of reefs face serious decline. Rising sea temperatures, damage by divers and marine vessels, pollution, and other manmade threats have raised the specter that over the next century, a vast number of the world's coral reef systems will cease to exist.

One of the most troubling threats facing coral reefs is ocean acidification, a phenomenon that occurs when the ocean becomes so acidic that corals and other shell-making organisms are unable to produce the calcium carbonate or to use the calcium carbonate that they need to form their shells. Another disturbing trend is the onset of coral bleaching, which results from rising sea temperatures causing corals to expel the algae that live within their tissues and provide the corals' different colors. Once the algae has been expelled, corals lose their color and, lacking the nourishment provided by photosynthesis that algae provides, the coral dies.

In 1994, recognizing the increasing degradation of the world reefs, the U.S. partnered with other countries to establish the International Coral Reef Initiative. Through its efforts, the International Coral Reef Initiative has mobilized regional and national governments to pursue science-based management of coral reef systems, spurred the establishment of coordinated coral reef protection efforts, and assembled organizations and stakeholders throughout the world to address pollution and other manmade threats that imperil the coral reefs of the world.

The International Coral Reef Initiative has declared 2008 the International Year of the Reef. The Initiative is leading an international effort to continue to bring the preservation of coral reefs into the global spotlight so that we can do what needs to be done to protect these vital national resources for generations to come.

I would like to commend the International Coral Reef Initiative for its efforts and express my enthusiasm for the level of interest, participation, and action that has been generated as a result of its work. I would also like to thank Chairman GORDON and Ranking Member HALL, as well as their staff, for bringing this resolution to the floor. I look forward to working with them further to ensure that the world's coral reefs are protected and preserved, and I urge passage of the resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 1112, recognizing 2008 as the International Year of the Reef. For almost 15 years, the United States has been an active participant