

that this Congress is allowed to convene on yet another day to come, may that be the day when we finally hear the cries of the innocent unborn children, and may that be the day when we find the humanity, the courage, and the will to embrace together our human and our constitutional duty to protect the least of these, our tiny American brothers and sisters, from this murderous scourge upon our Nation called abortion on demand.

Mr. Speaker, this is April 22, 2008, 12,874 days since Roe versus Wade first stained the very foundations of this Nation with the blood of its own children, and this in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. SOLIS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ZIMBABWE

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

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, there is an issue of critical concern to the human rights movement around the world and a critical concern to the continent of Africa. And it is because tonight, I just want to report, that the country of Zimbabwe is in very, very grim and dire shape. President Robert Mugabe has plundered his country, driving it to ruin. And you know a little bit about the violence that you have seen on television over the last 72 hours. A once prosperous economy has been devastated by misrule; inflation is running at 200,000 percent per year, and life expectancy there has been driven down to a mere 34 years.

This was once a major agricultural exporter to the rest of Africa, but many Zimbabweans are now facing starvation because Mugabe has kicked productive farmers off his land. His regime has used food as a weapon; he rewards backers; he starves and punishes opponents. As Karl Marx said: Those who will not obey will not eat.

Today, after 28 years of misrule, Mugabe is trying to steal the election, cracking heads to extend his reign. Defeated at the ballot box, the regime has simply refused to release official election results. And, instead, what has it done? It has stepped up its violence against the people across the countryside. It has arrested and killed its political opponents. 3,000 families have been forced from their homes. The torture chambers are full. Human rights groups report on those dead and those tortured to death. Ominously, the regime has charged the opposition presidential candidate with treason, and we know what that means, a charge that could signal the beginning of massive

violence against the majority that supported the movement for democratic change.

We should remember that this is the same Robert Mugabe that engineered a massacre in Southern Zimbabwe in Matabeleland in the early 1980s, and he used North Korean troops, North Korean trained troops. Those in the countryside can show you the wells, as they showed us, where those North Korean troops of the fifth brigade directed the local villagers be thrown down alive down those wells and be killed. And that spate of killing took thousands and thousands of lives across the country. So, this is an autocrat who has stopped at nothing. And he has allies.

As we speak, a Chinese freighter is adrift somewhere off the western coast of Africa looking for a friendly port to unload a shipment destined for Zimbabwe. And in the hull of that ship is 3 million rounds of AK-47 ammo, 1,500 rounds of 40 millimeter rockets, 2,703 rounds of 60 millimeter mortar bombs. This cargo could quickly turn Zimbabwe into a killing field.

China has played a similar role elsewhere, fueling other African violence, showing contempt for African lives. It provided the machetes to the Hutu militia to carry out its 1994 genocide. Beijing is arming the government in Sudan, which is committing genocide in Darfur with those weapons. It does this for political influence and Beijing does it for economic gain, especially oil and mineral wealth. China is currently Zimbabwe's largest investor and second largest trading partner, where it secures much needed natural resources for China. But it is also its armory.

But the thing I have to reported tonight is that China is running into roadblocks, because last week South African port and truck workers refused to move this 70-ton weapons shipment to Zimbabwe. They were made aware of it by an investigative journalist. Their strike was backed by the South African union movement which said: South Africa cannot be seen to be facilitating the flow of weapons into Zimbabwe at a time when there is a political dispute and a volatile situation.

The spokesman was being diplomatic. South African labor has been one of the few to pointedly and vocally criticize Mugabe's tyranny. They despise the tyrant to their north and they called for an international boycott of this ship. And this is an inspiring event.

In the early 1970s, a labor leader at a Polish port stood up as well. Lech Walesa faced off against Soviet tyranny, demanding democracy and freedom for his native Poland.

This week, South African port workers said they weren't going to play any role in Mugabe's next slaughter. Their action hasn't brought down a tyranny, but it may have been the beginning of one's fall. For years, Mr. Speaker, neighboring countries have set back applauding Mugabe despite the many Zimbabweans he has beaten and killed. The South African government has

been an offender in this. It has even given Mugabe means of cover. President Thabo Mbeki recently called the election normal, and denied the crisis in Zimbabwe. His government would have allowed the Chinese armed shipment to transit South Africa, but China decided to avoid the hassle at South African ports. This diplomatic support from South Africa and others has bolstered Mugabe at home. But, in the meantime, the neighbors have taken their lead. Their opposition has snowballed: Mozambique has said no. Namibia has said no. We hope tomorrow Angola says no, and sends this ship laden with its weapons back to China.

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IN MEMORY OF SERGEANT WILLIAM ALLMON

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, today the residents of Floyd County, Georgia are saying goodbye to a native son who died while bravely serving his Nation in Iraq. Sergeant William Elliot Allmon was killed in action on April 12, 2008 outside of Baghdad, after his vehicle encountered an IED, an improvised explosive device.

Last night, I joined Sergeant Will Allmon's family, friends, and supporters at his visitation to honor the life of this brave soldier. He was remembered as a man of the highest character whose receipt of two Army commendation medals, an Army achievement medal, a combat action badge are testament to the supreme sense of duty he felt to his country and to his brothers in arms, his comrades. Most importantly, he was remembered as a first-born son, a father, and grandson whose contagious smile brought a sense of warmth to those in his presence.

Born and raised in Floyd County, Georgia, Will joined the National Guard at age 17 before going full active duty in 2003. After serving one tour in Iraq, and even being wounded, Sergeant Allmon selflessly decided to return to the war zone for a second tour, from which his unit will return home this summer.

