

Lance Corporal Haerter was from the small Peconic Bay community of Sag Harbor, New York, and is the village's first war casualty since World War II. He is the 30th of our brave troops from Long Island, and the eighth constituent of mine, who has fallen in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lance Corporal Haerter had been in Iraq for only a month when he died a hero while defending a checkpoint in Ramadi. He was killed while firing at the driver of an enemy truck full of explosives that was running a barrier and about to crash into dozens of his fellow marines. His noble sacrifice was honored earlier this week when hundreds of Long Islanders paid their respects outside the Old Whalers Church in Sag Harbor. They remembered his youth, his love of the Marine Corps, and his determination to be the best marine he could be. He was always faithful.

On behalf of New York's First Congressional District, I extend our heartfelt condolences to his family. Their loss will never be forgotten, and we will always remember Jordan's noble sacrifice.

PASS THE "RIPE" ACT

(Mr. FLAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLAKE. Madam Speaker, recently I introduced a bill to repeal some of the legislative provisions that have led to an artificial demand for ethanol. H.R. 5911, the Remove Incentives for Producing Ethanol Act of 2008, or RIPE Act, repeals the renewable fuel standard, repeals tax credits for ethanol producers, and repeals tariffs and duties on imported ethanol. These incentives are giving ethanol producers a guaranteed market for their product.

Domestic corn, already a heavily subsidized commodity, has been the primary source of biofuel, and the mandate has encouraged farmers to focus agriculture production away from food production toward fuel production. The Department of Agriculture has said that the biofuel mandate has raised fuel prices as much as 20 percent.

In addition, ethanol's role as a supposed savior for our energy woes has been severely overstated. Ethanol as a fuel yields about 30 percent less energy per gallon than a gallon of gasoline. This is what happens when government picks winners and losers in the economy and the marketplace. Just 4 months ago, we were convinced we had a winner. It's turned out to be a big loser.

We need to remove the incentive. I urge support of H.R. 5911.

LET US SALUTE OUR VETERANS

(Mr. CARSON of Indiana asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I come to the House floor today to honor our Nation's veterans,

particularly the thousands of Hoosiers who have risked their lives to protect our Nation and secure our liberty. All Americans owe a great debt to the veterans who have served and, in some cases, made the ultimate sacrifices for our Nation.

As a Member of Congress, I rely on the spirit of these brave men and women to guide me as we work in the Chamber to ensure our troops have the benefits they have earned and deserved when they come home.

This weekend in my hometown of Indianapolis, Indiana, our distinguished House Majority Leader STENY HOYER has graciously agreed to accompany me to meet with a group of our Nation's finest veterans at the American Legion on Guion Road. This visit will provide Leader HOYER and me with the opportunity to personally thank some of our veterans and learn more about how we can better meet the needs of these true American heroes.

I am honored to welcome the majority leader back to Indianapolis, and I look forward to working with him to ensure that we meet the needs of all of our Nation's veterans.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. TAUSCHER). Members are reminded not to traffic the well while another Member is under recognition.

REAUTHORIZE COUNTY PAYMENTS

(Mr. WALDEN of Oregon asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, of all of the counties in the Second Congressional District, perhaps none has been more profoundly impacted by Congress' refusal to reauthorize county payments than Josephine County.

Nearly half of the county workforce has been cut in recent years. Public safety has been hardest hit. Overnight patrols by the Josephine County Sheriff's Office are down to one 10-hour shift split among six deputies who cover 1,640 square miles. That's six deputies patrolling an area the size of the State of Rhode Island.

Maybe you remember the frantic search after Thanksgiving of 2006 for the James Kim family in the Federal forests off southern Oregon. The search-and-rescue funds for that operation came from this very program that Congress has refused to reauthorize.

Why won't the Democrat leadership bring a vote on H.R. 3058? It's a bipartisan, 4-year reauthorization bill for county payments. It has been 3 months since the committees of jurisdiction have sent it to the full House, and yet no votes have been scheduled.

So I again call on the Democratic leadership to do the right thing. Keep the commitment to the timbered com-

munities of this country and pass a reauthorization or attach it to a vehicle that's moving. Restore faith with rural counties all across America. Keep the Federal commitment to the people of timbered counties like Josephine.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 1167 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 1167

Resolved, That it shall be in order at any time on the legislative day of Thursday, May 1, 2008, for the Speaker to entertain motions that the House suspend the rules relating to the following measures:

(1) The bill (H.R. 5715) to ensure continued availability of access to the Federal student loan program for students and families.

