

showed up in Washington D.C. over this past weekend. And we need to hear what they have to say.

But they want to respect their elected Representatives. They want the rule of law to adhere to. They don't want to see this country flooded over with the level of corruption that we have seen in places like Mexico and Russia, or I go there and I think, what can be done?

I can prescribe the solutions that I think are very constructive to those countries, but if you could snap your fingers and get rid of the corruption in those countries, that would be the biggest thing that could be done. And then the people would have hope; they would have faith again. They would believe again that their government was responsible and responsive to them.

But the rule of law—and I think about how important it is to comply with the letter and the intent of the law, not just avoid prosecution, not just find a way to skirt around the edge of it, respect and revere the law and comply with the letter and the intent of the law.

And I had this little thought that popped up into my head—I was listening to the judge talk about this—this little phrase recurs back to me: no controlling legal authority. Do you remember that?

The Vice President of the United States, Al Gore, said, well there is no controlling legal authority. So, therefore, if there isn't any way that you can control his activities by enforcing a law that one can point to, therefore, whatever he might do apparently is acceptable or maybe even moral.

In the absence of prohibition, things become moral in this era of morals relativism.

I reject that. We have got to have high standards, high standards of conscience, high standards of morality, and our laws uphold those standards. And the people on the left will constantly argue you can't legislate morality.

Well, but if you de-legislate the morality that others legislated, now you have, now you have lowered the standard. Now you have lowered the bar. And now people believe it's acceptable, and it has happened over and over again. Our legislation is morality. Our legislation, the laws of America, the laws of our States and our local subdivisions uphold the moral standards of the people that pass them.

It's often our faith; our Judeo-Christian values are what shaped this country. The Declaration and the Constitution are infused with Judeo-Christian values. And those values are part of the culture reflected in the documents, not the documents that drove the culture.

And if we lose our culture, the documents will become meaningless to us. That's why we have got to stand up for the rule of law here on the floor of the House of Representatives, and everybody in America has to stand up for the rule of law, the letter and the intent of law, and the moral and ethical

foundation that underpins it, or we lose our way, and we lose our country.

Mr. CARTER. I thank the gentleman for that impassioned speech. We have about 5 minutes more left.

So I make it very clear, I don't think I made it clear, but Roll Call newspaper reported on August 25 some of these issues with Mr. RANGEL.

I am going to go through them very quickly. He filed an amended return about his 2007 assets and income disclosing more than \$600,000 in assets, tens of thousands of dollars in income, that he had failed to report. He failed to report, for instance, a Congressional Federal Credit Union, which is just right down the hall from us here, account of at least \$250,001; an investment fund account also worth at least \$250,001.

He originally claimed assets of \$516,000 to \$1.316 million. Now he has revised it to \$1.028 million to \$2.5 million.

And once again he failed to report the income on his Dominican Republic account. He failed to report investments that netted him between 29,000 and 81,000 in capital gains dividends and in rental income when he previously claimed between 6,000 and 17,000.

He failed to report his investment in certain stocks, at least 1,001 of Yum brands; 15,001 in PepsiCo; and 250,001 in funds of Allianz Global Investors Consults Diversified Port III, half the limit, number three.

He failed to report rental income, and that's on top of the multiple allegations we have been talking about. It's time for a Member that justice must be swift and justice delayed is justice denied.

I ask the leadership of this House to move this process, reconcile these issues of the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and let's resolve this crisis of this House so we can no longer be called the House of hypocrisy.

□ 2115

EXAMINING THE FACTS ON HEALTH CARE REFORM LEGISLATION

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, tonight I want to take a little time to examine some of the statements President Obama made when he addressed Congress on the issue of health care. Many of the things he mentioned in his address deserve some clarification or outright rebuttal.

The President said that, Not a dollar of the Medicare trust fund will be used to pay for this plan. That was easy for the President to say, and it is technically correct. It is technically correct only because there is no Medicare trust fund. It is an accounting mirage,

a sham of government IOUs, thanks to decades of government deficit spending.

And, furthermore, among more than \$500 million in proposed savings from Medicare, the Democrat bills also propose redirecting \$23 billion from the Medicare Improvement Fund to fund new health care entitlements. According to current law, the Medicare Improvement Fund is designated specifically "to make improvements under the original Medicare fee-for-service program."

