LAST VOTE ON CONTRACT WITH AMERICA—FREE AT LAST

(Mr. ARMEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I will just take a minute. Let me say to my colleagues that here we are on day 92 of the 100 days for the Contract With America and on this overwhelmingly bipartisan vote that we just cast we have made our last vote on the Contract With America.

Let me say to all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle how very proud I am of the way we as a body have conducted our affairs. This has been a difficult schedule. It has been extraordinarily demanding on our families, and if I may close my remarks with this observation, on behalf of our families let me just say: Free at least; free at last.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 345

Mr. PICKETT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the name of the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. BREWSTER] be removed from the list of cosponsors of H.R. 345.

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

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 483, MEDICARE SELECT EXPANSION

Ms. PRYCE. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 130 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 130

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 1(b) of rule XXIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 483) to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to permit medicare select policies to be offered in all States, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Commerce. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. In lieu of any committee amendment it shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of H.R. 1391. That amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. No amendment to that amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except one further amendment in the nature of a substitute which may be offered only by Representative Dingell of Michigan or his designee, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for one hour equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, and shall not be subject to amendment. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendment as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the amendment in the nature of a substitute made in order as original text. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and any amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. Subject to clause 2(l)(5) of rule XI, the Committee on Commerce may file a report to the House on H.R. 483 at any time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. PRYCE] is recognized for 1 hour.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MS. PRYCE

Ms. PRYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that House Resolution 130 be amended on page 2, line 3, by inserting after ''bill'' the words ''for failure to comply with clause (2)(1)(6) of rule XI.''

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I would like to know exactly what the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. PRYCE] is doing at the present time.

Ms. PRYCE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MOAKLEY. Further reserving the right to object, I yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio.

Ms. PRYCE. Mr. Speaker, the words proposed to be inserted were inadvertently deleted from the text of the rule, even though it is clear from the motion made in committee that those included words were to be reported.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman has a very lucid explanation, and I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The resolution is amended.

Ms. PRYCE. Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MOAKLEY], pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purposes of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, time is of the essence. That is the basic principle underlying our consideration of this legislation today.

In 1990, Congress created the Medicare Select Program to allow Medicare recipients the option of purchasing a MediGap managed care option. This 15-State demonstration project is set to expire on June 30, a date that is not so far away when you consider that we are about to begin a 3-week district work period. Unless Congress takes prompt action to renew this program, the insurance benefits of nearly half a million senior citizens covered by the Medicare Select Program would be in jeopardy.

Failure to extend the program's authority would most likely lead to higher premiums for current enrollees, presenting a new burden for senior citizens who live on fixed incomes.

The legislation before us, crafted by the distinguished gentlewoman from Connecticut [Mrs. JOHNSON], expands this option now being tried successfully in 15 States to seniors in all 50 States, extends the program for a minimum of 5 additional years, and puts it on track to becoming permanent if the Secretary of Health and Human Services certifies that certain conditions have been met.

In order to expedite consideration of this bill in the House, and to ensure that the Senate, will have ample time to debate this issue, the Committee on Rules has reported a fair and balanced rule for this very necessary legislation. Only the rule will be considered by the House today.

Mr. Speaker, the rule provides for 1 hour of general debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Commerce, after which time the bill shall be considered for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

The rule makes in order as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the 5-minute rule an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of H.R. 1391. This bill reflects a consensus position reached by the two committees of jurisdiction in this matter: The Committee on Commerce, and the Committee on Ways and Means.

No amendment to that amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order, except one further amendment in the nature of a substitute which may be offered only by Representative DINGELL or his designee. The amendment shall not be subject to further amendment, and is debatable for an hour, which shall be equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent.

Finally, the minority is provided with one motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, health care reform dominated much of the time and attention of the 103d Congress. This year, work has already begun to explore new and innovative ways to make health care more available and affordable for our citizens, especially for older Americans.

As Chairman BLILEY stated before the Committee on Rules last evening, this legislation provides a reasonable balance to permit a very valuable, and arguably successful, program for our senior citizens to continue, while allowing us time to evaluate the program more closely before making it permanent.