are going to be cut. We bargained for this. What is going to happen to my prescription drugs?'' I am standing there saying to this woman not to panic, but they have every reason to be concerned. I am still going to reiterate not to panic because we want to try to see what we can do, but people are very concerned, and that is compounded because they joined these programs, many of them, because it held out a prescription drug benefit.

One woman in another meeting got up and she said, ''They wined and dined us. They met with us. They took us out for lobster dinners. They talked with us about this and then they pulled back. And this is just 3 years ago. They have now pulled back.'' Lots of those folks joined up because it was a prescription drug benefit because they are being choked to death by the cost of prescription drugs.

To just enforce what you have said and to associate myself with you, that on this floor we could see that they produced a plan on the other side of the aisle that put the fate of our seniors in the hands of these institutions who will not wait around to see whether or not something works and that provides a benefit to seniors. But again if the profit motive is not there, they are gone.

□ 1930

And they are gone in a heartbeat. That says something loud and clear to me about the values of those institutions, as well as the values of the people in this House who decided that that was the way in which we ought to deal with prescription drugs in our society today, because that is what this issue bears on, is the issue of values, what we believe are the priorities and what are the things that are important.

When you get to looking at budgets, they are living documents. They are living documents. It is about who we are as a country. And we have laid out a prescription drug plan as Democrats that I am proud of. I really am proud to stand behind this. It says, Let's go through a system that we know has made one incredible difference in the health care of seniors in this country. Ninety-nine percent today of our seniors are covered by Medicare, and it may have its warts and it may have some difficulties, but it has worked. It is tried, it is true, it is reliable, it is trustworthy, and seniors have come to count on it.

Let us work through something that has roots and that people do understand and trust and says it is defined for you, it is voluntary, it covers all of the seniors, everywhere in the country, and it will make a difference in driving that price down, and it will bring you some relief, so that while you are ill, you know you can get and pay for the medication that will help to make sure that you are healthy and that you are safe.

I am proud to be here with my colleagues tonight to talk about it, and I know we will every single night, talk about this issue which plays such an enormous role in the lives of families today.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) for sharing her thoughts on this issue. You talk about those seniors that you visited with over the July 4th recess, and I always come back to a lady that is my constituent down in Orange, Texas, that came into a little gathering that I had over 2 years ago at a local pharmacy there in Orange in Southeast Texas, when I went around for the very first time in my district to talk about the problem of the high price of prescription drugs and what I thought we should try to do about it in Congress.

She heard I was coming by a little newspaper article, and she showed up, a lovely lady, Mrs. Francis Staley, 84 years old, blind. She takes 12 prescriptions. They cost her about what her Social Security check is, $400-some a month, and she just came by to tell me that she appreciated that we were trying to help.

Now, there are a lot of Ms. Staleys out there, and there are going to be a lot more, as the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) said, when these seniors start getting the notices that most of them are getting in my district and yours and that of the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), saying that their Medicare+Choice plans are being cancelled by their insurance company.

As was said, most of the seniors that signed up for those plans did so because they wanted the prescription drug coverage that those insurance companies used to entice them to sign up in the first place.

We are truly headed for a crisis in health care in this country, specifically a crisis relating to prescription drugs, because you must know that the people that signed up for those Medicare+Choice plans were the very seniors who really needed the prescription drug coverage.

Now, our country is very prosperous. We live in better economic times than we have ever known. We have had record surpluses reported to this Congress, and, if we are the compassionate people that I hope we are, we can see our way clear to pass a meaningful, genuine prescription drug benefit under the Medicare program for our seniors. I truly believe we can.

THE GREATEST PROBLEM FACING AMERICA—ILLITERACY AND FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I took this hour because I want to try to make sure that all the American people and all Members of Congress understand the greatest problem facing this Nation, and I repeat, the greatest problem facing this Nation. It is illiteracy and functional literacy. There are those in the chamber and out in the public who will say, Well, that is a local problem. There are others that will say, Well, that is a State problem. I want Members to understand it is neither a local problem nor a state problem, it is a national problem. Our survival as a great Nation will depend on whether we can attack the problem and whether we can solve the problem.