Then there is the issue of taxpayer-funded abortion coverage. President Obama said, Under our plan, no Federal dollars will be used to fund abortions, and Federal conscience laws will remain in place. But independent groups have confirmed that the legislation will result in Federal funds being used to pay for abortions—both through the government-run health plan and through Federal subsidies provided through the exchange, despite various accounting gimmicks created in a so-called Energy and Commerce Committee "compromise."

Republicans offered amendments in all three of the committees to say this money cannot be used for abortions, and they were rebuffed at each turn.

President Obama also went on to claim that, "Reducing the waste and inefficiency in Medicare and Medicaid will pay for most of this plan. Much of the rest will be paid for with revenues from the very same drug and insurance companies that stand to benefit from tens of millions of new customers."

But the Congressional Budget Office had previously found that the cuts to Medicare Advantage plans included in the Democrat legislation would result in millions of seniors, including thousands and thousands in my district in North Carolina, losing their current plan—a direct contradiction of the President's assertion that, Nothing in this plan requires you to change what you have.

The President could have strengthened his statements by quoting sections and lines to back up the statements. We who have presented our alternatives and who have stood to refute the comments have been able, in most cases, to quote the section and the line of the bill to show that what we are saying is the truth.

As you can see from this discussion of the President's speech, when it comes to the debate over health care reform, there are often two sides to the issue, and it is simply not as cut and dried as President Obama has tried to make it out.

Many of us have serious misgivings and disagreements with the proposed legislation and will not allow our disagreements to be mischaracterized and sidelined by lofty rhetoric.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentlewoman from

Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days to enter remarks into the RECORD on this topic.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Ms. FUDGE. Certainly I appreciate the opportunity to join my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus, the CBC, for this Special Order. Currently, the CBC is chaired by the Honorable Barbara Lee from the Ninth Congressional District of California.

My name is Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge, and I represent the 11th Congressional District of the State of Ohio. CBC members are advocates for the human family nationally and internationally and have played a significant role as local and regional activists. We continue to work diligently to be the conscience of the Congress, but understand all politics are local. Therefore, we provide dedicated and focused service to the citizens of the congressional districts we serve.

The vision of the founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus, to promote the public welfare through legislation designed to meet the needs of millions of neglected citizens, continues to be a focal point for the legislative work and political activities of the Congressional Black Caucus.

As Members of Congress, CBC members also promote legislation to aid neglected citizens throughout the world. We understand that the United States, as a bellwether, has the ability to positively impact our neighbors abroad.

The United States is a leader in advocating for the underprivileged at home and abroad. Americans understand that if we uplift others, then we, too, will be advanced.

With this in mind, tonight's CBC hour will focus on poverty reduction and the economic, social and political outlook for the continent of Africa. Specifically, I will discuss increasing access to both education and financial services in Africa.

As a member of the Education and Labor Committee, I know well the far-reaching effects of education on individuals' quality of life and a nation's economic competitiveness. In the context of improving developing nations such as many African countries, the basic education offers the hope of a more prosperous world.

The benefits of basic education are innumerable. For instance, we know that when all citizens receive a good education, their nation's economic prosperity is increased, preventable illness is decreased, democratic ideals are spread, violent conflicts are reduced, and women are able to advance further than if they were discouraged from pursuing their studies.

Mr. Speaker, I see we have been joined by our Chair, the Honorable

BARBARA LEE from California. I would now like to yield to the gentlelady, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. LEE of California. Let me thank the gentlelady for yielding and also for organizing once again the voice of the Congressional Black Caucus. Thank you so much, Congresswoman FUDGE, for continuing to raise the critical issues that our entire country must address at this moment in our history, and thank you so much for having a focus tonight on the continent of Africa, which is often forgotten.

Africa faces numerous challenges, which you mentioned earlier, but also enormous opportunities, and the promotion and the strengthening of the United States-Africa relationship is really vital to realizing the progress that's being made in addressing enduring crises related to food insecurity, the devastating health pandemic, such as HIV and AIDS, and the growing rates of inequality and poverty. Also, the economic prosperity.

As Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, I am proud to point out that the Congressional Black Caucus is privileged to draw upon the wisdom and the expertise of our colleague on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Congressman DONALD PAYNE of New Jersey. Congressman PAYNE is more than a member, however; he is a resident expert on Africa. He understands the continent and each country on the continent.

