

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Speaker, this is a defining week in the history of this Republic. At no time in history has the Federal legislature mandated that everyone in this country buy anything; yet this week we are going to mandate, if this bill passes and is enacted into law, that everyone in this country under the force of law has to buy health insurance.

The Founding Fathers are rolling over in their graves today because they knew that we should be leery of a large central government mandating things to even the States that they have to comply with. They told us to have a healthy distrust of Big Brother, the Federal Government. They told us basically to sleep with one eye open and one eye closed because our freedoms could be at risk from within. We are at that moment in the history of this great Nation, and we must stand strong and resolute.

In Tennessee where I live, our Democratic Governor, Phil Bredesen, has called this the "mother of all unfunded mandates," because it forces all these new people into State Medicaid programs. In our State it is called TennCare. It is a multibillion dollar mandate to the people of Tennessee, and we don't have the money to pay for it. And we will not raise taxes to pay for it; we will not go into debt to pay for it. It is wrong for the States to be run over like this.

They carved out the 10th Amendment and gave States some sovereignty. There are liberal publications today writing that article VI allows the Federal Government to override the States. But that is on matters of equality and justice, not a decision of policy by the Federal legislature to mandate costs and taxes and debt on its people.

We must stand strong against this bill this week in the Congress. But if it is enacted into law, we must lead a repeal movement to immediately, as soon as possible, repeal this bill before it goes into effect. And then, if we are not able to repeal it, the Governors of this country should come out of their chairs and stand against this bill.

I will tell you, in Tennessee, if I am to become the 49th Governor of our great State, we will meet the Federal legislature and the Federal Government at the State line to oppose this mandate, because we will not raise taxes, we will not go into debt, we will not be violated like this. And we must let our Founding Fathers rest peacefully, knowing that these living laboratories of democracy, our States, are allowed to exist, setting our own taxes, setting our own rules, living in the United States but not being run over by the United States.

Mr. Speaker, this is a defining moment in the history of our country. We must be resolute. We must fight with every ounce of our energy to stop this Federal invasion and this overriding of States' rights.

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

woman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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 addressed the House. Her 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. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

CUBA'S PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Orlando Zapata Tamayo, a prisoner of conscience who went on a hunger strike in one of the Cuban gulags, one of the many gulags that is full of political prisoners in that island prison of Cuba.

He went on a hunger strike to protest the multiple constant beatings that he was suffering under, that he and other political prisoners have to deal with on a constant basis. So he did, he went on a hunger strike. And after 80 days of being on a hunger strike, he passed away. He passed away after 80 days on February 28.

Right after that, another pro-democracy activist, very well known, another also former political prisoner named Guillermo Farinas, also began his own hunger strike. Mr. Speaker, he is still on a hunger strike today, 21 days after the death of Mr. Orlando Zapata Tamayo. He is already under very, very difficult circumstances. He is exceedingly frail, and his health is quickly deteriorating. But he is not stopping, again, to protest the conditions of the many political prisoners, but also to protest the lack of freedom, and to demand freedom for all political prisoners in Cuba and demand freedom for all who live on that enslaved island.

On March 11, Mr. Speaker, Felix Bonne announced that if and when Guillermo Farinas were to give his life in this hunger strike, that he would follow him; that he would be willing to give his life on a hunger strike to protest the conditions on the island, to protest the enslavement of all Cuban people, and the mistreatment of the political prisoners.

Today, March 17, 30 women known as the Ladies in White who go and protest peacefully in the streets of Havana,

and what they ask for is for the release of the political prisoners, of their relatives, their husbands, their sons, their brothers, today, 30 of them were thrown in prison. They were arrested, again, just because they were asking for the freedom of the political prisoners.

Today's march was led by Reina Zapata. She is the mother of Orlando Zapata Tamayo who, as I mentioned, died after 80 days on a hunger strike. Again, they were also arrested, taken away. Some of them had to be sent to the hospital because of the way that they were taken away.

And I mention this, Mr. Speaker, because it is important that the world understand that the people of Cuba are standing up, they are speaking out, they are protesting. They are protesting the conditions on the island, the lack of freedom, the oppression, the brutality of the Castro brothers who have been now the dictators on that island for over half a century.

So it is important that we also stand up and speak out, that we stand side by side with those in Cuba who are giving their all, including their lives, in the cause of freedom.

I know that there are some who still believe that it is okay to excuse those horrors; that we should try to make a buck, if we can, from that regime, with that regime at the expense of the suffering of the Cuban people. But, Mr. Speaker, as you know, there is no more noble people than the American people, which is why the vast majority stand side by side with the suffering of the Cubans, with the cause of a free Cuba.

So it is important that we remember as we debate and as we speak and as we live in freedom that just 90 miles away from the shores of the United States there are people who are suffering and who are dying for the cause of freedom. Mr. Speaker, we stand with them, we admire them, we support them. And we know that that cause will not be in vain, that their deaths will not be in vain, and that Cuba will be free.

□ 1745

HEALTH CARE REFORM

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

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, there's a motto inscribed on Nebraska's State Capitol. It says, "The Salvation of the State is Watchfulness in the Citizen." Mr. Speaker, Nebraskans and all Americans are watching this health care debate. Frankly, I think they're growing tired—tired of the backroom dealing, tired of the abuse of the legislative process, and tired of the unwillingness of this body to craft the right policy for our country.

