

colleagues that during the 1976 outbreak of swine flu only 1 America died from the flu, but mandatory vaccinations killed at least 25 before the program was abandoned.

Madam Speaker, the panicked reaction to swine flu outbreak demonstrates why the Federal Government should not become involved in health care. Instead, decisions as to how best to deal with infectious disease should be left to local communities, health care providers, and, most importantly of all, individual citizens. Patients should always have the right to make their own decision about whether or not to receive a vaccine after getting full information on both the risks and the benefits of vaccines from their health care provider.

Mr. BURGESS. I have no other speakers on my side, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I have no additional speakers. I urge passage of this resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1003, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. PALLONE. 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 and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EMERGENCY AID TO AMERICAN SURVIVORS OF THE HAITI EARTHQUAKE ACT

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 2949) to amend section 1113 of the Social Security Act to provide authority for increased fiscal year 2010 payments for temporary assistance to United States citizens returned from foreign countries, to provide necessary funding to avoid shortfalls in the Medicare cost-sharing program for low-income qualifying individuals, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 2949

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN AGGREGATE PAYMENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010 FOR TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO UNITED STATES CITIZENS RETURNED FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

Section 1113(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1313(d)) is amended by striking "September, 30, 2003" and all that follows and inserting "September 30, 2009, except that, in the case of fiscal year 2010, the total amount of such assistance provided during that fiscal year shall not exceed \$25,000,000."

SEC. 3. QI PROGRAM FUNDING.

Section 1933(g)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396u-3(g)(2)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (M), by striking "\$412,500,000" and inserting "\$462,500,000"; and

(2) in subparagraph (N), by striking "\$150,000,000" and inserting "\$165,000,000".

SEC. 4. APPLICATION OF MEDICAID IMPROVEMENT FUND.

Section 1941(b)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396w-1(b)(1)(A)) is amended by striking "\$100,000,000" and inserting "\$10,000,000".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) be allowed to control 10 minutes of the time for debate on this bill.

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

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 2949.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, 2 weeks ago, the largest earthquake ever recorded in Haiti wreaked havoc throughout the country.

Some of those affected by the devastation in Haiti are U.S. citizens who are now being evacuated back to the United States. We need to act today to continue a program that helps these Americans get back home.

The Repatriation Program provides assistance to U.S. citizens evacuating foreign countries due to a crisis by helping them secure and pay for connecting flights, temporary lodging, food, and medical assistance. Recipients of this assistance are expected to reimburse the government for such aid, unless repayment poses a significant hardship.

This program has an annual funding cap of only \$1 million, which is far short of the funding needed to help all the U.S. citizens returning home. There were roughly 45,000 Americans living in Haiti when the earthquake hit, and over 14,000 have already been evacuated.

The bill before us increases the program's funding cap to \$25 million for this year so that it can continue to serve U.S. citizens returning from Haiti.

It is worth noting that we have raised this program's annual funding cap in response to past international crises. Most recently, in 2006, Congress

responded to a request from the Bush administration to increase the program's funding to help Americans evacuating Lebanon.

As sent over by the Senate, this bill also continues funding for another group of needy Americans, low-income senior citizens. A program known as QI that now helps Medicare beneficiaries with their part B premiums if their income is only slightly above the poverty line requires additional funding in order to continue to provide assistance to every State throughout the rest of the year. This legislation provides the necessary funding to address this shortfall and to ensure the program continues to operate.

The Congressional Budget Office reports that the cost of both of these provisions is fully offset by a reduction in the Medicaid Improvement Fund, which provides additional funding to HHS for program management.

In short, this bill helps people in great need of assistance without raising the deficit.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this effort to help Americans evacuating from Haiti and to continue assistance to Medicare beneficiaries.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of this Senate bill, S. 2949. As Representative McDERMOTT described, it will provide assistance to thousands of Americans returning from Haiti following the devastating January 12 earthquake there.

Let me reiterate that we are helping American citizens with this legislation.

The bill, entitled Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act, will ensure that State and local governments and charitable agencies on the ground in Florida, for example, and elsewhere have the resources to do exactly that.

Funding for those local efforts is provided through the Repatriation Program administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Each year, that program provides temporary assistance in the form of loans to U.S. citizens and their dependents arriving in the U.S. following an emergency. By law, currently the program is capped at \$1 million per year.