He is the Chair of the Africa and Global Health Subcommittee. He is recognized on the continent of Africa as being a person who seeks global peace and security every step of the way. He is also the leader of our Congressional Black Caucus International Affairs Task Force.

The Congressional Black Caucus also is ably represented on the Foreign Affairs Committee by Congressman GREGORY MEEKS of New York; Congresswoman and former ambassador DIANE WATSON of California; Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON-LEE of Texas; and also Congressman DAVID SCOTT of Georgia.

President Obama has likewise demonstrated a clear commitment to turn the corner in Africa, most notably with his announcement of a government-wide United States review of the U.S. Global Development Policy. Also, a renewed \$3.5 billion food security initiative. And also we must remember his very stern and forthright speech in Ghana, where he asserted America's responsibilities to help advance a brighter future in Africa with action, not just with words.

Further, Secretary of State Clinton's recent visit to Africa brought much needed attention to the global fight against HIV and AIDS, violence against women, trade opportunities with the continent, and all of the development and aid issues which the Department of State is responsible for.

Despite such a positive outlook for our administration's strategy, the per-

sistence of health pandemics, chronic food insecurity, a global economic crisis, and a looming threat of climate change continues to threaten the livelihood of millions of individuals across Africa each and every day. There are currently more people going hungry in the world than ever before. According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, almost a sixth of the world's population, or 1 billion individuals, are now undernourished.

Encouraging sustainable, long-term development will require a significant contribution from the United States and international partners. Recent estimates indicate that it will cost \$500 billion to \$600 billion for the next 10 years to allow developing nations such as those in Africa to grow, using renewable energy sources rather than relying on dirty fuels.

Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and its International Affairs Task Force under the leadership of Chairman PAYNE have long been a leading voice in Congress in calling for the United States to provide support for adaptation and sustainable development abroad, as well as assistance to ensure affordable access to emerging clean technologies.

The reality is that any strategy to combat global warming and climate change will need to include meaningful and equitable action on the international level. The scale of these challenges reflects the urgency of our efforts here in Congress.

The goal of the Congressional Black Caucus is to find and fund long-term, sustainable solutions to these threats at the household, community, and national levels.

Despite this great moral imperative, the United States continues to spend a disproportionately small amount of funding on nonmilitary foreign affairs programs. Most people in our country think that we spend a large portion of our budget on foreign affairs, but we just do not do that.

Instead of spending a staggering 52 percent of the Federal discretionary budget on an inflated defense budget for the Pentagon, that continues to invest in Cold War-era weapons systems to the tune of about \$100 billion for, really, an enemy that does not exist, we should be investing in diplomacy and development activities that will help bring stability to nations on the brink of collapse and conflict. That is the essence of how we ensure our own national security.

That's why I have introduced H. Con. Res. 63, a resolution calling for an increase in nonmilitary foreign assistance to an amount equal to no less than 1 percent of GDP. It's hard to imagine we're not even at 1 percent yet.

Foreign assistance programs are essential in promoting national security and improving the credibility and standing of the United States in the world. To that end, our Congressional Black Caucus will continue to work to

develop clear goals and strategies for alleviating poverty, improving global health, and encouraging sustainable development, particularly in Africa. We will also continue to strengthen America's foreign assistance and diplomatic capacities, which is critical to this effort.

In noting the critical role of the United States in Africa, I must also speak out with regard to our responsibility to urgently seek peace for the residents of Darfur and the Sudan. When it comes to Darfur and the Sudan, it's important to recognize that the people of Sudan's desire for a just and longstanding sustainable peace has been crushed repeatedly by one of the most brutal regimes in the world.

More than 2 million South Sudanese have died in the 21-year war, and suffered countless atrocities, mostly committed by the same regime in Khartoum.

□ 2130

That's why it's so important to do the right thing now, which is to support the International Criminal Court in its efforts to hold Sudan's President Bashir accountable for his crimes against humanity. And let me tell you, they are crimes against humanity. I have visited the refugee camps on three occasions and witnessed the effects of genocide that were taking place right in front of my eyes. I tell you, we cannot lift sanctions at this point. We have to keep the pressure on to help make sure that people in the Sudan are protected and that the humanitarian assistance gets to them and gets to them immediately.