Let me just point out a few statistics from the National Adult Literacy Survey. This goes back to 1992, and therefore these figures are much higher even today. Forty to 44 million out of 190 million adults demonstrate the lowest basic literacy skills. Approximately 50 million adults have skills on the next higher level of proficiency. Forty-two percent of all adults who demonstrate the lowest basic literacy skills are living in poverty.

Does that not sound like a national problem? It surely does to me.

Adults in prison are far more likely than those in the general population to perform in the two lowest levels of literacy. Seventy percent of prisoners scored in the two lowest levels. This means they have some reading and writing skills. They are not adequately equipped to perform simple necessary tasks to survive in the 21st Century. Only 51 percent of prisoners have completed high school or its equivalent, compared to 76 percent of the general population.

I show the next chart simply to point out that many of those of us who serve in the Congress do not have the opportunity to serve large center city populations, and I show some of those large city populations: Los Angeles in 1997, 680,000 people; this city, Washington, D.C., 77,000; Miami, almost 346,000; Chicago, 477,000; New York, over 1 million; and on and on the list goes.

Now, even though we do not have the opportunity to represent some of these larger populations, we also realize that many in these larger populations are in those low levels of literacy, and so we should make every effort to understand the obstacles they face, such as unemployment, or the inability to be their child's first and most important teacher.

I want to repeat that: Inability to be their child's first and most important teacher. We found out a long time ago, unless some adult in that child's life can be that child's first and most important teacher, obviously you are not going to break the cycle of illiteracy. It will be too late by the time they get to first grade. Of course, their dependency on Federal assistance programs is well documented.

Now, the future of the great Nation depends on our ability to understand these problems facing illiterate adults, and then to find ways to correct the

problems so they, too, can achieve the American dream.

During the Sixties, Congress enacted a variety of programs to alleviate these problems stemming from illiteracy. The legislation was very well intended. Unfortunately, it was badly designed and badly formulated.

For example, the emphasis of the program was on covering the largest number of children possible and making sure money got to the right place. There were no oversight provisions and little emphasis on program quality. As a result, as the Federal Government we spent a lot of Federal tax dollars with no measurable success in improving the literacy skills of those most in need during the first 10 years particularly of those programs.

Head Start is one example. It started out as a program where they tried to see how many children they could cover, and used most of the money for that purpose. Unfortunately, there were very few early childhood people to be hired. There were none at $10,000, so the program became a baby-sitting program. The program became a poverty jobs program. Even today, with all the quality features that we have added in the last two reauthorizations, the Head Start teacher's salary is about $19,000 compared to the average K through 12 teacher's salary of $35,000.

These programs were programs that were rightfully thought of in relationship to what are we going to do to save this Nation, because all great nations fall from within, and one of the ways for us to fall is to continue this large number and growing number of illiterate and functional literate.

Being illiterate and functionally literate is nothing new. The difference, however, is at one time you could get a job, you could support a family. That is gone forever in this high-tech society that we now live in. A functional literate is no longer someone that can read and comprehend at 6th grade level. A functional literate is someone who cannot read and function well at a 12th grade level. This will just continue to grow and grow.

Chapter I, the same story. It was certainly the right idea to try to make sure that you closed the achievement gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged. Unfortunately, again, very little effort was made to design a program that could do that, and the auditors only looked to see whether the money got to the right place. They did not look to see whether there was quality in the program. So we did not close that achievement gap.

Yet it was a block grant. I repeat, particularly for my side of the aisle, it was about as pure as it could be, a block grant, as long as you used the money for the children for which you were to use that money. How you did it was entirely up to you, and, as a superintendent, of course, we never knew how much money we were getting until October or November, when all the plans should have been made long before school began.

In one of the recent reports, it said that in relationship to Title I, in the period covered by the study, children in high poverty schools began school academically behind their peers in low poverty schools and were unable to close this gap in achievement as they progressed through school. When assessed against high academic standards, most students failed to exhibit the skill and mastery in reading and mathematics expected for their respective grade levels. Students in high poverty schools were by far the least able to demonstrate the expected levels of academic proficiency.

We got the same results from the 1998 NAP test, again, pointing out that a large number of children in poverty schools, in low performing schools, with low expectations, were doing very, very poorly on the NAP reading test, scored below basic on all of these tests.

I realized as a superintendent that I was not using Title I money very well. No one was, because, as I said, half the time we got the money long after school began. No one said what it was we were to accomplish, so I did what most did, we decided somehow or other we are going to teach junior high school and senior high school children how to read. We did not know how to do that. Little or no research was there to help us, and no one equipped to do it.