This bill, which passed the Senate last night, temporarily increases that cap for 2010. As the legislation makes clear, and the Congressional Budget Office score confirms, this increase is entirely paid for by reducing spending in other areas. It does not raise the national debt.

This is similar to how Congress responded when demand for repatriation assistance swelled following the American evacuation of Lebanon in 2006. Congress stepped in to provide for the additional funds that were needed and paid for that additional funding through savings. That is the right approach. And, frankly, my constituents

would like to see this balanced budget approach applied across the board, not just to the smallest items.

For my part, I wish we were cutting funds in the bloated State Department budget to pay for this emergency. As I am sure my colleagues would agree, Congress should be looking for ways to save taxpayer dollars all the time, not just when new spending emergency needs come up. Unfortunately, since we are acting on a Senate bill, these concerns will have to wait for another day.

Before I yield, I would like to note the special importance this bill has for the State of Florida. Since so many of our returning citizens are arriving through my home State, I truly appreciate my colleagues supporting this bill and making sure that State and local agencies have the resources that they need to respond to this emergency.

The State Department suggests that there were approximately 45,000 U.S. citizens in Haiti and that they were there when the earthquake hit. As of yesterday, some 14,000 had already returned to the United States. I commend all the workers in Florida and across the country, whether with State or local government agencies, the Red Cross, our Armed Forces, or other agencies who are helping fellow citizens as they travel to their final destinations in the United States.

The House and Senate are to be commended for acting very quickly on this legislation. Passing the Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act today is important to thousands of Americans who have been displaced and who need a helping hand to return home. I encourage support for this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of the Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act, or S. 2949, which passed the Senate last night with bipartisan support.

As my colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee have explained, this bill provides \$25 million to enable the Secretary of HHS to reimburse States for the costs of providing temporary assistance to U.S. citizens who have returned from the catastrophe in Haiti without available resources.

I want to focus on the portion of the bill that provides temporary assistance for low-income Medicare beneficiaries under what is known as the Medicaid QI program.

Currently, Medicaid pays the Medicare part B premiums for low-income Medicare beneficiaries with incomes between 120 percent and 135 percent of the Federal poverty level. That translates to an income of between \$13,000 and \$14,600 per year.

Now, the monthly part B premium is \$96.40 per month, or \$1,157 per year. And this is 8 percent to 9 percent of the income of these low-income, elderly,

and disabled Medicare beneficiaries. Obviously, having Medicaid pay this premium makes Medicare much more affordable for these people and eases their financial struggles.

This Medicaid payment comes from a fixed amount of funding for the QIs that is allocated among the States. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, that fund is about \$65 million short for this calendar year 2010. When the fund runs out, States have the option of continuing to pay the part B premiums for this population with their own funds or simply stopping new enrollment.

One State, Arizona, has already announced that it is capping its QI program this week in response to an estimated \$2.8 million shortfall in its allotment. The State is going to give public notice and then deny all new Arizona applications. This will affect approximately 175 Medicare beneficiaries in Arizona each month.

While no other State has yet to stop enrollment, there are 21 States in addition to Arizona that have projected shortfalls in their QI funding. That includes Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Vermont.

By filing this \$65 million national QI funding shortfall for this calendar year, this bill will allow Arizona to uncap its QI program and help the other 21 States avoid capping theirs. Tens of thousands of low-income Medicare beneficiaries all over the country will be able to receive assistance with their part B premiums.

Madam Speaker, let me stress that this bill is fully paid for. It withdraws \$90 million from the Medicaid Improvement Fund to offset both the cost of the temporary assistance for U.S. citizens returning from Haiti and the cost of funding the QI program shortfall. In fact, CBO estimates that the legislation will actually reduce the deficit by \$14 million. So I think overall this is very good legislation, very helpful to the States, and certainly significant for those who are returning from Haiti. And I would urge my colleagues to suspend the rules and pass S. 2949.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. This legislation will ensure that American citizens returning from the devastation in Haiti in the days ahead will receive the same help and support as those who have already arrived and gotten their way home. It also will ensure that the many individuals hard at work assisting their fellow citizens will get the resources they need to continue these important efforts. I would ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

Mr. McDERMOTT. I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL).

Mr. RANGEL. I want to thank my colleagues, and especially Dr.

McDERMOTT, for bringing this piece of legislation to the floor to give some assistance to American citizens who found themselves in Haiti during this tragedy. This comes under the Social Security system, and I'm glad that Dr. McDERMOTT was able to bring it to the floor.