The Congressional Black Caucus under Congressman PAYNE's leadership was instrumental. We encouraged President Obama to appoint a special envoy for Sudan who is fully empowered and resourced to focus on Sudan as a whole and with special attention to the ongoing genocide in Darfur, the full implementation of the CPA and the humanitarian crisis.

I have to applaud and thank President Obama for appointing Major General Gration as the special envoy for Sudan because General Gration, who I met the first time I was in Sudan, is really uniquely qualified to undertake this critically important post. I know that I speak for all of my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus when I say that we look forward to working with the special envoy to move us past the current stalemate, to end the genocide in Darfur and to bring peace to the long-suffering people of the Sudan. These are just a few—and I mean just a few—of the many critical issues with which the Congressional Black Caucus is taking a leading role.

The continent of Africa is strong. It's resilient. The Congressional Black Caucus is committed to working with our colleagues here in Congress to enact policies which support African nations in their efforts to ensure good governance, to prevent violence and

conflict, and to provide a foundation for future stability, human development and sustainable economic growth.

So thank you again, Congresswoman FUDGE, for this evening and for giving us the chance to, once again, speak our minds and tell the American people what the Congressional Black Caucus not only continues to work on but also to encourage their support for many of the policies and the funding initiatives that we have been long calling for for many, many years. Thank you.

Ms. FUDGE. Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Speaker, I would just very much like to thank our Chair for being here at every Special Order, for the support that she has given to me personally but, more importantly, for the leadership she gives to the CBC. I thank you, Madam Chair, for being here.

Mr. Speaker, if I may continue, I wanted to just talk about the economic prosperity on the African continent. Many African countries do still, indeed, struggle to achieve economic sustainability and growth. This pursuit is undermined in part by the large number of citizens who have not received a basic education. Not a single economically viable nation achieved its prosperity without implementing near universal primary education. Additionally, education increases a Nation's gross domestic product. Adults with a primary school education earn twice as much as adults without any schooling.

In the areas of health, education and behavior changes are also the most effective way to address preventable diseases, including smallpox, tuberculosis, diarrhea and other water-borne illnesses. According to some estimations, if all children completed primary education, 700,000 new cases of AIDS and HIV could be prevented each year.

We also need to improve the political stability and reduce conflict. Education and the free exchange of ideas also encourages democratic styles of government. When citizens are well informed, they are more likely to participate in their democracy. As it relates to violent conflicts, education that teaches tolerance, the value of each individual, and respect for different beliefs is the best method to reduce violence and extremism.

Basic education provides girls and women with expanded employment opportunities, which is important for the overall advancement of families. Women's employability is especially crucial if they are the family's sole support. Children of educated women are in better health and are twice as likely to be enrolled in school.

Mr. Speaker, 75 million children worldwide are not at school; 55 percent of them are girls. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for nearly one-half of the world's school-age children who are not enrolled in school. Twelve percent of the developing world's primary school-age population is not in school; more than 80 percent of them are in rural

areas, and the vast majority are poor. Globally, 134 countries account for two-thirds of the out-of-school children, and current projections show that those countries will have 29 million out-of-school children by the year 2015.

Among African nations, there are various barriers to basic education. The lack of school buildings, shortage of teachers, prohibitive compulsory fees, and unique challenges faced by girls all limit many Africans' abilities to access formal education. However, these challenges are not insurmountable. Nearly 80 million new places of instruction must be created in order for all school-age African children to be accommodated. This will be a large undertaking, to say the least.

I applaud African governments for making progress towards the goals advanced in the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000. That framework was a statement signed by 164 countries during the 2000 World Education Forum stating that their commitment to universal education was strong. But without diligent support from the international community, these great goals will remain elusive.

In addition to the need for new schools, it is estimated that an additional 3 million teachers are needed in Africa in order for the continent to reach its goal of universal education by the year 2015. In Nigeria, which is the most populous country in Africa, there is a shortage of 1 million teachers.

