

bipartisan legislation we enacted last year reauthorizing child welfare services, which included many good ideas from both sides of the aisle.

As we continue to hear that Elon Musk and his band of hackers are rampaging through Federal agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, firing policy experts, falsely accusing Americans of fraud, freezing and terminating investments that were directed by Congress, I hope we can return to the kind of partnership and genuine concern for vulnerable Americans that sparked both bills.

Move fast and break stuff might be a good model for technology companies, but it is wrong for the programs we have created to protect children.

Mr. Speaker, I support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. FEENSTRA).

Mr. FEENSTRA. Mr. Speaker, as a father of four, I believe that every child deserves a safe and loving home.

Unfortunately, many vulnerable children in our foster care system lack a family that they can call their own due to the shortage of foster families.

This must change, and that is what this bill does.

My bill, the Recruiting Families Using Data Act, would help States uphold and strengthen their diligent recruitment plans by improving their processes with concrete facts and information that identifies, recruits, and retains qualified foster care homes.

If we are going to address the problems facing the foster care system, we need better data on those that are having a problem. That is why this bill is so important.

This legislation would also establish a family advisory board to share best practices, highlight financial obstacles facing foster families, and keep foster families at the center of the systematic changes for improvement.

With the right tools and right resources, we can find a caring home for every child in our foster care program. That is why this bill is so important.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to stand with me for foster families, and support our children and vote for this wonderful bill.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this good bill to help ensure that children in foster care are in safe, appropriate homes.

I further urge my colleagues to work with us to stop these indiscriminate, illegal layoffs and funding cuts which threaten to undermine the good bipartisan work we have done on behalf of vulnerable children.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, nearly 400,000 American children today are in the Nation's child welfare sys-

tem and counting on us to help them secure access to a permanent, loving, and stable home. At the same time, thousands of parents across the Nation are ready and willing to provide that love and shelter for kids in need. However, more must be done to link those children with those families who will volunteer to help.

The Recruiting Families Using Data Act will give States the tools and incentives to grow the number of foster families able to care for kids who might otherwise remain stuck in other parts of our welfare system. It is a vote of confidence in the generosity and kindness of potential foster families, and I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CRAWFORD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 579.

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.

CHRONIC DISEASE FLEXIBLE COVERAGE ACT

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 919) to codify Internal Revenue Service guidance relating to treatment of certain services and items for chronic conditions as meeting the preventive care deductible safe harbor for purposes of high deductible health plans in connection with health savings accounts.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 919

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 "Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act".

SEC. 2. SERVICES AND ITEMS FOR CHRONIC CONDITIONS TREATED AS PREVENTIVE CARE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The additional preventive care services and items for chronic conditions that may be treated as preventive care for purposes of section 223(c)(2)(C) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as set forth in IRS Notice 2019-45 shall have the same force and effect as if included in the enactment of this Act.

(b) NO INFERENCE.—To the extent not inconsistent with this section, no inference shall be made from subsection (a) with respect to such other rules or guidance as the Secretary has provided, or may provide, with respect to preventive services for purposes of section 223(c)(2)(C) of such Code.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. PANETTA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act, introduced by Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Chairman VERN BUCHANAN and our Ways and Means colleague, Representative JIMMY PANETTA.

This legislation provides employers and their employees with greater flexibility to design healthcare coverage options that expand access to treatments for chronic diseases.

The chronic disease epidemic has, unfortunately, impacted nearly every family in America and represents a significant share of our healthcare spending. In fact, 90 percent of the \$4.1 trillion this country spends each year on healthcare goes toward chronic disease. This is not surprising when you realize that 60 percent of Americans suffer from some form of chronic disease, whether it be heart disease, diabetes, or cancer.

So many Americans would benefit from having healthcare coverage that is not only more affordable but more responsive to their needs so that they can better manage their health.

Last Congress, the House of Representatives approved a version of this legislation, but unfortunately, we were not able to get the bill across the finish line. However, with President Trump back in the White House, we are moving this bill once again, a bill that further strengthens a policy put in place during the first Trump administration.

For the 53 percent of employers that offer high deductible health plans to their employees, they would now be able to improve those options by allowing predeductible coverage of critical chronic care management services, including beta blockers, blood pressure monitors, glucometers, inhalers, and medications and testing to help individuals with high cholesterol. While the bill includes 14 specific services that could be covered, it leaves the door open for the list to be expanded later, as well.

By providing flexible coverage options for more people living with chronic health conditions, we can help lower their costs and improve their health and well-being.

I thank Representatives BUCHANAN and PANETTA for their leadership on this issue, as well as recognize the work of our Ways and Means Health Subcommittee that held its first hearing this Congress on creating healthier options for families and raising awareness about the chronic disease epidemic we have in this country.