(2) The bill (H.R. 493) to prohibit discrimination on the basis of genetic information with respect to health insurance and employment.

(3) A bill to provide for a temporary extension of programs authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

I yield myself such time as I may consume and ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 1167.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, as the Clerk just described, H. Res. 1167 authorizes the Speaker to entertain motions that the House suspend the rules at any time on the legislative day of Thursday, May 1, 2008, on legislation relating to the following three measures:

(1) H.R. 5715, to protect the Federal student loan program.

(2) H.R. 493, Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act.

(3) a bill to provide for a temporary extension of the farm bill.

The rule is necessary because under clause 1(a) of rule XV, the Speaker may entertain motions to suspend the rules only on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday of each week. In order for suspensions to be considered on other days, the Rules Committee must authorize consideration of these motions.

This is not an unusual procedure. In fact, in the 109th Congress, my friends on the other side of the aisle reported

a number of rules that provided for additional suspension days.

This rule limits the suspension of rules to only these three time-sensitive measures. This will help us move these noncontroversial, yet important, legislative initiatives that have widespread bipartisan support.

I urge my colleagues to support this rule.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the chairwoman of the Rules Committee, Ms. SLAUGHTER, for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, on September 28, 2006, the Republicans were in the majority and the Democrats were in the minority. I was managing a rule on the floor similar to what we are considering here today to allow specific bills to be considered under suspensions under the rule on a day that suspensions are not permitted under House rules like today.

During debate on that day in September 2006, the then-ranking member of the Rules Committee, Ms. SLAUGHTER, stated, "It isn't just what the Congress has done with its time that is so disappointing. It is also what the Congress has not done, all of the challenges it has not addressed."

Madam Speaker, the same can be absolutely said today about the Democrat control of the House of Representatives. Earlier this year, House Democrats approved a budget that included a tax hike of \$683 billion, the largest in American history. Americans cannot afford the Democrat plans to cut the child tax credit in half, to reinstate the marriage penalty, and raise taxes on every single taxpayer. Instead of record-breaking tax increases, this Congress should work to make those tax cuts permanent.

I'm also dismayed that the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives has not acted to extend the State and local sales tax deduction to States that don't have State income tax. That tax expired on January 1 of this year. The State and local sales tax deduction is important for those States that don't have a State income tax, such as my home State of Washington. Extending this deduction is a matter of fairness that Congress must act to renew as soon as possible.

The Democrat-controlled House of Representatives have also failed to act to give our intelligence community the tools they need to protect our country from new terrorist threats by modernizing the seventies-era FISA laws. For over 74 days now, America has been hobbled in the vital work to monitor terrorist communications and detect new plots despite the fact that the Senate has approved a bipartisan plan and

sent it over to the House. House Democrat leaders have refused to allow the House to vote on the Senate plan and have refused to go to conference with the Senate.

Madam Speaker, why, I ask, why is an issue of this magnitude being placed on the back burner by Democrat leaders, despite repeated attempts by Republicans to allow the House to vote on this bipartisan plan?

Madam Speaker, the Democrat-controlled House has also failed to address perhaps the most pressing issue on the minds of Americans today, rising gas prices.

□ 1030

Democrat leaders may not like to hear it, but since they took control of Congress in January of 2007, the cost of a gallon of gas has gone up by over 50 percent. In fact, the cost of gas has gone up by more in 16 months than it had gone up in the prior 6 years.

Instead, they have spent hours giving speeches trying to blame the President and anyone but themselves for the fact that Congress has done nothing to address rising gas prices. But, Madam Speaker, facts are stubborn things.

And the facts are that gas prices have gone up over a dollar a gallon on the Democrat Congress' watch. The facts are that Democrat leaders promised the American people in 2006 that if they were to control Congress that they had a "commonsense plan" to "lower the price at the pump."

It's been 16 months of this Democrat Congress, and the promise is nowhere to be seen. This Congress has put forward no plan, has taken no action, and passed no bills to lower gas prices. They promised relief at the pump to lower gas prices, and they've done nothing.

Madam Speaker, at this time I would like to insert into the RECORD an article by Investor's Business Daily posted April 29, 2008, and it states, "This Congress is possibly the most irresponsible in modern history. This is especially true when it comes to America's dysfunctional energy policy."