Not only are workforce shortages caused by the difficulty to obtain thorough education, the availability of teachers on the continent is also impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The disease, itself, has robbed education systems of manpower and knowledge and continues to drive up cost. In a report released by the World Bank in 2002, an estimated 860,000 children in sub-Saharan Africa lost teachers to AIDS in 1999. In some cases where there has been an increase in class enrollment, the loss of one teacher can affect hundreds of students. The cost of replacing these instructors is prohibitive for many countries. If the nation of Swaziland hired and trained enough staff to replace the teachers lost to HIV and AIDS, the estimated cost would be \$233 million, more than half of the government's budget for 2001–2002.

Again, there are too many primary and secondary schools in the developing world that are forced to rely on student fees to supplement government funding. These fees, while modest by American standards, often prevent children from enrolling. Similarly, some families cannot afford the uniforms commonly required by the schools.

In 2003, Kenya eliminated primary school fees in a step towards universal primary education for its entire population. In Kenya alone, 1.5 million students who had not previously attended school then enrolled, increasing the average class size from 40 to 120. Kenya

took a step in the right direction, but these actions must be coupled with greater investment by local governments and donors to address the issues of quality that arise when access to education is increased.

While this statistic represents an improvement in the rate of primary school enrollment during the early nineties of over 10 percent, we should also be aware that the problems still remain. In countries such as Djibouti, Ethiopia, Niger and Mali, less than half of all school-age children go to school, and there is a disparity in enrollment rates between boys and girls. Forty-two percent of girls as opposed to 38 percent of boys are out of school.

As the international community and donors discuss the importance of quality education, we must remember the vast numbers of teachers who will need to be trained and what this means to the international partners who work with African governments and civil society groups. Education is a long-term path to economic viability. Stimulating small businesses through micro-lending is another method of improving the economies of developing nations, which will ultimately lead to expanded trade and business opportunities for all of the world.

I and several Members recently returned from a congressional delegation to Tunisia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Senegal. Our goal was to educate Members on the impact that the global financial crisis has had on the continent of Africa. Additionally, we examined the regional impact of multilateral development banks, international financial institutions, and the International Monetary Fund.

The codel spent significant time examining the effect of the global economic crisis on local economies. We were especially interested in how the multilateral development banks and the United States supports, particularly the African Development Bank, are helping countries to obtain grants, loans and technical assistance. We also explored the role and impact of the IMF on the region during this period of economic crisis.

Africa is of increasing strategic interest to the global economy. The continent is expected to soon provide the United States with more petroleum than the Middle East. Again, I will repeat. The continent of Africa is expected to soon provide the United States with more petroleum than we get from the Middle East.

Several reports state that more than half of all Africans are estimated to live on a dollar or less a day. The nations we visited were interested in help up, not a handout. Well-intentioned countries and organizations have poured billions of dollars into improving conditions for Africans, but their efforts have repeatedly failed to stimulate large-scale sustainable growth. This is, in part, because many of these groups do not fully incorporate local traditions, values and attitudes into

their assistance programs. Assistance can only be successful if it is culturally sensitive and adapts to the needs of the local community.

The direct impact of the global crisis on Africa, however, has been relatively contained. Many African nations have not been severely affected by the crisis since African banks generally are not well integrated into the global financial system. Nonetheless, African countries still are at risk of indirect adverse effects, such as reduced worldwide demand for African exports, a dampening of economic growth, a tightening of credit, and reduced remittance flows. Despite these setbacks, Mr. Speaker, African countries can greatly benefit from programs that both encourage productivity and promote economic independence.

Access to formal financial services is a key component of economic development. One method to facilitate development is microfinance. Microfinance is when banking institutions or even individuals grant small loans to other individuals, usually to establish or expand a small or self-sustaining business. When individuals gain access to credit, they can start a business, hire their neighbors, and stimulate local economic growth. For example, a loan made to a woman to buy a sewing machine can yield an income when she offers her sewing and tailoring services. Or if a loan helps a family purchase a cow, the milk produced from the cow can generate both nourishment and income.

The average microfinance loan amount ranges from \$50 to \$5,000, and the repayment cycle can range from 90 days to 18 months. Repayment of microfinance loans is 98 percent compared to regular business loans by traditional lenders. Official microfinance organizations are currently only reaching 5 to 8 percent of the businesses who are in dire need of loans. Access to credit for the poor is in dire need as well. Microfinancing institutions also provide access to savings accounts.