As HHS Secretary Kennedy is shining a light on the chronic disease epidemic, the Ways and Means Committee is leading the charge in Congress to examine the root causes and delivering solutions, including this bill before us today.

I encourage all of my colleagues to once again provide strong bipartisan support for this effort to address chronic disease. I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and, of course, my good friend, Representative VERN BUCHANAN, an excellent member of the Ways and Means Committee for their work on this bill.

With his work, I rise today to support this legislation, the Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act. This is bipartisan, commonsense legislation to allow predeductible health coverage for chronic disease patients with a high deductible health plan, otherwise known as HDHP.

This commonsense legislation, as you heard from the chairman, already passed Congress last session under the leadership of my friends and former colleagues, Brad Wenstrup and Earl Blumenauer. It is common sense mainly because, as you heard from the chairman, chronic disease is so common.

Mr. Speaker, 6 in 10 adult Americans have a chronic disease, which is the leading cause of disabilities in the United States of America. Mr. Speaker, 90 percent of our annual health spending goes to chronic disease and mental health management. While these chronic diseases are common, they are also manageable if we just do everything that we can to improve access to care.

In my 19th Congressional District on the central coast of California, the number one thing I hear about from constituents is access to healthcare or, I should say, the lack of access to healthcare. The one thing that is clear, though, is that insurance doesn't do you much good if you can't use it.

In 2023, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 43 percent of people with employer-based coverage had an HDHP. Moreover, 56 percent of employers offer an HDHP. However, nearly 59 percent of Americans—that is nearly 6 in 10 people—lack \$1,000 in savings to handle an emergency expense.

That is exactly why expanding HDHP coverage to offer critical care for some of our most medically vulnerable constituents isn't just the right thing to do. It is the smart thing to do.

The Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act codifies IRS guidance to expand the safe harbor for high deductible health plans offering predeductible care for chronic conditions. It lets employers offer first-dollar access to care for patients with diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, and many more, as the chairman mentioned.

When this IRS guidance was originally issued in 2019, a survey found that 76 percent, or more than three-quarters, of employers expanded predeductible coverage for chronic diseases. Codifying this policy now will save countless lives by helping more patients manage their conditions and stay healthy.

That is why this bill is endorsed by so many, from chronic disease advocates to health benefit groups to small business associations. That is why I recommend my colleagues to vote for the Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act.

Again, I thank Congressman BUCHANAN, and I thank the chairman for bringing this bill forward.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BUCHANAN).

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for his leadership, as well. I rise today in strong support of my bill, the Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act.

This important legislation will expand treatment options for Americans living with chronic diseases provided through their employer's healthcare coverage. My bill allows employers to offer predeductibility on 14 different chronic diseases, especially for those who are on high deductible health plans.

With 6 in 10 Americans living with at least one chronic disease, it is clear to me that we need to have many more options. The cost for chronic diseases in the American economy is enormous, accounting for over \$1 trillion a year, if you can imagine that. Chronic disease also accounts for the overwhelming percentages of preventable deaths in the United States. I believe this initiative will improve patients' health, also reducing costly hospitalizations.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, Congressman PANETTA, for his leadership and friendship. I really appreciate his working with me on this. I also thank Leader SCALISE and Whip EMMER for bringing this to the floor today.

I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense bill to help give Americans the tools they need for a longer, healthier, and happier life.

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MURPHY).

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, we have heard from great speakers talking about the problem with chronic disease in the United States.

One of the issues that face people who have hypertension, kidney disease, and diabetes is that they can't get the medicines or the devices that they need to be able to regulate their condition.

This bill, H.R. 919, helps to solve that problem by giving individuals access to

those lifesaving devices prior to them fulfilling their deductible. This is critical, as we fight chronic disease in the United States. As we have heard, over 90 percent of the expenditures in this country are due to chronic disease.

I know that in my district in eastern North Carolina, the rate of diabetes, obesity, congestive heart failure, and high blood pressure are things that are really, truly killing our population. Being able to access devices so that we can monitor these things is crucial. We have to have availability for these devices for people before they have to pay their full deductible.

I applaud Representative BUCHANAN, Representative PANETTA, and Chairman SMITH for bringing this forward. This is common sense. President Trump tried to do this in his first term. I am very grateful that they are trying to do this again. We want to make America healthy again. That starts with being able to give patients the tools that they need to be healthy. I urge support for H.R. 919 to my colleagues.

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield myself the balance of my time for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, as you have heard, this legislation has bipartisan support and support from a broad coalition of employers and health stakeholders. I appreciate my colleagues on the other side being so concerned and so focused on this. Let's just hope they have that same concern when it comes to Medicaid and Medicare going forward, especially with the reconciliation package.

They understand, and we understand, that it is critical that we start expanding access to preventative care and chronic care management to stem the tide of chronic disease.

