discussed in the past, and that is something that would.

Mr. GANSKE. If the gentleman would yield, I have argued on the floor, I have encouraged my colleagues, Republican and Democrat, to vote for medical malpractice reform. In fact, the House of Representatives passed that legislation in the last Congress, but we found out that we could not get that through the Senate, and the administration is opposed to it. To put that into a Patient Bill of Rights, a consumer protection bill, would be to realize fully that that bill could not pass, it could not become law.

I continue to be in favor of that legislation, but what I want to see is, I want to see a Patient Bill of Rights passed and become law this year. I think most of the major medical organizations, including the American Medical Association, recognize by loading up other issues into a Patient Bill of Rights you are working to defeat a Patient Bill of Rights, not to advance it.

Mr. PALLONE. Did not the AMA, which has been the biggest supporter of this medical malpractice reform, even say at one point that they did not want to deal with it this year in the context of the patient protections for the exact reason that you just cited, which is very amazing to me because this was always their biggest, one of their biggest, concerns.

Mr. GANSKE. I cannot speak. I am not a representative for that organization. All I can say is I am sure that that organization would like to see those provisions become law at some point in time, but the recognition is there that on this piece of legislation that will be considered a poison pill. We have broad bipartisan consensus and support for a limited Patient Bill of Rights like is in the Patient Bill of Rights bill, 3605, or Patient Access to Responsible Care Act.

It is not like you have to reinvent the wheel. These bills have been out there for some time. They already have broad bipartisan support. It is simply a matter of bringing them to the floor for a debate under a fair rule in a timely fashion before this session runs out.

Mr. PALLONE. Can I just ask you one more thing about the health marts, because I was not sure I understood.

You said that your concern is that ERISA exemptions would be expanded beyond what they already are now to cover health marts? In other words, we would actually have to deal with this exemption from liability in an even broader fashion?

Mr. GANSKE. That would be my understanding, and let me just read from this letter from Blue Cross/Blue Shield Association and the Health Insurance Association of America.

''As representatives of the health insurance and health plan community, we are concerned about the issue of access to health coverage for small firms. However, we urge legislators to avoid legislation that unravels the market by helping a limited group of small employers at the expense of other individuals and small groups.''

And I can assure you, as somebody that speaks to a number of insurance companies located in my own district that still provide insurance to individuals outside of the employer market, that if you created this health mart idea, what you would be doing is you would be taking the healthy individuals out of that individual market, thereby making the individual market more sick. That would, therefore, have the effect of raising the premiums significantly for those who still purchase their own health insurance.

And there are a lot of people like that; farmers, for example. I represent a lot of farmers.

So I would certainly advise the GOP Task Force not to include this type of proposal in their health care legislation, but simply to stick with the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. Norwood) who has worked on that task force so strongly in terms of a Patient Bill of Rights.

And you need to remember also that there are a number of HMOs that are trying to do an ethical, good job on providing care for their constituents, and many of them have already called upon Congress to pass Federal legislation for a Patient Bill of Rights. We have Kaiser, for instance, or the Health Insurance Plan, HIP, and others. They see a benefit in having some federally-enforceable minimum standards.

It is very similar to what we see if you were buying an automobile. Gee, I mean when you buy an automobile, you know that you are getting headlights that work, brakes that work, turn signals, a seat belt. Those are all a product of Federal and State law for minimum safety standards, and yet there continues to be a great deal of competition in the auto industry. By having some uniform rules on that, we certainly have not moved to a nationalized auto industry any more than by passing a Patient Bill of Rights and having some uniform safety standards would we ever be moving towards a nationalized health insurance system. It is just a matter of common sense.

Mr. PALLONE. I think there is no question that, you know, what we are really talking about here are just basic protections, common sense protections, and as the gentleman has pointed out, the not-for-profit HMOs actually from the very beginning of this year when the President first came out with his patient bill of rights in, I guess it was in his State of the Union address, and there were I think 18 points at that stage or 18 types of protections that were being discussed by the White House, and actually we had many of the not-for-profit HMOs supporting those principles because they are really a floor. They are just a floor of basic protections.

And what happens is, and again I think you mentioned this at some point in the past, is that if the not-for-profit or the good HMOs, whatever their characterizations would be, adhere to these patient protections and then the other ones that are for-profit or for whatever reason do not, it basically creates a noncompetitive situation, becomes cheaper, if you will, for the ones that are not providing the protections to operate.

Mr. GANSKE. And if the gentleman would yield, we have our July 4th recess coming up soon. I would hope that organizations like some of the ones that I have read tonight, all the other organizations that are signed on to passing this type of legislation this year would contact their Congressman and Congresswoman back in their districts and express to them the importance and how this affects real people a lot of the time and how Congress should do something about this this session and not allow this legislation to be bottled up.

Mr. PALLONE. And following up on your comments, and I guess I will close with this:

We know that during this 2-week recess that many Members, including myself, will be having town meetings and forums at which time there will be opportunities for groups or individuals to go to those town meetings and express to their Member of Congress their support and ask them to support the Patient Bill of Rights, or actually ask them to support the discharge petition that you and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) have now introduced. We need to get as many Members as possible on this discharge petition because, if we can get a majority on the discharge petition by the time we come back or soon after that in the weeks that follow, we can finally bring the Patient Bill of Rights or the PARCA bill, these types of managed care reforms, to the floor.

And again I just want to commend you for your effort in moving in that direction because this is the time. If we are not going to pass this now when there is so much support for it, we are never going to pass it, and we have got to try and get more and more of our colleagues on board.