Microfinance has proven to be successful because of its ability to reach the poor, especially women with highly sustainable programs that have a positive impact. As the United Nations Office of Special Adviser on Africa reports, women are a better credit risk than men and more responsible managers of meager resources. Furthermore, women are, and I quote, more committed to using their loans for the benefit of their household rather than self-gratifying consumption, as is common among many African men. Empowering women sets families on the path toward economic independence. This case study demonstrates how microfinance can help alleviate poverty.

In 2007, Absa Bank Group in South Africa established a dedicated microenterprise finance unit to make funding more readily available to businesses that are formally excluded from getting regular bank loans. It has been es-

timated that as many as 97 percent of microentrepreneurs in South Africa had no access to loans prior to receiving funding through the AMEF. Today, more than 4.5 million people on low incomes use Absa Bank services for everything from microloans to saving accounts and transactions, leading the way for microenterprise loans in South Africa.

In addition to providing loans, microfinance institutions can also support individuals by keeping savings in a secure manner and by helping to accumulate interest on deposits.

□ 2145

This allows the poor to lift themselves out of poverty.

Self-reliance, Mr. Speaker, is the key. I've seen both the despair and the resiliency of Africans. In Rwanda I met a woman who was given a cow. Shortly after she received the cow, the cow had a calf, which she was then obligated to give to her neighbor. But based upon the cow she had and the milk that she could harvest from that particular cow, she was able to not only feed her family but to sell enough milk to then buy a bicycle.

She bought a bicycle, Mr. Speaker, so that she could ride the 3 miles it took to get clean water. So instead of walking, now she could ride and send her children to get clean water. She then made enough money to send her children to school and pay the fees. She then took out a loan and bought another cow, and with that cow she is able now to buy food and clothing. She is able to do much more than she was before. She is really quite an entrepreneur. And, by the way, Mr. Speaker, this woman has AIDS. But she is raising five children on her own because someone gave her a cow and she had the ability to go from there.

Mr. Speaker, in the very near future, microloans that support small-scale entrepreneurship will improve the lives of Africans and empower them to work their way out of poverty. Microfinance is already proven in India and Bangladesh to be an effective economic development strategy. According to World Vision, one loan, just one loan, can create 40 jobs in a community of approximately 600 to 700 people.

The difficulties faced by African nations should not deter us from providing assistance. Through America's support of expanding basic education and access to financial services, we can assist African leaders and people in creating a more vibrant continent and, in turn, a richer world. My recent experience has confirmed for me that both of these approaches can empower people by providing them with confidence, self-esteem, and the financial means to contribute to their economic advancement. Our leadership and our moral strength is only enhanced when we help others. Truly, Mr. Speaker, we lift as we rise.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MASSA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honor to have the privilege to represent my constituents here on the floor of the House of Representatives and convey the thought process for myself and a good number of my colleagues about the issues of the day. And hopefully we will be able to cap off this evening and send some people to bed with some thoughts that they'll wake up in the morning supporting or else have good reasons to oppose.

A lot has transpired here since the August break began, and we only have 1 week behind us here in the House of Representatives since we have returned. That deep tradition has been that Members of Congress would leave Washington, D.C. in the hot, humid month of August. This tradition began before air conditioning. It's a good tradition, and I think we should keep it because we saw something phenomenal in America this past August, and it seemed like a never-ending series of townhall meetings that took place in community after community. Nearly every congressional district held something. Some held many, many meetings. I don't know the record on the number of the townhall meetings that were had, but I'm sure it fell in the dozens of meetings for a single Member.

For myself I represent 32 counties in western Iowa, the western third of the State, that's sliced from Minnesota down to Missouri, 32 counties, 286 towns. I held a good number of townhall meetings, and it was a very rewarding experience.

The thing that I take away from it, Mr. Speaker, and there are many—I got some ideas on the health care issue that are on my list that I will talk about here in a moment, Mr. Speaker. But the thing that I will remember the most, it isn't a single issue or a single individual or a way an argument was phrased or worded or how compelling they were, and there were many that were compelling arguments, but it was the image of town after town, meeting after meeting, rooms full of people, often people in standing room around the outside, some people standing and looking in the doorway. We always found a way, I think, though, where everybody could hear. If they wanted in, they could get in. We couldn't always hear the comments of everyone because there were just too many.