□ 1945

So we said, well, we will bring first grade teachers in, our best reading teachers in first grade. Of course, that was a disaster primarily because, first of all, they were not used to dealing with teenagers. They did not understand, first of all, that the one thing that these teenagers did not want to admit was the fact that they could not read. Secondly, they really did not see the necessity of this order to be able to read. So that did not work either.

I finally said to an early childhood staff member, an outstanding member on my staff, we know every parent that did not graduate from high school. We know every older brother and sister that did not graduate from high school. Is there not something we can do to prevent that from repeating itself with all of the rest of the members of the family and their children and their grandchildren? And she said, yes. We can make very, very sure that every child who comes to first grade is reading-ready. I said, good. How are we going to do that? Well, we will take our Title I money and we will work with 3 and 4 year olds, but we will also work with their parents because, as she said, it is very, very important that the parent can be the child's first and most important teacher.

It was amazing to not only watch what happened to these children, but to watch what happened to the parents, parents who would never come to a PTA meeting, who would have been embarrassed. When they got the necessary literary skills and when they understood what it is one can do to help a preschool child to become reading-ready, they not only became participants in school activities, PTA, et cetera, but they became leaders.

That is an experience that encouraged me to introduce the Even Start program which I introduced many, many years ago as a member of the minority. I was told at that particular time that as a member of the minority, you are not going to get any program, I will guarantee you. Then when I got the program, they said, now I will guarantee you you will never get any funding, but we got funding, because we convinced enough people that if we are going to break the cycle of illiteracy, we have to deal with the entire family. I do not know why it took us so long in this country to understand that, but it has taken us a long, long time.

Looking at the next chart, I have critics who say, well, the program has not worked very well. I want to point out, when we look at a study of intensive, high-quality Even Start programs and we do it in a scientific manner, we will discover the following: 62 percent of those seeking certification from the program got their GED, got their high school certification. Fifty percent of those not currently enrolled in an education or training program are now employed. Forty percent of the parents continue to seek employment and enroll in education and training programs. Forty-five percent of the families reduced or eliminated their reliance on public assistance. I would say that is a pretty effective program. How nice it would be to duplicate that over and over again all over this country.

Children are ready to enter kindergarten, as indicated by their teachers. Eighty percent of the Even Start youngsters rated as class average or above. Seventy-five percent of third grade children from Even Start continue to perform average or better in their classes as judged by their teachers, which is something we have never been able to accomplish before, because there never seemed to be a carryover with any of our preschool programs. Children perform well on formal assessments, 60 percent at average or better in reading, 80 percent in language, and 70 percent in mathematics.

Looking at the next chart, because it deals with what I just talked about, as to what the benefits are for the children, if we could just wait for the next chart, but first, this is what I just indicated is how we have helped the children in the Even Start program.

Now, looking at the next chart, what has it done for parents? We will discover that parents spend more time supporting the education of their children at home, including helping with homework, reading, and playing, helping that parent become the child's first and most important teacher.

So many of us in the Congress do not understand that that is not the typical family that we think is out there. They

need this kind of help. Parents are more active in their children's schools after attending Even Start programs; parents become contributors to their communities through working in schools, neighborhood development organizations and neighborhood improvement projects. Additionally, 4 years after exiting the Even Start program, the average savings to the taxpayer each year in welfare costs is enough to pay the cost for one family for one year in the program. In essence, the program pays for itself.

Now, to make sure that we do not get trapped in the same trap we were caught in as far as Head Start was concerned where we did not go out early on and talk about quality and make sure that, as a matter of fact, there were quality programs helping children, and did not insist that in Head Start they deal with the parents, in order to make sure that that does not happen in Even Start, we have developed the Literacy Involves Families Together Act, the LIFT Act. As I said, we put the improvements in there to make sure that all of these programs that I talked about in these surveys, programs of excellence, will be the program all over the United States. We will not have weak programs.