I have never been more proud of the Congress, my country, and, indeed, citizens throughout the world for rallying to the cause of these young people.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2949: The "Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act." This bill would provide up to \$25 million in Fiscal Year 2010 for a Department of Health and Human Services program which repatriates U.S. citizens from foreign countries. This assistance is vital to Americans who were living in Haiti when the earthquake struck as well as the families of those displaced who are now faced with the unexpected responsibility of supporting their repatriating relatives.

This repatriation assistance provides temporary assistance to citizens and their dependents who are identified by the Department of State as needing to return from a foreign country to the U.S. but who do not have the resources to do so.

As you know, on Tuesday, January 12th, a massive, 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti near the capital of Port-au-Prince. There is still no official estimate of death or destruction but the damage to buildings is extensive and the number of injured or dead is estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands.

The full dimensions of the disaster are still unfolding, but Haiti's Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive told CNN that he believes there are well over 100,000 dead, and leading senator Youri Latortue estimated the number at possibly as high as 500,000, according the Associated Press.

America is responding, and will continue to respond with immediate humanitarian assistance to help the people of this struggling island nation rebuild their livelihoods. I send my condolences to the people and government of Haiti as they grieve once again in the aftermath of a natural disaster. As Haiti's neighbor, I believe it is the United States' responsibility to help Haiti recover, and build the capacity to mitigate against future disasters.

America and her allies have already initiated a comprehensive, interagency response to the earthquake. The State Department, Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Coast Guard, USAID—all worked overnight to ensure critical resources were positioned to support the response and recovery effort, including efforts to find and assist American citizens in Haiti.

Within days of last week's devastating earthquake, U.S. Southern Command deployed a team of 30 people to Haiti to support U.S. relief efforts in the aftermath of one of the largest natural disasters in the western hemisphere. The team included U.S. military engineers, operational planners, and a command and control group and communication specialists arriving on two C-130 Hercules aircraft. Since, there has been a tremendous interagency response with support and partnering with U.S. Embassy personnel as well as Haitian, United Nations and international officials

to assess the situation and facilitate follow-on U.S. military support.

Our friends in the international community must also be commended for their efforts. The United Nations is releasing \$10 million from its emergency funds. The European Commission has approved €3 million (\$4.37 million) with more funds likely. Countless other nations, from Germany to China to Israel to Mexico have also pledged support. I commend each of these nations for coming to our neighboring nation in dire need of assistance.

Many of my constituents have asked what they can do to help, or how they can find their loved ones. Those who are interested in helping immediately can text 'HAITI' to '90999' and a donation of \$10 will be made automatically to the Red Cross for relief efforts. The donation will be charged to your cell phone bill.

The outpouring of support and funding from the American people was both instant and sustained. According to the Washington Post, the text messaging effort raised \$5 million in its first day, breaking the previous one-day record of about \$450,000. Text-message donations continue to play a larger-than-expected role in the push for earthquake relief in Haiti. As of late Sunday, the American Red Cross said that it had collected pledges of about \$103 million, including \$22 million through the text donation program. Each donor should be proud of their contribution to help their brothers and sisters in Haiti.

Financially, 2009 was not an easy year for many Americans. Although thousands of jobs were created and we are back on the road to economic recovery, Americans lived on tighter budgets than usual. This legislation passed today will allow those Americans who have generously donated money to Haiti to receive their tax break this year instead of next year.

In January of 2005, Congress enacted this type of relief for individuals that made charitable contributions to victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami that occurred in late December of 2004. That bill (H.R. 241 in the 109th Congress) passed the House of Representatives without objection and subsequently passed the Senate by unanimous consent. I hope that this legislation, like our response to the 2004 tsunami, will encourage Americans to contribute more money to Haiti. As Haiti starts on its long recovery, every dollar is critically important. Americans have responded in great numbers, and I am proud to represent such a compassionate and generous nation.

Americans are not only giving their money, they are also giving their time and expertise as well. This weekend, I arranged for a team of seven doctors, six nurses, two techs, and two search and rescue volunteers to fly to Haiti and provide immediate humanitarian support. This team led by Dr. Richard Toussaint from Forest Park Medical Center in Dallas Texas arrived in Haiti just after noon on Saturday. From there, the doctors made their way to Hospital Sacre-Coeur where, in roughly two days, they performed about 70 amputations, surgically treated about 150 patients, and saw about 600 patients total. I commend this team of medical personnel for their selfless actions and willingness to spend their own time and money to come to the aid of people they had never met.