Passing the Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act will improve long-term health outcomes, let businesses offer superior health benefits, and strengthen healthcare for everyone.

Once again, I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is long overdue, particularly given the enormous size, scope, and cost of America's chronic disease epidemic. It will put more patients in the driver's seat when it comes to managing their health, and open doors for folks to get the treatments that will not only save them money but improve their well-being.

High deductible healthcare plans are already a popular option for employers to offer their workers. Expanding what services can be provided under these plans, specifically to help treat chronic diseases, will only make this a more affordable and useful health coverage choice for patients.

I encourage my colleagues to support the passage of the Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 919.

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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. After consultation among the Speaker and the majority and minority leaders, and with their consent, the Chair announces that, when the two Houses meet tonight in joint session to hear an address by the President of the United States, only the doors immediately opposite the Speaker and those immediately to his left and right will be open.

No one will be allowed on the floor of the House who does not have the privilege of the floor of the House. Due to the large attendance that is anticipated, the rule regarding the privilege of the floor must be strictly enforced. Children of Members will not be permitted on the floor. The cooperation of all Members is requested.

The practice of purporting to reserve seats prior to the joint session by placement of placards or personal items will not be allowed. Chamber Security may remove these items from the seats. Members may reserve their seats only by physical presence following the security sweep of the Chamber.

All Members are reminded to observe proper decorum as provided in the rules of the House and the Speaker's announced policies of January 3, 2025. Failure to adhere to the standards of decorum detracts from the dignity of the proceedings and presents security challenges for the House.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 8:35 p.m. for the purpose of receiving in joint session the President of the United States.

Accordingly, (at 2 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 2039

JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS PURSUANT TO HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 11 TO RE- CEIVE A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 8 o'clock and 39 minutes p.m.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms, Mrs. Seton Gardner, announced the Vice President and Members of the

U.S. Senate, who entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, the Vice President taking the chair at the right of the Speaker, and the Members of the Senate the seats reserved for them.

The SPEAKER. The joint session will come to order.

The Chair appoints as members of the committee on the part of the House to escort the President of the United States into the Chamber:

The gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE);

The gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. EMMER);

The gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MCCLAIN);

The gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HUDSON);

The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. RESCHENTHALER);

The gentleman from Utah (Mr. MOORE);

The gentlewoman from Indiana (Mrs. HOUCHIN);

The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. HERN);

The gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES);

The gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Ms. CLARK);

The gentleman from California (Mr. AGUILAR);

The gentleman from California (Mr. LIEU);

The gentleman from Colorado (Mr. NEGUSE);

The gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DELBENE); and

The gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL).

The VICE PRESIDENT. The President of the Senate, at the direction of that body, appoints the following Senators as members of the committee on the part of the Senate to escort the President of the United States into the House Chamber:

The Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE);

The Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO);

The Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON);

The Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD);

The Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO);

The Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT);

The Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER);

The Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN);

The Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR);

The Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER); and

The Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN).

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency Hersey Kyota, the Ambassador of the Republic of Palau.

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Chief Justice of the United States and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court.

The Chief Justice of the United States and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

The members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

At 9 o'clock and 13 minutes p.m., the Sergeant at Arms, the Honorable William P. McFarland, announced the President of the United States.

The President of the United States, escorted by the committee of Senators and Representatives, entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and stood at the Clerk's desk.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

The PRESIDENT. Speaker JOHNSON, Vice President VANCE, the First Lady of the United States, Members of the United States Congress, thank you very much.

And to my fellow citizens, America is back. Six weeks ago, I stood beneath the dome of this Capitol and proclaimed the dawn of the golden age of America. From that moment on, it has been nothing but swift and unrelenting action to usher in the greatest and most successful era in the history of our country.

We have accomplished more in 43 days than most administrations accomplished in 4 years or 8 years, and we are just getting started.

I return to this Chamber tonight to report that America's momentum is back. Our spirit is back. Our pride is back. Our confidence is back. And the American Dream is surging bigger and better than ever before.

The American Dream is unstoppable, and our country is on the verge of a comeback, the likes of which the world has never witnessed and perhaps will never witness again. There's never been anything like it.

The Presidential election of November 5th was a mandate like has not been seen in many decades. We won all seven swing States, giving us an electoral college victory of 312 votes. We won the popular vote by big numbers and won counties in our country—and won counties in our country 2,700 to 525 on a map that reads almost completely red for Republican.

Now, for the first time in modern history, more Americans believe that our country is headed in the right direction than the wrong direction. In fact, it is an astonishing record 27-point swing, the most ever.

Likewise, small business optimism saw its single largest 1-month gain ever recorded, a 41-point jump.

The SPEAKER. Members are directed to uphold and maintain decorum in the