But it was amazing when I read this weekend an article in my local newspaper and it was about Even Start. Now, one editor of one publication who is supposed to be totally concerned about families did not believe that the Federal Government should be involved in Even Start because that means getting involved in family lives. What a tragedy. If one is really a supporter of families, if that is one's aim, if that is what one's group does, then it seems to me the first thing one can do to help preserve that family is to make sure that one has a literate family, to make very, very sure that one has literate adults in that family, so again, that they could keep the family together, because they can get the jobs in order to move up the scale, so that they can provide for their families. But, most importantly, so that they can be the child's first and most important teacher.

If one is involved in one of these family groups, one has to get behind these kinds of programs. Because, first of all, why should these people not have the same opportunity to home school as anybody else? Is that not what we say oftentimes as a family group, how important that home schooling is? Why should these parents not have the same opportunity? They do not, until they get the literacy skills that they need in order to do that.

Unfortunately, what I worry about is that so many of us, our concept of a family, the traditional nuclear family of 2 loving parents and grandparents, is for 50 percent of the youngsters in this country, a pipe dream. That is all it is to them.

Now, I do not understand why that editor does not understand that, and I surely do not understand why her boss does not understand that, who is much older, because I learned 60 years ago that my idea of what a family was and is was not quite right in relationship to many other children in this country. Sixty years ago I left, after 8 years in a 2-room country elementary school, finished 8th grade and therefore I had to go on then to Center City for junior high school and then senior high school. When I arrived in Center City, and this was a small city, and that was 60 years ago, I discovered that there was not a loving mother and father for every one of these children that I am now attending school in Center City with. There is not a loving grandparent living next door. There is not a parent home who is literate enough to be the child's first and most important teacher. The reality is that many children today do not have such a family, and anybody who is out there promoting families and who constantly talk about the importance of the family, and that is what their organization is all about, certainly has to understand that.

Mr. Speaker, similar arguments were made when we tried to consolidate over 60 job training programs spread over every agency downtown. The left-hand did not know what the right-hand was doing, and people were not getting the proper job training for the programs and the jobs that were available in the 20th and now the 21st century. But we got the same argument again, that somehow or another, we are going to place these children in little cubby holes from the day they are born, and I suppose they believe that every child should be a 4-year college graduate. What would they do? We only need 25 percent of our population as 4-year college graduates to do the jobs that are available and will be available.

Now, this article also quoted in one of the local newspapers that Members of Congress were saying, well, there are mixed reviews about the success of Even Start. Of course, what they were talking about was there was a question in relationship to the evaluation of these programs, and I agree there was a question about the evaluation. That is why we had an evaluation done that met all of the requirements that we need if we want to have a legitimate evaluation. And we used the evaluations that the gentleman is talking about to improve the Even Start program and, as I indicated, our LIFT legislation does.

For example, one of the evaluations pointed out the need for intensive services in Even Start projects. The law was modified to require intensive services for participants. So again, the current Literacy Involves Family Together Act continues to make modifications to Even Start to improve the program quality and strengthen the evaluation. In each area, scores for participants at the end of 1996 were compared to those at the beginning of that year with Even Start participants showing significant improvement in each area.

Looking at chart 6, Members occasionally say, but we need to spend this money on other programs, and one of the things that I hear constantly is that we need to get to the 40 percent of excess costs when we fund special education. I am glad to have these converts in the Congress. For 17 years I stood here myself, and about the only help I got was from the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) from the other side of the aisle, and later on, from the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), saying that one does not mandate IDEA, but we pass laws that would tell local districts that if they do not do what we say they must do in Special Ed, they are going to be in trouble because of civil rights laws, et cetera. So the districts, of course, said, well, if we are going to have to do it, then we might as well do it exactly as the Federal Government says so that we do get some support. Because, after all, the Congress, when they passed it, said, we will give you 40 percent of the excess costs to educate a special needs student. Sometimes, that is 10 times, 15 times, 20 times greater than when it costs to educate a nonspecial needs child. If we take the average cost over the United States several years ago to educate a K through 12 child, it is about $6,300. If we gave 40 percent, we are talking about every Special Ed child should get $2,500 from the Federal Government for that purpose. Well, that did not happen. It did not happen. The last couple of years, I am happy to say, we are now beginning to work toward that mandate.

This chart, for instance, will show, first of all, that this is what the President requested in 1997 in yellow, this is what the Congress did in 1997 in red, and on over, 1998, the same, yellow is the President, red is the Congress; 1999, and the year 2000.

