

Captain Rattan's accommodation request was granted. I am grateful to Secretary Gates and then-Secretary of the Army Pete Geren for reviewing and ultimately granting the accommodation. They have both shown tremendous foresight in recognizing that our Nation's 21st-century fighting force should incorporate all aspects of American society.

Sikhs fought bravely in defense of our Nation in both World Wars, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. At present, Sikhs serve in the militaries of Great Britain, Canada and India, among others, and as United States peacekeepers, often working closely with American troops in troubled regions.

Throughout our Nation's history, the military has succeeded in training individuals from diverse backgrounds and communities to achieve one unifying goal, to protect and defend the United States. By denying Sikh officers the ability to appropriately practice their religion while serving, the Army denies itself access to the important talents and abilities of these individuals who are willing to fight and die for our Nation.

No American should have to choose between his religion and service to our country. At a time when this country is fighting two wars overseas, we can ill afford to turn away skilled, accomplished and patriotic young Americans like Captain Rattan who wish to serve. Captain Rattan's achievement today underscores the importance of preserving diversity in our Armed Forces. It is a testament to one of the most fundamental values, freedom of religion upon which our Nation was founded and which makes the United States a beacon of hope and liberty throughout the world. I wholeheartedly congratulate him on this very important occasion.

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

STATES' RIGHTS

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

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, you know, we have seen for some time the Federal Government, since 1913, usurping States' rights. This Federal Government, this Congress, the House and Senate with the complicity of both Republican and Democratic Presidents, sending to the States unfunded mandates demanding that they come up with millions and billions of dollars that they didn't have, just out of the blue. We've now come up with one that

many States believe will bankrupt them.

How did we get here? Well, in 1913 the constitutionally sanctioned process of electing Senators was changed by the 17th Amendment. That was put in the Constitution after great debate, and what it required was that the State legislatures, the States select—not the overall population of the State—but the State legislatures would select the U.S. Senators. That was a check and balance on the Federal Government's usurpation of States' rights because if any U.S. Senator came up here and voted such an unfunded mandate upon the State, he was going to quickly be recalled, as has happened before.

But the appeal—and I don't know how I would have voted on the 17th Amendment because it sounds so good. You know what, we ought to let all the people in the State elect our U.S. Senator. And once that was done, once that amendment was passed, there was no further check on States' rights and the protections afforded in the 9th and 10th Amendments that reserved all power not specifically enumerated, as it says here, in the 10th Amendment: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

Both Republicans and Democrats have violated that concept. And what could the States do about it? After 1913, they had no power to do anything about it. They didn't have an Army as big as the United States, and we didn't want secession again. We didn't want another civil war. It should be done legislatively and diplomatically and within legislative bodies, however they were called, and within the framework of the U.S. Constitution.

Well, the Constitution, when it was drafted, addressed that point, and it's very clear. And perhaps it took a government to run away, as one State representative or Governor said, The mother of all unfunded mandates. The States—there are 39 of them that have so far said, We're not going to take this anymore. We're going to do something, whether it's going to be legislative, litigation, whatever. We're going to stop this. But the truth is, it may take years to get through the courts to the Supreme Court. It may take years.

So here's the solution: it was in the Constitution all along. It's called article V of the United States Constitution. Now we know that article V has been used many times by this first line, "The Congress, whenever two-thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary"—we know that's been used many times. The House and Senate agree we need an amendment, and so they call for the amendment to be produced. But something—I haven't been able to find it. It's been done before, but it can be. It's there. But here it is: "Or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two-thirds of the several States shall"—it means Congress shall, Congress shall, that it's not any choice that Congress has.

If two-thirds of the States apply and say, We want a convention—not a Constitutional Convention because this can be restricted by the Congress—but an amendment—one amendment would be all that was necessary to return a check and balance on the Federal Government, give the States what the 9th and 10th Amendments reserved to them. Two-thirds of the States make application, Congress shall call in a convention for proposing amendments—not rewriting the Constitution. And this is a procedural issue that the Supreme Court has always said, with regard to procedural issues, That's political. It's procedural. Congress, you do it however you want to. We're not touching that. We're not going to issue a decision. That's what this should be. This is how we return control and some sense of order to the States.

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.)

HEALTH CARE: THE CRISIS OF CONSENT

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

Mr. MCCOTTER. So this is what change looks like. If he were here, Mr. Speaker, in this time of momentous national distress, I would remind the President of the United States that he is not a leader of a party or an ideology. He is the leader of our country, one founded not to ameliorate others but to inspire the world.

As families lose their jobs, their homes and their dreams for their children, as our troops fight in sacrifice in foreign fields for our liberty and security, President Obama's obsessive-compulsive pursuit of an abominable government takeover of health care has defied the public's objections, despoiled this, the people's House, and further alienated Americans from their representative government.

As President Obama's campaign mantra of "hope and change" has degenerated into tax and hate, reputable surveys prior to this vote report: the public overwhelmingly thinks that the U.S. Government is broken. Only 21 percent of the public thinks it is being governed with its consent. Only 26 percent of the public trusts the Federal Government most of the time or always; 56 percent of Americans think the Federal Government has become so large and powerful that it poses an immediate threat to the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens; 70 percent believe the government and big business typically work together in ways that hurt consumers and investors; and 71 percent of Americans think the Federal Government is a special interest.

