

Seventeen percent of the people I represent are on Medicare, roughly 114,000 people. Many of these citizens live in communities where there are few doctors and few health care options. If the available doctors stop seeing Medicare patients, the health care access for all Kansans will be severely damaged. We must prevent the scheduled physician fee reductions from going into effect, and I encourage the Senate to take up necessary legislation now.

Just this week, I received a letter from a family physician back home. He, of course, expressed his frustration with our current Medicare system. Here are his words:

"It is with mixed emotion that I am writing to inform you of my intent to leave my family medicine practice. I have reached the point where I am no longer willing to expose myself or my family to the risk of having to rely upon an increasingly unreliable and poor source of income, Medicare. As a small business with 12 employees, I don't have the margin to absorb others' incompetence or our government's capricious reimbursement. I am not willing to be a pawn in an ideological chess match in Washington, and therefore as of today I will no longer accept Medicare patients.

"I am considering a position in an economically booming region in another State that is nearly 95 percent private pay. What physician worth their salt will continue in a system that undervalues the work they do for a patient population that is the most complex and the most time demanding?

"Congress and the Medicare system are taking advantage of good-intentioned physicians who are more interested in caring for patients and upholding and honoring the Hippocratic Oath than lining their pockets. Even now, writing this letter to you, I feel a sense of guilt as though I am betraying my Medicare patients. I have realized, however, that it is not I that have betrayed the elderly, rather Congress."

When doctors close their practices, it creates a gap that is almost impossible for us in rural communities to fill. Congress must understand that we have a responsibility in making physicians want to continue to practice medicine, to not give them the reason to walk out their clinic or hospital doors and never look back. Congress needs to look closely at our role in these trends and make sure we are not encouraging this situation by playing politics with people's health care and their lives.

I hope that the Senate will pass legislation this week that can keep our vital health care system in place and protect our most vulnerable citizens.

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

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

#### REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF SENATOR JESSE HELMS

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

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Senator Jesse Helms. Senator Helms, who passed away this past 4th of July at the age of 86, was renowned for his considerable personal warmth and his commitment to the good of his constituents. So it is no surprise that in the days after his passing, tales from his constituents across the State of North Carolina paid tribute to his decades-long track record of thoughtful constituent service.

But Senator Helms was so much more than a good public servant. He was a man of integrity, and over the course of his 30 years of service in the United States Senate, you could always count on one thing: You knew where Jesse Helms stood on the issue. An outspoken conservative who was never bashful about defending the conservative principles of small government and individual freedom, he was a man who refused to compromise on his principles.

Senator Helms knew a conservative when he saw one. This is why he helped propel Ronald Reagan to the national stage by orchestrating Reagan's North Carolina primary victory in 1976. In so doing, he helped prepare the groundwork for the eventual Reagan Revolution of the 1980s.

As we remember the life of Senator Helms, we know we have lost one of the finest conservative statesmen of a generation. Senator Helms believed that America was the greatest nation in the world, and that belief informed his principles and the policies that he ultimately pursued. For instance, he knew that a strong America would be a signpost of hope for millions during the uncertain times of global communist influence in the seventies and eighties. As a strident anti-communist, he fought to ensure America would be a bulwark against the forces of oppression and tyranny in the communist corners of the globe.

Senator Helms was also an indomitable champion of life. He believed in the dignity of the lives of the unborn and fought with heroic energy to see to it that they might receive the protection they deserve. His pro-life legacy is still with us today. In fact, Senator Helms successfully amended legislation 35 years ago to include what is today known as the "Helms amendment." This amendment, which is still in effect, mandates that no U.S. foreign aid money may be used to pay for or promote abortions.

Yes, Senator Helms fought for the innocent unborn, he condemned wide-

spread corruption in the United Nations before it was popular to do so, and he staked out clear conservative positions without having to consult a pollster. He was a one-of-a-kind leader who passed on conservative principles to many, including me. But his crusades were never just about him. Rather, he fought for his country and the ideas that he knew made America great.

He said it best in his farewell address to the Senate: "Being remembered isn't important. What is important is standing up for what you believe to be right, hoping that you have done everything you can to preserve the moral and spiritual principles that made America great in the first place."

Senator Helms' death last Friday was a profound loss for America and for the State of North Carolina. He served his country well, dispatching his duty to stand up for what is right with unrivaled moral clarity. He will be missed, and today my thoughts and my prayers are with his family and loved ones as they grieve this loss and remember a life well-lived.

#### DECLARING ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

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

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I would like to say to the gentlewoman who just spoke that I sure share her admiration for Jesse Helms. I had the honor to work with him on legislation known as the Helms-Burton law, and I want you to know he was a wonderful man, a titan and a real conservative, and the kind of man that everybody in America could be proud to say that he was a Senator in the august body on the other side of the building.

Let me just say briefly today that we just celebrated the 4th of July, known as Independence Day, and we celebrate that because we became an independent Nation after the Revolutionary War by winning that war and becoming not a colony of Great Britain, but a United States of America, an independent country. Our Declaration of Independence.

Now we are faced with another problem. It is called energy dependence. We are dependent on Saudi Arabia, we are dependent on other countries in the Middle East, we are dependent on countries in South America like Venezuela that are not friends of ours, and we ought to be moving toward energy independence.

Any of my colleagues who were out marching in parades during the 4th of July recess ought to know that the people they were talking to on those parade routes were saying, hey, we don't want gasoline at \$4 or \$5 a gallon. We don't need to have gasoline at \$4 or \$5 a gallon, because we can drill right here in the United States and get

enough oil or gas or other energy products so we can be energy independent. All we have to do is start.