□ 2000

So Members can see, we are finally working towards that. But I have told them every time I have spoken on the issue that unless we stop the overidentification, we can never get to 40 percent. There is not enough money in the world to get to 40 percent.

Where does overidentification come from, primarily? It comes from the fact that children are in special education, and many times the only special need they have is the fact that they were not reading ready when they came to school. So there they are, at the end of first grade and they cannot read. They are either socially promoted or failed, and it pretty much ends really their enthusiasm and interest in school. Even though they cannot drop out until much later, they really dropped out, as far as improving academically.

Well, do not then take the money from an Even Start program that is working and say that we are going to take it in order to fund special education. We are just complicating the

problem. If we cannot stop the overidentification because of reading problems, then we can never get to 40 percent. There is not sufficient money to do that.

But it is much, were cheaper to make sure that children are reading ready. Again, I go back to the fact that that can only happen if some adult in their preschool life is able to be their first and most important teacher.

So we have dramatically increased, 19 percent in 1997, 17 percent in 1998, 13 percent in 1999, 16 percent in the year 2000, funding for Special Ed. The reason that is important is because the local school districts must take their money to fund the Special Ed programs, and they must take it away from all other students in order to do that.

Looking at the next chart, I would point out, as I said, if we cannot stop the overidentification and if we cannot stop the number of new children coming in each year, these increases that I just talked about in money evaporate because the increases in numbers into the program continue to go up.

So if we look at this chart, we will notice that in school year 1996, 1997, we had $5.796 million in Special Ed Part B of IDEA, but if we look on, it was almost $6 million in 1997–1998; again, higher as an estimate in 1998–1999, because we do not have the exact figures. This coming year we are looking at $6.262 million as an estimate.

So we have to stop increasing the numbers. One of the ways we stop increasing the numbers is to make sure that children are reading ready by the time they come to first grade. I again repeat that will be if some adult, their parent or some adult in their life, is functioning well as their first and most important teacher.

Looking at the next chart, because in this newspaper article, remember, also, how many families can we help with $150 million? We get the argument all the time with the Job Corps. I had to fight to preserve it over and over and over again, because they said, it is expensive. Yes, it is expensive, but Job Corps is the last chance these young people will have. From that point on it becomes really expensive, because we are the victims of their crimes. They are incarcerated, and it becomes very, very expensive.

But looking at this chart, when we talk about what can we do with $150 million, my answer is, a lot, a lot. We only had $14 million in 1989, but we were able to serve almost 6,000 families: 6,000 families that were going to break this cycle of illiteracy, 6,000 families that were going to be able to get off of welfare, 6,000 families that were going to be able to climb the ladder of success and get out of poverty.

In 1990, we got $24 million. That took us up to 16,000 families. In 1999, we got to 49 million, and we were up to 38,000 families. The last figure we have is 1996, and we are up to almost 91,000 families; 91,000 families, again, 91,000, many able to get their high school diploma, many went on to higher education, many went on to training programs so they could get a piece of the American dream. Many became that first and most important teacher in their child's life.

See, the beauty of the program is that that is not the only funding. The program encourages significant financial contributions from States, from local businesses, and from the private sector for a very small Federal investment.

This article also said that this Member wanted to make sure that we had an audited Department of Education. I do not know what this has to do with this, because we passed in the House of Representatives legislation and said we want that audit, and there is good reason to want that audit. I supported that. But it has nothing to do with Even Start.

And it says that the audit of several Department of Education programs must happen. As I said, I supported that. The article also said that the person wanted an audit of AmeriCorps.

Welcome to the crowd. When it came to the floor again, if Members will check the records, the one voice who spoke so loudly against it, not because it did not have merit but because it was totally misdirected as to how it should have unfolded, but when we think of the cost, it was promised as a program that was going to help young people get a college education; a pretty expensive way, because it is $29,000 or $30,000 per person. Only about one-third of them have taken advantage of college.

The major problem was that it set up a new bureaucracy, a new bureaucracy here and many new bureaucracies in every State to carry out the program. We had a college work study program already funded, already set up in operation, and all we had to do is say that a portion of that college work study grant had to be students participating in community service. Then we would have had all of the money to help more students, instead of paying bureaucracies in every State and in the Nation's capital to carry out the program.

But I did not get much support, so I am glad to hear that there are some converts along that line.