Mr. GANSKE. If the gentleman would yield, I appreciate the courtesy of being able to do these special orders with you. As I said before earlier in this special order, I would sincerely hope that a discharge petition is not necessary, that the Republican leadership in the House would set a date certain for bringing this legislation to the floor and make sure that it is with a rule that is fair and not a rule similar to the one that we have seen on campaign finance reform.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the gentleman and thank him again.

ENDING DISCRIMINATION IN AMERICA

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

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, since the House adjourned early today, I thought I would take the opportunity to come to the floor to speak, as others have done in other forums this week, about a most unfortunate episode that happened earlier this week.

□ 2030

In an interview on television, Senate Majority Leader TRENT LOTT spoke out about homosexuality in a way that I think maybe was unintentional by him, but, nonetheless, was very hurtful and harmful to people in the gay and lesbian community.

I know that we are not supposed to be urging the Senate to take action on issues, but, without violating that rules of the House, I just want to put in context my own remarks, and that is that there is a confirmation of a nomination of an ambassador, James Hormel, which is hopefully going to come up before the Senate soon.

This nomination was sent from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to the full Senate, but Senator LOTT has not taken up the issue. It was in the context of an interview about that, I believe, that Senator LOTT made his unfortunate remarks about homosexuality, saying, ''It is a sin; it is just like alcohol or sex addiction or kleptomaniacs.'' Then our own Majority Leader, Mr. ARMEY, said that homosexuality ''. . . is a sin. I know it is. It is in the Bible,'' or words to that effect.

One of the issues that is being raised about Jim Hormel's nomination is that he was seen laughing at a parade where there were people dressed as nuns. Without going into that, I just want to say that between my husband and me and our five children, we have over 100 years, 100 years, of Catholic school education. This is a source of great pride to us and great strength to us. So we certainly have a great deal of respect for the clergy and the nuns who taught us and our children and would not want in any way for them to be demeaned, and I do not think that Jim Hormel has a demeaning bone in his body.

Jim Hormel is a very distinguished leader in our community in the San Francisco Bay area. He is a philanthropist. He has been the Dean of the Law School at the University of Chicago before he came to San Francisco. As I said, he is a great philanthropist, a supporter of the arts and education, is very respected in the business community, is an astute businessman and is a very effective leader. He would make a great ambassador, and his nomination, I think, is a tribute to President Clinton, that he had the courage to name Jim Hormel as ambassador to Luxemburg.

Jim Hormel, because he is gay, his nomination is being held up, and, as I say, unfortunately, the Leaders in the Senate and in the House have characterized his sexual orientation in a way that I think, as I say, is hopefully unintentionally, is most harmful to people in that community.

When we were little people we used to say ''sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me.'' But that really was not true then, and it is not true now. We have to be very careful about the power of words and the resonance that those words have as people repeat them and hear them.

It is ironic that this all should happen at a time which is Gay Pride Week throughout the country. Speaking for my own area that I have the privilege of representing, we are blessed in our community with a large gay and lesbian population, and we will have a large parade on Sunday where people who take pride in their own situation as well as their friends will take pride with them, and I will be very honored to join that parade.

I have never felt any bias from our own Majority Leader here, Mr. ARMEY, or Mr. LOTT, our former colleague in the House and now the distinguished Majority Leader in the Senate, because of my support for gay and lesbian rights. I have never thought that Mr. Hormel had ever demeaned my religion or said something or did something objectionable to my religion, Catholicism, because he may have been amused, if that is even so, by people dressed as nuns. Nuns do not even dress as nuns. It is not the same as it used to be.

But I think that it is time for us to have some reconciliation on this. We have to, and this will sound very San Francisco, I know, heighten the sensitivity of our colleagues to the hurt that it does to so many people in our country when they are demeaned by leaders of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I do think this maybe will provide us with an opportunity to say, you know, let us turn down the flame on this issue. The Bible, if we are quoting the Bible, has told my children, my husband and me for our lifetimes, as did our parents, that we are all God's children. They did not say you are all God's children, depending on your sexual orientation. They said we are all God's children, and, as such, worthy of respect, and in every person there is a spark of divinity that is to be respected.

It is that attitude toward people that I think drives many of us into the political arena to do God's work. I do not like to bring politics and religion together, but it is to respect what our religion teaches us for people, that we want everyone to have the same opportunities, whatever their color, their creed or their sexual orientation. Discrimination has no place in our country. Neither does characterization of people because they might be different from us have a place.

So I come to the floor tonight not to criticize, but to reach out to the two majority leaders, in the hope that we can put a stop to these characterizations which, as I say again, and I will say for a third time, may be unintentional, but are, nonetheless, very painful to the people that are described by them.

Jim Hormel is a great American. He is a patriotic American. He is somebody who would bring great honor to our country to represent us abroad. He has already accomplished a great deal just by his courage and by allowing his name to be put forth, and hopefully his nomination will culminate in his being the ambassador to Luxemburg. In any event, it will hopefully also achieve a reconciliation in our country about how we treat people, all people, all God's children. That is what the Bible told us.

As a Catholic, again, I particularly take issue with the fact that some have said that Jim Hormel's nomination is offensive to Catholics by saying, as Jim Hormel's friend, one of the great joys of my life is to be his friend. I would only hope that his nomination accomplishes the ending of discrimination in our country against people, regardless of their sexual orientation.

So in this Gay Pride Week, let us all take pride in each and every one of us, and particularly not make judgments about people for how they are not like us, but to respect them for what they are.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. THOMPSON (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for 10:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. today account of official business.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mrs. MALONEY of New York) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. CONYERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FILNER, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. SANCHEZ, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MILLER of Florida) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. SCARBOROUGH, for 5 minutes, on June 24.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas, for 5 minutes, today and on June 24.

Mrs. CHENOWETH, for 5 minutes, on June 24.

Mr. BILIRAKIS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PAUL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CRAPO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MICA, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at his own request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)