[From Investor's Business Daily, Apr. 29, 2008]

CONGRESS VS. YOU

Energy: President Bush let the Democrat-led Congress have it with both barrels Tuesday, lambasting lawmakers for fiddling while the energy crisis burns. It was a well-deserved takedown of do-nothing lawmakers.

We've said it before, but we'll say it again: This Congress is possibly the most irresponsible in modern history. This is especially true when it comes to America's dysfunctional energy policy.

The media won't call either the House or the Senate on its failures, for one very obvious reason: They mostly share an ideology with the Democrats that keeps them from understanding how free markets and supply and demand really work. Sad, but true.

So we were happy to hear the president do the job, calling out Congress for its inaction and ignorance in his wide-ranging press conference Tuesday.

"Many Americans are understandably anxious about issues affecting their pocketbook,

from gas and food prices to mortgage and tuition bills," Bush said. "They're looking to their elected leaders in Congress for action. Unfortunately, on many of these issues, all they're getting is delay."

Best of all, Bush didn't let the issue sit with just generalities. He reeled off a bill of particulars of congressional energy inaction, including:

Failing to allow drilling in ANWR. We have, as Bush noted, estimated capacity of a million barrels of oil a day from this source alone—enough for 27 million gallons of gas and diesel. But Congress won't touch it, fearful of the clout of the environmental lobby. As a result, you pay at the pump so your representative can raise campaign cash.

Refusing to build new refineries. The U.S. hasn't built one since 1976, yet sanctions at least 15 unique "boutique" fuel blends around the nation. So even the slightest problem at a refinery causes enormous supply problems and price spikes. Congress has done nothing about this.

Turning its back on nuclear power. It's safe and, with advances in nuclear reprocessing technology, waste problems have been minimized. Still, we have just 104 nuclear plants—the same as a decade ago—producing just 19% of our total energy. (Many European nations produce 40% or more of their power with nuclear.) Granted, nuclear power plants are expensive—about \$3 billion each. But they produce energy at \$1.72/kilowatt-hour vs. \$2.37 for coal and \$6.35 for natural gas.

Raising taxes on energy producers. This is where a basic understanding of economics would help: Higher taxes and needless regulation lead to less production of a commodity. So by proposing "windfall" and other taxes on energy companies plus tough new rules, Congress makes our energy situation worse.

These are just a few of Congress' sins of omission—all while India, China, Eastern Europe and the Middle East add more than a million barrels of new demand each and every year. New Energy Department forecasts see world oil demand growing 40% by 2030, including a 28% increase in the U.S.

Americans who are worried about the direction of their country, including runaway energy and food prices, should keep in mind the upcoming election isn't just about choosing a new president. We'll also pick a new Congress.

The current Congress, led on the House side by a speaker who promised a "commonsense plan" to cut energy prices two years ago, has shown itself to be incompetent and irresponsible. It doesn't deserve re-election.

Madam Speaker, we all know that we must work together, Democrats, Republicans, the House, the Senate and the President, to solve America's pain at the pump. Until this happens, however, we should not deny good ideas from being considered.

Therefore, I will be urging my colleagues to defeat the previous question so that I can amend the rule to make in order any bill that would "have the effect of lowering the national average price per gallon of regular unleaded gas." Let's defeat the previous question and show America that Congress is serious about addressing the rising cost at the pump.

With that, I reserve my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, since I will be the last speaker on this side, I will reserve my time until the gentleman has closed.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. At this time, Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of the time.

Madam Speaker, Americans don't want a debate on the problems causing gas prices to dramatically increase. They want a debate on solutions.

Therefore, as I stated a moment ago, I will be asking my colleagues to vote "no" on the previous question so that Members can offer solutions that have the effect of lowering the national average price per gallon of regular unleaded gas.

As I mentioned, 2 years ago, then-minority leader, now-Speaker PELOSI promised Americans a Democrat plan to lower gas prices at the pump. They have controlled Congress for 16 months, but we still have not seen this plan. Meanwhile, the cost of gasoline is setting record highs. The time is now for the House to debate ideas and solutions for lowering gas prices, and it is time for the Democrats to reveal their plan that they promised 2 years ago.

So, Madam Speaker, by defeating the previous question, I will move to amend the rule to allow any bill to be offered and considered under suspensions of the rule that would have the effect of lowering the national average price per gallon of regular unleaded gas.

Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have the text of the amendment and extraneous material inserted in the RECORD prior to the vote on the previous question.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to defeat the previous question so that we can have this debate, so that we can consider these vitally important issues that America's families, workers, truckers, small businesses, and our entire economy face with these rising prices of gasoline.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, while I had not planned to be here at this point to debate gas prices, I feel compelled to put a few things on the record.

Everybody knows that ExxonMobil announced first quarter profits totaling \$11 billion, up 17 percent from last year and just shy of record profits last quarter. BP announced profits increased 63 percent; Royal Dutch-Shell 25 percent, and this increases the 5-year trend of record oil profits.

While my colleagues say we have done nothing, the fact is that we've done a great deal and they've almost consistently voted against it. For example, we have tried more than once to take away the Federal subsidies to these oil companies, to the big five, because they are awash in money, and we see no reason for them to get more from the taxpayers than they're already getting at the pump. That has been consistently fought by both the Republican Party and the President. The President calls for the same poli-

cies that he has done all along and sort of hopes for the best. For the last 7 years, congressional Republicans and President Bush doled out billions of dollars in subsidies to the big oil companies, instead of working for an energy independence plan for America which was rarely discussed even during their tenure.

We're committed to a new direction. Speaker PELOSI has called on President Bush to suspend purchases of oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve temporarily. That would go a long way toward helping us with this. We have done this before, but President Bush says he doesn't think it would affect the price.

On Friday, the New Direction Congress called on the Federal Trade Commission to enforce the law and to investigate record gas prices and possible market manipulation. Under the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, the FTC has the authority, but will not take it, to exercise the power to protect the consumer from skyrocketing energy costs. That is the Republican administration.

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 also included landmark provisions to make cars and trucks more efficient and to promote the use of more affordable American biofuels. The new fuel standards will reduce our oil consumption by 1.1 million barrels per day by 2020, and it will save American families \$700 to \$1,000 per year at the pump. That is under the Democrats in Congress.

We've also passed legislation in this House to crack down on oil price gouging, to hold OPEC accountable for oil price fixing, and then, as I said, to repeal the subsidies for profit-rich Big Oil so we can invest in a renewable energy future. However, President Bush and the Republicans block these efforts every step of the way.

Cracking down on oil price gouging was opposed by 140 Republicans in the House, including all of the Republican leadership except Mr. MCCOTTER. Holding OPEC accountable was opposed by 67 Republicans, including most of the Republican leadership, Mr. BOEHNER, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. COLE, Mr. DREIER, and Ms. GRANGER. Repealing subsidies to the profit-rich oil companies and investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency was opposed by 174 Republicans, almost unanimously, including all of the Republican leadership. And in every case, the Bush administration threatened to veto the bills. Unfortunately, Republicans in the Senate refused to even let them become bills to go to the President.

We have a good and sufficient record here. We have planned to do more. We have done more than was done in the last 7 years to try to do that.

With that, I urge a "yes" vote on the previous question and on the rule.

The material previously referred to by Mr. HASTINGS of Washington is as follows:

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 1167 OFFERED BY MR. HASTINGS OF WASHINGTON

At the end of the resolution, add the following new paragraph:

(4) Any bill which the proponent asserts, if enacted, would have the effect of lowering the national average price per gallon of regular unleaded gasoline.

The information contained herein was provided by Democratic Minority on multiple occasions throughout the 109th Congress.)

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Democratic majority agenda and a vote to allow the opposition, at least for the moment, to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's Precedents of the House of Representatives, (VI, 308-311) describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as "a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House being made by the Member in charge." To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that "the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition" in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R-Illinois) said: "The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition."

Because the vote today may look bad for the Democratic majority they will say "the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever." But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the definition of the previous question used in the Floor Procedures Manual published by the Rules Committee in the 109th Congress, (page 56). Here's how the Rules Committee described the rule using information from Congressional Quarterly's "American Congressional Dictionary": "If the previous question is defeated, control of debate shifts to the leading opposition member (usually the minority Floor Manager) who then manages an hour of debate and may offer a germane amendment to the pending business."

Deschler's Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives, the subchapter titled "Amending Special Rules" states: "a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate." (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the previous question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for debate thereon."