The problem is in this body and the other body on the other side of the building, they will not move, the majority will not move on drilling here in the United States. We could drill in the ANWR in Alaska and get 1 to 2 million barrels of oil a day. We could drill off the continental shelf and get 1 or 2 million barrels of oil a day. We have about a 400 or 500 year supply of natural gas. And we are not doing anything. We are not drilling.

We are sending \$400 or \$500 million a day over to Saudi Arabia and to Venezuela and South America for oil that we could produce right here in America. It is costing us jobs, it is costing us energy, it is causing food price hikes, the price of anything else that you buy that is transported by truck in this country, and the people going to and from work or paying \$4 or \$5 a gallon or \$70 or \$80 or \$90 for one tankful.

□ 1945

They can't survive. The economy will continue to go down if we don't do something about these energy prices. And we are not going to do it until we allow this country to drill, this government to drill in places like the ANWR and off the Continental Shelf, and use the coal shale that we have here in abundance to produce our own energy. We can do it. The people of America by about an 80 percent margin say drill now, drill in America, lower those gas prices. And we are not doing it.

We just celebrated our declaration of independence from Great Britain. It is high time we had a declaration of independence regarding our energy. We need to drill here in America, we need to drill in the ANWR, we need to drill offshore and become energy independent. It is time. And I hope all of my colleagues will sign my good friend, Mr. WESTMORELAND from Georgia's petition over here that will let everybody know in this country, all of their constituents know that they are committed to drilling in America to get energy prices down.

He is going to take a one-hour special order here pretty quick telling everybody why we should be drilling here in America. So if I were talking to people across this country, Madam Speaker, I would say call your Congressman, call your Senator, and tell them to sign Mr. WESTMORELAND's petition so we can move toward energy independence. It is high time. We should do it now.

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

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

#### IRAQ

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

tleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Madam Speaker, in the last 2 days there have been two major stories about comments made by the prime minister of Iraq. In the first, he said that terrorism in Iraq has been defeated. In the second, the Iraqi prime minister said he wants to negotiate a departure date for U.S. troops.

Yet, because the Defense Department has requested more money for Iraq this year than any year of the war so far, you can rest assured that we will not be leaving any time soon. This war has always been more about money and power than about any real threat to the U.S. Saddam Hussein's total military budget was only a little over 2/10 of 1 percent of ours.

As the conservative columnist Charley Reese wrote a few years ago: We attacked a country that had not attacked us, that had not even threatened to attack us, and was not even capable of attacking us."

Now some are gloating about the success of the surge as if this somehow justifies all the deaths, all the injuries, and all the waste, fraud, and abuse of previous years. Well, surely with the expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars, there would be a few successes along the way.

It is not criticism of the troops to say that this was a very unnecessary war that we should never have been in, in the first place. This war has meant massive foreign aid, huge deficit spending, and has put almost the entire burden of enforcing U.N. resolutions on our taxpayers and on our military. It has gone against every traditional conservative position I have ever known.

The Democrats recently passed a budget raising our national debt limit to \$10.5 trillion. We are still borrowing staggering amounts of money, and this war has been our largest single expense. The Defense Department, like any giant bureaucracy, always wants more money, yet we simply cannot afford to keep spending at the rate our military leaders want.

Georgie Anne Geyer, the conservative foreign policy columnist, wrote a few months after the Iraqi war started that, "Americans will inevitably come to a point where they have to choose between a government that provides services at home or one that seeks empire across the globe."

This war has already become the most expensive and wasteful war in American history. There has not been anything fiscally conservative about the war in Iraq. In fact, there has been so much waste of money, so much fraud, so much excessive and lavish spending that fiscal conservatives should be the ones most upset about all this.

According to the Government Accountability Office, we already have \$53 trillion to \$54 trillion in unfunded future pension liabilities on top of our national debt, and this figure is going up every day. We are now spending at

the rate of \$500 million a day, every day, for our military ventures in Iraq and Afghanistan. In just a few short years we will not be able to pay our Social Security and veterans pensions and all the other things we have promised our own people with money that will buy very much.

Evan Thomas in the June 23 issue of Newsweek wrote, "American politicians have gone to extraordinary lengths to be seen as Churchill, not Chamberlain, with results that have not always been in America's best interest."

He wrote that Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic were frequently compared to Hitler. "But," Thomas wrote, "the only real Hitler was Hitler. Saddam and Milosevic were murderers, but at most local menaces."

Both parties are falling all over themselves trying to prove their patriotism, and thus are afraid to question any Pentagon expenditure. And the Defense Department seems to know that no matter how wasteful or inefficient it becomes, that Congress will keep on giving it huge increases.

Where are the fiscal conservatives? Where are those who will say that, since the surge has been successful, we need to spend less money in Iraq, not more? Where are those who supported this war who will not back up the Iraqi prime minister and say it is time to start bringing our troops home?

Surely conservatives, who have always been the biggest opponents of world government, are not going to say we should keep on running Iraq and simply stay there forever regardless of how the Iraqis themselves feel.

At some point we need to start putting our own people first once again. At some point, Madam Speaker, we need to stop borrowing hundreds of billions to spend in other countries, and take care of our own people.

#### BLUE DOG COALITION

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

Mr. MATHESON. Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to organize a special order this hour on the part of the Blue Dog Coalition. The Blue Dogs wanted to take advantage of this opportunity tonight to speak about energy policy issues.

I think that there is no doubt that when it comes to domestic policy issues that this country faces, that energy policy is right at the top of the list. I think it is clear that this country should be looking for a comprehensive balanced energy policy, and I think that represents the type of politics the Blue Dogs in the House of Representatives have often supported.

We have a number of issues that we really want to work through tonight, and I have a number of my fellow Blue