His whole mission in Iraq centered on keeping his fellow soldiers safe, risking his life for the sake of others. Sergeant Allmon served as a combat engineer for the Army, where he specialized in building protective structures for friendly forces and destroying protective structures for the enemy.

I think his mom put it best when she said, "He was a leader who was looked up to by other soldiers. He was a loyal soldier who went beyond the call of duty."

Sergeant Allmon leaves behind his wife, Jennifer; his 3-year-old son, Damien; an 11-year-old stepson, Jason Luke Johnson; his mother, Donna Fortune; his father, William Allmon; his

grandfather, Leonard Allmon; and grandparents, Billy and Joann Phillips.

Mr. Speaker, my prayers go out to his family and my deepest gratitude goes out to Sergeant Allmon for his selfless sacrifice for this Nation, and I ask all Members, and I know they will, join me in honoring the distinguished memory of Sergeant William Allmon.

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

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

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

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

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

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

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 5515

Mr. GOODE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw my name as a cosponsor of H.R. 5515.

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

There was no objection.

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, tonight I am honored to be able to speak this evening about the issue of universal health care, one of the biggest domestic challenges that is facing our country at the present time. I am also pleased to be joined this evening and who will be speaking in just a few minutes, by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) on the issue of universal health care.

Mr. Speaker, again I am very pleased to have this time to speak on a topic that remains of paramount concern to individuals and families across the country, and that is again the issue of health care in America.

Health care costs, Mr. Speaker, are rising in the United States at an alarming, alarming rate. Yet despite

the fact that we spend more per capita on health care than any other industrialized country, we produce very disappointing outcomes by a number of important measures. One major attributable factor is the high level of uninsured in America.

Furthermore, the U.S. remains the only developed nation that does not guarantee health coverage as a right to all of its citizens. Today, there are nearly 47 million Americans who lack health insurance coverage, leaving one in six without access to proper medical care. What makes these figures more shocking is that over 80 percent of the uninsured come from working families. As the cost of health care continues to rise, it is clearly burdening our families and placing American employers at more and more of a competitive disadvantage. Therefore, I believe it is our duty as policymakers to offer a new vision and new solutions to fix our ailing health care system.

Providing quality, affordable health care to every American has been a long-time priority of mine. And it is in this spirit of furthering the national dialogue on this important issue that my colleague from Connecticut, Congressman CHRIS SHAYS and I have worked together to introduce H.R. 5348, the American Health Benefits Program Act of 2008.

This bipartisan universal health care proposal is based on a tried-and-true program that has stood the test of time, and that is the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program or FEHBP as it is called. Currently over 8 million Federal employees, retirees and their dependents receive health insurance coverage under FEHBP. This includes Members of Congress.

This program uses a system of managed competition between private insurance carriers and provides enrollees with a large menu of coverage options. Its use of bulk purchasing power helps contain costs and brings stability to the system. In 2007, this resulted in an average premium increase of just 1.8 percent compared to the private market average of 6.1 percent. And by the way, I have yet to come across an employer, at least in my home district, or anywhere in the country, for that matter, who has only realized a 6.1 percent increase in their health care costs. Generally it is in the double digits and sometimes you can be talking about 20 or 30 percent or more increases to a given health care plan in any given year. Our proposal basically would use that successful model to provide similar benefits to all Americans, establishing the first ever American health benefits program or AHBP.

Now the development of AHBP will be guided by eight fundamental principles, and they are on this chart to my right: choice, shared responsibility, affordability, portability, continuity, preventive care, and health care reinvestment. I believe these are the types of principles that we have to have in any type of system and they are cer-

tainly the core tenets of our universal health care proposal.

Now under AHBP, employers who wish to continue negotiating with private insurance carriers may do so as long as the coverage they offer meets a basic standard set by AHBP. However, employer-sponsored coverage is proving to be more and more cost-prohibitive for businesses as health care costs continue to outpace inflation and insurance options drastically fluctuate from plan to plan. That's why AHBP allows companies to choose to pay a fixed predictable payroll tax according to their size and average employee earnings.

We have a chart here which says that depending on the average number of employees that a company has, as well as according to their average salary, they would pay a certain percentage of their payroll tax. For example, on the very lower end where you have the small businesses that have the lowest average earnings, that company would only pay a maximum of 4 percent of payroll.

On the higher end, you would have the companies that at the very highest end would pay no more than 10 percent of payroll. There would be a certain cap on the average earning itself.

So my point is that there is a range of options here. There is a range of plans to choose from, but this is also an affordable way for employees to have health care coverage.

Basically we are separating out the coverage from the workplace itself. We need to get away from the issue of just employer-sponsored coverage. I think it is the best way to go, and it is a sensible proposal.

For many businesses this may cost less than they currently spend on premium contributions and health care and health plan administration. Payroll tax revenue under the system we are proposing will basically create a funding stream to allow for a fixed government contribution of 72 percent toward health care premiums of every participating American.

Individuals in AHBP will have the responsibility to pay for the remaining share of their premiums, to the extent that they can afford it, again with the lowest income earners receiving subsidies to ensure affordability.

This new program is not a single-payer system. It is not one size fits all, and it does not reinvent the wheel. Medicare, Medicaid and veteran services and other public programs that are tailored to specific populations will remain intact. Additionally, no one will be denied coverage or discriminated against based on their health status or preexisting condition. That is a very important tenet of this proposal.

AHBP will use basically an expanded system of managed competition to ensure that private insurance carriers compete for enrollees on the basis of benefits as well as efficiency, service and price. It will offer portable and continuous coverage and incentivize investment in disease preventive and