But the dissenters had their say. And they actually had, I think, a disproportionate amount of voice within the meetings that I had, but that's all right. We got to hear from both sides of the argument. We got to hear from more of those that oppose a national health care plan than those that support it. Those that supported it were a distinct minority in my district, but

they had more than their fair share to say.

So I weighed those issues, and I watched their reaction. But the thing I remember the most were hundreds of attentive people sitting there with focused attention, listening to every word, listening to the words that were spoken by their friends, their neighbors, their family members, listened to the responses that I gave, and weighing this and putting it into their calculator for what America is going to look like.

I will never forget those faces, those eyes looking up to the front of the room, paying attention to every word, taking notes. Some of the questions were so well worded, so carefully phrased, you could tell that there was a deep amount of research that went into the questions. I wondered if some of them didn't stay up nearly all night long to be ready just for their chance, their chance to have that moment to have their say.

And I'm so encouraged by their commitment, and I wish they had more voice. I wish we could hear them now, Mr. Speaker. I wish we could fill this Chamber up with the people that filled up these townhall meetings, and especially the leadership, but the rank and file of all of us that have the privilege here to serve in the House of Representatives could hear those voices again in here.

I hope when we debate a health care bill here on the floor of the House that this gallery is full of people. I hope the C-SPAN camera, Mr. Speaker, represents millions out there that are watching every move, listening to every word, people that are taking notes, people that are tape-recording our actions and our words and carefully analyzing, and I hope we're held accountable for the decisions that are made in committee where generally it doesn't get the press that it gets here on the floor.

But when the day comes, the American people need to know that they have been heard, that we went home, that we traveled our districts, we did our townhall meetings, and that we came back and conferred with each other and arrived at a decision that's the right decision for the long-term best interests of our descendants, our progeny and their descendants as well, Mr. Speaker.

So I hope that's what happens. And I don't know that it will. I don't know that it will because there are forces at play, and some of the people, especially in the majority, have voiced this, that their townhall meetings with their constituents are just one of the places where they get the information to decide. Other places might be the lobby. It might be their coffers. It might be their leadership. And it could be just simply a deeply entrenched philosophy that favors Big Government over freedom.

So for me in my townhall meetings, if there was one position that I took

that I was clear on that had the most support of all, it was I will not support a bill that diminishes the people's freedom in the United States of America. That's my pledge, Mr. Speaker. I will not diminish our freedom. It's my freedom too. And I have taken an oath to uphold this Constitution, and it's our Constitution and it's about freedom. It isn't just about individual freedom. It's about the 10th Amendment. It's about the freedom of the States to control those things which are not specifically designated and enumerated for the Federal Government. This Federal Government has reached across the 10th Amendment and violated at least the spirit and I will say also the letter of the Constitution over and over again.

And if this United States of America passes a health care bill that looks anything like H.R. 3200, it will be a violation of our Constitution consistently in several different ways.

So I'm very concerned about where we go with this: the disregard, the cavalier attitude that many Members of Congress have towards the Constitution, towards their oath to the Constitution, towards its meaning and towards its content.

And this drive to create this single-payer system, you know, you just couldn't drive the wooden stake in the heart of HillaryCare back in 1993 and 1994. When Senator Phil Gramm stood on the floor of the United States Senate right down this hallway where I'm faced right now and he said this health care bill, this national health care bill will pass over my cold, dead political body, a lot of people thought that Senator Phil Gramm was going to become a cold, dead political body and that HillaryCare was going to pass. But it has not. It's been 15 years and more since Phil Gramm made that statement, and he has held off this nationalized health care, this socialized medicine juggernaut. He has and many others have too. It has been a national effort.

Yes, there are people out there that think that they'd be better off if somebody else would take the responsibility for their health care, and they are large in number but small in percentage, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I will make this point that we have constantly heard the words and the statistics that are over 40 million people that are uninsured in America, that we have got to do something about the uninsured. And this number of 40 million usually rounds up to around 44 million. Now it has kind of crept up to 47 million and probably the most reliable number is close to 46 million people uninsured in America. Now, that's a pretty large percentage of our population. We have about 306 million Americans, and if 46 or 47 million are uninsured, that's, let's see, one-sixth or a little bit less of our population.

It's funny that the uninsured is about the same percentage of our population as the GDP is consumed by health care.