Overall, Nebraskans, and I assume most Americans, want a good health care bill, one that truly strengthens

health care outcomes for everyone and reduces cost while we protect vulnerable persons. Instead, with Washington-style elitism, efforts are continuing behind closed doors on a measure that is filled with special deals that will substantially shift costs, erode health care liberties, and add to increased and unsustainable government spending.

Mr. Speaker, our constituents are watching to see if the health care legislation is fair—fair to seniors, fair to families, fair to small businesses, fair to the hardworking citizens across this country.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we can do better.

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

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

HISTORIC HEALTH CARE DEBATE

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

Mr. MANZULLO. Mr. Speaker, we are engaged in what is called an historic debate over the issue of health care reform, and there are a couple of issues that need to be addressed.

The area that I represent in northern Illinois, the biggest city is at 19.7 percent unemployment. Add 7 percentage points to that, it's nearly 27 percent unemployment. It's incredible.

The State of Illinois is laying off teachers, social workers, people involved in all types of social services. Students at a nearby high school went out and picketed because they're concerned over the loss of their advanced placement classes. Yet, under the Senate bill, many more across the country would be added to the Medicaid roles. The State of Illinois, already bankrupt, billions of dollars in debt, would have to take on paying an additional \$400 million a year in Federal mandates and unreimbursed increased Medicaid expenses. This doesn't make sense.

On top of it, there's a 2½ percent—we think that's the amount—excise tax on medical equipment, medical devices, the very equipment that was used to save the life of my wife who came down with cancer 4 years ago: the titanium brace that replaces one of her vertebrae, the radiation machine, all the latest equipment. A tax on the very equipment that's used to help people get excellent health care in this country? We're not quite sure which equipment would be taxed or which would be free of tax, but once the tax starts—and we all know what happens with the tax. It's passed on to the consumers.

So here's this monstrous bill from the Senate that the House is supposed to adopt by some type of unique proc-

ess that's going to tax lifesaving equipment. It just defies logic as to why this is being done; \$500 billion in tax increases. Now Social Security would apply to dividends, interest, capital gains taxes. Tax after tax after tax hurting the American people. I never thought that it would happen in America when lifesaving devices would be taxed to increase the cost to the people who use them.

This isn't what the American people want; it certainly isn't what they deserve. There are many ways to bring down the high cost of health care: through association health plans, through meaningful medical liability reform, through increasing the number of community health centers, by allowing small employers the ability to have the same tax breaks that corporations do when using their money to buy health insurance premiums.

America watches and looks and wonders and asks this question: Why are the leaders in Congress doing this to us?

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

(Mr. SOUDER 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 Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DUNCAN 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 Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PENCE 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 Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. AKIN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just taking a moment here to arrange some charts and I will be right with you.

Mr. Speaker, we once again are going to be on a subject that seems to be increasingly riveting the attention of Americans—and for good reason. What

we are talking about here this evening is the proposition that the Congress will take over, over a period of time, one-sixth of the U.S. economy. That is the health care section of the economy.

Obviously, this big a change, a remake of health care, which is not just changing a little portion here or there, but a complete remake of health care, is a question of significant proportion. It is a very costly proposition. It's one that involves a tremendous amount of change, and any change, of course, is controversial. This proposal, though, is more controversial than most and is resulting in a tremendous outpouring of phone calls. The switchboards are almost shut down here at the Capitol. But we, once again tonight, are going to be talking about it because there is talk we might even vote on the bill this week, and who knows what's going to happen.

I'm joined in the Chamber by Dr. FLEMING, a very fine physician but also a Member of Congress and someone who knows a considerable amount about the health care bill. Part of what the discussion has been lately has been a question of the procedure of how the bill would become law. That's, I think, where we should start, because that's where the news is right now and it's a big question.

Dr. FLEMING, I thought we might start there because a lot of people have heard about the bill, even some of the things in the bill, but the question is how this bill would become law.

I'm going to start by just laying down the simple pattern that's in the U.S. Constitution. The way that a bill becomes law is that it's passed by the Senate. It's passed by the House. It's sent to the President, and he signs it. That's the plain, bare-bones facts of how it works. That's what the Constitution says. The Constitution gives the House and the Senate a lot of flexibility in how we design our rules, but ultimately the bill has to pass a straight-up vote in the Senate and a straight-up vote in the House and has to be signed by the President. If it doesn't do that, it doesn't meet the constitutional standard.

Now, the process becomes a little more complicated as we go on because the Senate has a weird rule. In fact, the Senate does a lot of weird things, but it has a weird rule, at least to those of us who are Members of the House, and that is that before a bill can come up for a vote, it takes 60 votes to bring it up for a vote. So if you've got a bill and you say, Hey, we've got a hundred Senators; I've got 55 votes for the bill, you're in deep trouble, because you won't ever get the 60 votes to get it up for just a straight-up vote even though you've got enough votes to pass it. In other words, the Senate has a little bit of a higher bar to protect to make sure there's at least 60 out of 100 Senators that are willing to pass a particular piece of legislation or bring it up for a vote. So that makes things more complicated.