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools

for those who oppose the Democratic majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam 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, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENT TO H.R. 493, GENETIC INFORMATION NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT OF 2008

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 1156 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 1156

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 493) to prohibit discrimination on the basis of genetic information with respect to health insurance and employment, with the Senate amendment thereto, and to consider in the House, without intervention of any point of order except those arising under clause 10 of rule XXI, a motion offered by the chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor or his designee that the House concur in the Senate amendment. The Senate amendment and the motion shall be considered as read. The motion shall be debatable for one hour, with 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and Labor, 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the motion to its adoption without intervening motion.

SEC. 2. During consideration of the motion to concur pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the motion to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

I yield myself as much time as I may consume and ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend

their remarks on House Resolution 1156.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, H. Res. 1156 provides for consideration of the Senate amendment to H.R. 493, the Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate on the motion with 20 minutes each controlled by the Committee on Education and Labor, the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and the Committee on Ways and Means.

Madam Speaker, the story of humanity is defined by extraordinary achievements that centuries later are looked upon as having impacted the course of human history. Five years ago, we saw one of these distinguishing achievements: the mapping out of the human genome, a discovery that pries open the door of possibility and presents an opportunity to advance the human race.

This breakthrough in the field of genetics joins the ranks of momentous discoveries that have changed the face of medicine and science for centuries to come, like the discovery of the polio vaccine so many years ago.

Last week, Senator KENNEDY on the Senate floor noted that the mapping of the human genome "may well affect the 21st century as profoundly as how the invention of the computer or the splitting of the atom affected the 20th century."

However, Madam Speaker, such discoveries and achievements do not automatically lead to these extraordinary breakthroughs. In order for us to fully reap the benefits, we must ensure that our social policy keeps pace with the advancement of our science.

That is precisely why I rise today in support of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act. It has been 13 years in the making, and I'm pleased that the House of Representatives is once again considering the bill today, hopefully for the last time, so we may send it to the President to sign into law.

While I'm pleased we're taking it up, I'm saddened that so much time has been lost and that the march toward progress and discovery has been slowed.

The Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act is the culmination of a broad and bipartisan effort to prohibit the improper use of genetic information in workforce and health insurance decisions.

It prohibits group health plans and health insurers from denying coverage to healthy individuals or charging higher premiums based solely on a genetic predisposition to maybe develop a disease in the future.

Furthermore, it bars employers from using one's genetic information when making hiring, firing, job placement or job promotion decisions.

Madam Speaker, the bill has been described as the first civil rights legislation of the 21st century. I think that assessment is correct because, with the exception of trauma, everything that happens to a person's body has a genetic component. From the color of our eyes to our height, to the illnesses and disorders we are susceptible to, everything happens because of our genes.

No one, not a single living human being, has perfect genes. In fact, each one of us is estimated to be genetically predisposed to between 5 and 50 serious disorders.

□ 1045

The good news is that since the sequencing of the human genome was completed in April, 2003, thanks to Dr. Francis Collins, who I am happy to say is in the gallery today, researchers have identified genetic markers for a variety of chronic health conditions and increased the potential for early treatment and the prevention of numerous genetic-based diseases. There are already genetic tests for over 1,000 diseases, and hundreds more are under development.

Let me mention just two of them. Just this week we heard from newspapers that in London and work being done in Pittsburgh, and I believe it's the University of Pennsylvania, has restored some eyesight to people who were disposed to a genetic disease that harmed their vision as children. To be able to restore eyesight is something none of us had ever dreamed of being able to do. But by injecting genetic material into the back of the eye behind the retina, they have received some sight. They believe that once they are able to do this in younger children and be able to increase the dose that the success rate will be extremely high, and that, in itself, is such good news.

Also yesterday the New York Times reported that the gene has been isolated for osteoporosis and for fragile bones. I remember when we were fighting for the Office of Women's Health, the statistic we used for osteoporosis was that we spent between \$20 and \$30 billion a year, and this was years ago, 10 or 15, all that much money to treat osteoporosis. At that point we had no treatment for it. We just tried to do the best we could. We have over time achieved some treatments for osteoporosis, but think what would happen if once we find that gene, we are able to manipulate that gene or change it and prevent osteoporosis altogether?

The great thing about this science is the limitless possibility to cure human conditions without long hospital stays, without invasive surgeries, and there are possibilities there for an entirely new way for us to provide health care.

Now, consider if these tests we know that can tell a woman if she has a family history of breast cancer, if she has a genetic predisposition. For at least the 10 years, I have been told by women