Let me just talk a little bit about this chart, because I want to point out just how different it is had we gone through work-study in relationship to bureaucracy and going through AmeriCorps.

Members can see, this is the Federal involvement, the State involvement, the grantee organizations, and then the individual on this side. That is, by going through this creating a new bureaucracy. We see all those arrows to give us an indication of what I am talking about.

Then we look on the other side and we see an existing work-study system already set up. We see how few arrows there are there, how few bureaucrats are involved in carrying out that program.

The point I am making, of course, is that all of this money that these people are collecting could have been gone to help children, young people, become college students and college graduates. Unfortunately, the money went into the bureaucracy.

Now, looking at chart 10, due to problems with illiteracy in the United States, we have had to go outside of the country to obtain the skilled work force required for many jobs. What a crying shame. We have had to go outside of this country to get the talent we need to carry out our high-tech employment opportunities and responsibilities. This will show Members what we have been doing as a Congress.

One of the reasons that I am so tempted to vote against it this year is because of my fear that we will not tackle the problem domestically. We will not do anything about preparing our own to do these $40,000, $50,000, $60,000 jobs. We will just rely on going outside this country to get that kind of talent.

Obviously, what is going to happen to our own people? Who is going to support them? The taxpayers that are fortunate enough to have the jobs, I suppose, to provide the tax dollars to do that.

This shows Members what we have been doing. In 1998 we went outside the country to get the people we needed. In 1993, in 1994, and we keep going up. The real tragedy is, the next time we have to vote we are going to vote to increase 200,000 each year for 3 years. That is 600,000 more people who we have to go outside of our country to bring in to do the high-tech jobs that are here.

That means our people who are at low levels cannot climb that ladder of success, cannot hope to get a piece of the American dream. They are not prepared to do that. I have said over and over again that if we keep relying on this H1(b) Visa business we, too, will fall from within. There is no way we can possibly survive as a great Nation unless we can provide the necessary manpower to do the high-tech jobs that are out there.

And high-tech jobs are going to become more high-tech. Wherever I speak, we used to say years ago, get that kid off the street and put him in the service. That will straighten him out. That is the last place I want to see them today. Those missiles will be coming back at us, rather than going where they are supposed to, because we have a high-tech military. Are we going to import people from other countries to provide the high-tech military that we need? We have to prepare them here in our own country.

We then also get into this business of comparing apples and oranges. We just love to say how poorly we are doing, and we do a broad brush. We compare ourselves with other countries. We not only compare students who are in high-achieving elementary and secondary schools, we compare all students.

We compare students where there is nothing expected of the student, no

high expectation. We will compare that with a Japan, where 50 percent of 3-year-olds and 92 percent of 4-year-olds are in school, most of it paid by public sources, some by private sources. In Germany, 53 percent of 3-year-olds and 78 percent of 4-year-olds are in school, almost all of which is publicly financed. In the United Kingdom, 47 percent of 3-year-olds and 92 percent of 4-year-olds are in school, almost all of which is publicly financed.

Then as we watch as they progress, oftentimes, and I guess it is still true in Japan, what they are going to do in life was pretty well determined by the kindergarten they got in. This was true throughout the industrial world. Oftentimes when someone got to middle school, that decision was not made by the person, what they were going to do, it was made by what the test results were.

So we have to be careful when we compare apples with oranges when we say how poorly we do. Yes, 50 percent of our children unfortunately are in failing situations. Yes, it is a Federal issue. It is a national issue.

Our forefathers would be dumbfounded that there would be those in the Congress who would try to hide behind what they have written as our founding documents to say that there is no responsibility on the Federal level in relationship to functional literacy and illiteracy in this country, that it is strictly a State and local responsibility.

When I tried to improve Title I, I got the same story from our side of the aisle, Oh, we cannot demand excellence from those programs. Well, it is the taxpayer who is paying for the program. Should we not demand excellence for the money we are spending, the taxpayers' dollars?

□ 2015

Let me close by reading an editorial I recently saw in the Easton Express Times, which is a newspaper that is not in my district, but in the State of Pennsylvania, and I will just read a portion of it. ''The Even Start learn-to-read program deserves increased Federal funding. Few things can narrow people's lives more than being unable to read. While other ways exist to get news and information about the world, illiteracy keeps its victims from reading danger warnings, understanding provisions of a contract, or discovering the joy that a good book, magazine or newspaper can provide. It can also limit a workers advancement or prevent employers from hiring workers,'' as I just pointed out how we are going outside this country to get all of those workers, ''certainly a present-day problem with low unemployment.