Additionally, I hosted a Houston-based Haiti relief effort called "Texans helping Haitians" with city leadership and the Haitian community in the aftermath of this horrible disaster.

Groups included in the effort to provide supplies and medical assistance to Haiti were: Texas Medical Center, Texas Dental Association, Search and Rescue Organizations, the Haitian Multicultural Association, Haitian Caribbean Organization of Texas, Caribbean Impact Foundation, and Haiti Counts.

We also helped coordinate the safe return of six Houston Rotarians that were stranded in the mountains and we are now working with Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance on the transport of orphans to awaiting families here in the U.S. Our paramount duty is to protect Americans, and this bill will do exactly that.

In addition to providing temporary assistance directly to repatriates, the program also provides funds to States and other vendors to cover the administrative costs of providing temporary assistance to these individuals. This financial assistance is repayable to the U.S. government, unless waived by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Additionally, this legislation provides an additional \$60 million in funding for the Qualifying Individual (QI) program, which allows States to fund the Medicare Part B premiums of near-poor seniors not eligible for Medicaid.

The bill's Haiti funding and the increased QI funds are paid for through transfers from the Medicaid Improvement Fund. The Medicaid Improvement Fund is a program intended to improve the management of the Medicaid program. The legislation cuts \$90 million from that fund.

Medicare is a lifeline for Houston's seniors and this bill takes crucial steps toward strengthening it and providing the highest quality of care and benefits for our elderly.

In my home state of Texas, the need for a more efficient healthcare is more prevalent now than ever. One in four Texans, about 5.7 million people, or 24.5 percent of the state's population, has no health insurance coverage. An estimated 1,339,550 Texas children—20.2 percent of Texas children—are uninsured. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Texas has the nation's highest percentage of uninsured residents. This poses consequences for every person, business and local government in the state who bear extra costs to pay for uncompensated care. If Medicare funding is allowed to be cut or capped, the number of uninsured will grow dramatically.

Once again, I am devastated by the immeasurable tragedy that occurred in Haiti. Along with my colleagues, I hope to visit Haiti in the near future to meet with their leaders and see what the United States can do to rebuild the shattered livelihoods. This bill will help two categories of Americans with no cost to the taxpayers. I strongly support this bill and urge my colleagues to join me in voting in favor of it.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Madam Speaker, it is difficult to comprehend the depth of tragedy and sorrow that has visited the poor island of Haiti. It is difficult to convey the depth of our sympathy and shock at the catastrophe that has befallen the Haitian people.

Madam Speaker, the extent of the misery, destruction and death is nearly beyond imagination. It surely puts our own national trials and tribulations into perspective.

Our national unity in pursuing efforts to relieve the suffering of the Haitian people has been tremendously encouraging, particularly as this unity has sprung up amid the division and vitriol that have plagued our national politics in recent months and years.

And while our efforts to bring aid to the Haitians must continue, and will continue, our first priority, our first obligation, our first solemn duty as Americans and members of the United States Congress is to rescue and provide immediate relief to the American citizens in Haiti who are victims of this tragic natural disaster.

I applaud Chairman RANGEL in the House and Chairman BAUCUS in the Senate for their swift and focused action. On short notice and in an environment of uncertainty they have crafted a bill that will ensure the U.S. government has the resources and authority it needs to provide emergency aid to American survivors of this earthquake.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 2949.

Two weeks ago today, Haiti was devastated by its largest earthquake in over two centuries.

The United States has been unparalleled in its efforts to assist Haiti in the wake of this catastrophe and it only makes sense that we would show the same compassion and generosity to the many Americans who were victims of this tragic disaster.

As my colleagues have shared, this bill will provide important temporary assistance to help U.S. citizens on a need basis as they return from Haiti and re-establish themselves here in the U.S.

When the earthquake struck, there were an estimated 45,000 Americans living in Haiti.

Since then, nearly 12,000 Americans have been evacuated.

This bill will help to cover the costs related to these repatriations.

Again, I rise in support of this important measure and if I may, would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the many Americans whose lives were lost as well in the earthquake.

My most sincere thoughts and prayers go out to all of the family and friends who lost loved ones that day.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I have no additional speakers. I urge passage of the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. I urge the passage of S. 2949, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 2949.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1530

POVERTY IN AMERICA AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1024) expressing