In the wake of this health care debate, despicable dysfunctional process and product, it is clear the most dangerous special interest is Big Government and President Obama is its lobbyist. In contrast to Americans' faith in themselves, every major piece of legislation proffered by the President and his Democratic Congress expands and empowers Big Government at the expense of the people, possessed of a smug, cynical, patronizing view of Americans as dependents desiring State benefits, this arrogant administration and its enablers have defied the American people and bipartisan opposition in Congress to unilaterally jam through a trillion-dollar government takeover of health care.

Why? For so many Americans, the answer is that this President and his Democratic Congress think they are smarter than you, want to run your life, and want to make government your ruler, not your servant. It threatens not only our health care system but it tears the social fabric of our Nation. Instead of working towards a more political Union, the President exacerbated the disorder of our Nation and wrought an experiment in human freedom and self-government on the precipice of implosion.

To do so the President has the power, but not the right. Thus he has merely scored a Pyrrhic victory over the American people. Ultimately, his government-run medicine scheme will be repealed and replaced because America's strength and salvation remains her free people, not a person.

And this November, America's sovereign citizens will remind the President and Democratic Congress that we the people do not work for government. The government works for us. No, the President and his Democratic Congress will not break us beneath Big Government. Devoted to our freedom and a more perfect Union, we will keep the faith, trust the public, calm the chaos, and heal our country.

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

(Ms. KAPTUR 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 Ohio (Mr. LATTA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is

recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor this evening to anchor an hour for the Congressional Black Caucus on health care reform. I have several of my colleagues here to join me. Interestingly enough, three are from three of the relevant committees that put the bill together in the House.

When I left my private practice of 21 years, I promised my patients that I would continue to do everything I could to ensure that they got the health care they needed, even though I was leaving the practice. Too many were uninsured. Too many had several chronic diseases. Too many could not afford even 1 month's supply of medicine. And our low-capped Medicaid funding was of very little help.

Last night our Democratic leadership and my Democratic colleagues helped me make good on that promise. Because of the landmark legislation that we passed last night, the most momentous piece of legislation since Social Security, Medicare and the civil rights bills, not only my constituents but all Americans will have access to affordable, quality, and comprehensive health care. And African Americans and other minorities will benefit because of the provisions that are included to reduce the disparities that Surgeon General Heckler called an affront to American ideals and to the genius of American medicine.

So tonight some of my colleagues will help to explain the many benefits of the bill we passed last evening and the way that our communities will be able to be helped by the legislation.

I would like to first call on the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Health Subcommittee who played a very important role in developing the bill as it went through Energy and Commerce.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Let me thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and thank her for all of her good work on the legislation. For the past 12 to 14 months, I have watched you as you have worked tirelessly to get a finished product that we can all be proud of. And so I want to thank you on behalf of the 600,000 people that I represent in the First Congressional District of North Carolina.

Mr. Speaker, every President in this country for the past 50 years or more has tried to reform health care. Unfortunately, all of them have failed, both Democrat and Republican. We have a health care system in this country that is in serious need of reforming. And President Barack Obama, during the Presidential campaign of 2008, campaigned on the platform that if elected, he would bring health care reform to the American people and for the American people. It was a hotly contested campaign, as we can all remember, but he was victorious because the American people had confidence that Presi-

dent Obama had the ability and the vision to bring people together to enact this worthwhile legislation and to do other great things for our country.

Well, we started the 111th Congress, and President Obama told us from day one that he was ready to deliver on the promise that he made to the American people. And so we in the Energy and Commerce Committee and Congresswoman CHRISTENSEN and many of us worked very hard to put together a good, strong piece of legislation. But I can tell you that we would not have enacted this bill last night without the courageous, visionary leadership of President Barack Obama.

In the Energy and Commerce Committee, we worked very hard to craft legislation that we were very proud of. At the same time as we were doing our work, the United States Senate was also crafting a piece of legislation and they completed their work on Christmas Eve, as we all remember. Well, what the American people may not fully understand is that in this body, before we can have a piece of legislation delivered to the President's desk, both the House and the Senate must agree. And so during the Christmas holidays, the Democratic leadership from both Chambers worked very hard to try to reconcile the differences between these two bills.

The unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker, and Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, is we had no participation, no help whatsoever from our Republican friends on the other side of the aisle. When I say we had no help at all, we actually had none. The fact of the matter is that out of the 178 Republicans who serve in the House of Representatives, not a single one worked with us on this legislation. We tried unsuccessfully on many occasions to try to include Republicans in our deliberations, but there was apparently a strategic decision, a political decision on their part to not participate.

Over on the other side of the Capitol, the same thing happened in the United States Senate. Out of the 40 Republicans who serve in the Senate, not a single one worked with us. And so it was Democrats who had to try to get this legislation shaped and to get it ready for passage. And so during the Christmas holidays, the Democratic leadership worked very hard. They worked through Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve and all through the holidays to try to reconcile their differences. And finally toward the end of the holiday season, there was a compromise between the Chambers and we reached a decision on this legislation.

The problem was that we lost a seat in the United States Senate. Due to the unfortunate passing of our hero, Senator Edward Kennedy from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, we lost a Democratic seat in the United States Senate. Senator Kennedy's replacement was not from the Democratic Party. We found ourselves with less than the supermajority that is required in the United States Senate.