''Thus, it is entirely appropriate for the Federal Government to continue to take the lead in sponsoring programs that will empower people by teaching them to read. One such program, Even Start, which has been in place for 6 years locally in Easton is under the funding microscope.

''Even Start teaches parents how to read so they can work with preschool children on reading, and also provides preschool care and education.''

The project director says ''the program's goal is to break the cycle of illiteracy and poverty by improving educational opportunities for poor families. Further, programs like Even Start serve as a sound investment to prevent the continuing cycle of poverty.''

And then the editor says ''who among us would argue against breaking the changes that link many people to a life of destitution? Who indeed.''

I repeat, how can we say it is anything other than a national problem when it is probably the one major problem facing us that could bring this great Nation down from within.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all on my side of the aisle to understand that what we may think of as that ideal family and the help that they get from their parents may not be true for 50 percent of the youngsters in this country; they need our help. We need them for a great future.

MANAGED CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak tonight on managed care reform, HMO reform. About a week or so ago, the Senate had a short debate and voted on the Nickles amendment, which was the GOP Senate version of patient protection.

Now, that amendment was given to Members with very short notice during that debate. I have the full text here. As one can see, it is quite dense. It consists of 80-some pages of legislative language, and so it was not easy to read through this so-called patient protection bill to understand exactly what was in the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I advised several of my Republican Senate colleagues to be very careful about voting for that bill, unless they had had a chance to review the specific language, because, as Members of both sides of the aisle know, the devil is always in the details in terms of whether a bill is a good bill or bad bill.

Over the last several days, I have had the opportunity to start reading the Nickles bill from the Senate, and it sadly is deficient in several areas. I would liken this more as an HMO protection bill rather than a patient protection bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to go into some detail about why that is, but it is very important for colleagues on both this side of the Capitol, as well as the other side of the Capitol to understand what is in this bill, because we passed a strong patient protection bill here on the floor of the House of Representatives in October of last year, the Norwood-Dingell-Ganske Bipartisan Consensus Managed Care Reform bill, and it had significant bipartisan support, not just 1 or 2 Members of one party, but 68 Republicans supported that bill, despite intense opposition by the HMO industry. So we have something to compare the Senate bill to.

As my colleagues on both sides of the aisle know, there has been a conference going on between the bill that passed the House and the bill that passed the Senate. I would say that the conference is not over, neither the Republicans nor the Democrats in the conference have said that the conference is over, but nothing much is happening now.

I think it is useful to go into some of the details of the Senate bill. The Senate bill limits many of its patient protections to only those Americans in self-insured plans. In fact, more than 135 million Americans would not receive most of the patient protections identified in the GOP Senate bill, including access to routine OB/GYN care for women, and pediatric care for children, continuity of care for terminally-ill patients, patients receiving in-patient and institutional care, and pregnant patients in their second trimester of pregnancy.

It would not include specialty care or access to specialty care, health care professionals for 135 million Americans; 135 million Americans would not have access to a point-of-service option. We have dealt with gag clauses that HMOs have put out in Medicare legislation that passed both the House and the Senate several years ago that prohibits contractual clauses that HMOs would try to limit the amount of information that a doctor could tell a patient without getting an expressed okay from the HMO; that would not be covered for more than 135 million Americans in the Senate bill.

The GOP Senate bill for 135 million Americans would not cover emergency medical screening exams or stabilization treatment. There are many different things.

I want to talk for the longest part of this special order about the Senate GOP plan's biggest fault, and that has to do with the enforcement provision or the liability provision.

Mr. Speaker, I have here an analysis of the Nickles GOP Senate bill by Professor Sara Rosenbaum, who is a Harold and Jane Hirsch Professor, Health Law and Policy at George Washington University; Professor David Frankford, Professor of Law at Rutgers University; and Professor Rand Rosenblatt, Professor of Law at Rutgers University School of Law.

I am going to primarily read this analysis. I think it is very important to get this into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is their analysis. I know Professor Rosenbaum personally. I respect her opinion and legal expertise a lot. This is how it goes.

By classifying medical treatment injuries as claims denials and coverage decisions governed by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, the