and all other American citizens in Puerto Rico. Who in my generation in America does not know the story of the Sullivan brothers in the Second World War? But how many Americans know that during the Korean War Mrs. Asuncion Rodriguez Acosta from the town of Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico, was the only American mother who had five sons serving in the Korean front at the same time?

Despite this brilliant record of gallantry and courage, the policy of the U.S. Government sets apart its 4 million American citizens in Puerto Rico and the territories. We are good enough to defend democracy throughout the world, but we are not good enough to have the same rights, nor good enough to receive the same benefits as all other American citizens in the 50 States. Are our sacrifices worth any less by virtue of living in a territory?

The bottom line is, can the United States continue to support a policy of discrimination in the Federal programs that are designed to protect our Nation's most needed citizens, be it in health, housing and economic prosperity?

A superficial mention of the terrorist attack dated 45 years ago only detracts attention from the real issues and should not be allowed to take the place of the in-depth discussions that the Nation should now be engaged in, including how and when to eliminate discrimination.

I urge you, Mr. Speaker, and I urge all of my colleagues to take the necessary steps to ensure that American citizens of Puerto Rico and the territories be recognized as equals and that we be granted equal consideration in all Federal programs together with our fellow citizens in the 50 States. Not only have we earned that right, but not to do so violates the most basic tenets of our democratic system which is based on the principle of equal rights to all. We cannot focus our attention on what a terrorist chooses to do and ignore the responsibility of Congress to direct a stop to discrimination. We must focus in our commitment to and the defense of our cherished American values.

THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL STATUTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, as Congress this week begins the debate on reinstating the independent counsel law, I think, as a student of history, it is interesting to review what has taken place regarding that law.

Regarding congressional action on that matter certain questions are raised:

Should an administration investigate itself?

Should the alleged wrongdoing of a major administration official be left to the attorney general or to a special counsel or an independent counsel?

Those are the questions that are now being asked as we face the expiration of the current independent counsel law.

Some say the problem is the law, some say the problem is the independent counsel. It is interesting to note, if we review history, what goes around comes around both in law and also in politics. A brief review of the independent counsel law, if folks would just take a moment to do that, reveals that we are about to return to where we started if the independent counsel law is not renewed.

Mr. Speaker, even in 1972, President Nixon suggested the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate the Watergate scandal. As we know from history, President Nixon in 1973 also ordered the Attorney General to fire the Watergate special prosecutor. Those actions led Congress and President Carter to enact in 1973 an Ethics in Government Act. All totaled, the special prosecutor law was invoked 11 times from 1978 to 1982 with three appointments of special prosecutors.

In 1983, that law was revised and renewed for another 5 years. In 1987, with the Iran-Contra statute, when it came up for reauthorization, and although it gave great heartburn, President Reagan in December of 1987 signed the reimplementing bill into law. With three investigations during the Bush administration, President Bush let the statute expire in 1992.

With a new administration and new scandals, the Attorney General, Janet Reno, under the general law authority, appointed Robert Fisk as a special counsel, not an independent counsel, but under her general authority to investigate Whitewater, and she initiated that action on June 30, 1994.

Vowing to head up an administration with the highest ethical standards, President Bill Clinton took the step of being the first President since Carter to endorse the institution of an independent counsel law. On July 1, 1994, President Clinton signed the reauthorization bill and commented about the law, and let me quote from the President: ''a foundation stone for trust between the government and our citizens.'' He dismissed charges that it had been, and I quote, ''a tool of partisan attack and a waste of taxpayer funds.'' Instead, he said the statute was, and let me quote, ''has been in the past and is today a force for government integrity and public confidence,'' end quote.

The Attorney General spoke before Congress, the same Attorney General who will be having the Department of Justice advocate the end of the independent counsel law, and stressed the government's and her own support for the bill, and let me quote what she said:

> As a vehicle to further the public's perception of fairness and thoroughness, and to avert even the most subtle influence of what may appear in an investigation of highly-placed executive officials.

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How interesting it is how the law comes around and goes around. How interesting it is that today the shoe is on the other foot. The administration is about to advocate the abolition of the Independent Counsel law. I think we just need to take a few minutes and look at history and see how people have taken various stands, depending on whose ox is getting gored.

I like to reflect on history, and I think this is a little lesson in history, particularly as it deals with the appointment of an Independent Counsel.

MEDICARE REFORM: DO NOT TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the National Commission on the Future of Medicare will wrap up its work sometime this month. The Commission members were given the task of putting Medicare on solid financial footing. Unfortunately, they want to save Medicare by privatizing it.

Under the Commission proposal, Medicare would no longer pay directly for health care services. Instead, it would provide each senior with a voucher good for part of the premium for private coverage. Medicare beneficiaries could use this voucher to buy into the fee-for-service plan sponsored by the Federal Government, so-called traditional Medicare, or join a private plan.

The Commission proposal creates a system of health coverage, but it abandons the principles of comprehensiveness and egalitarianism that make Medicare such a valuable national program, an essential national service for America's elderly.

Today the Medicare program is income-blind. All seniors have access to this same level of care. The Commission proposal markets a class-based health care system of two-tiered health care: excellent care for the affluent, only barely adequate or worse health care for the less well off.

The idea that vouchers would empower seniors to choose a health plan that best suits their needs is a myth. The reality is that they will be forced to accept whatever health care plan that they can afford. Medicare beneficiaries have been able to enroll in private managed care plans for sometime now, and their experience, unfortunately, does not bode well for a full-fledged privatization effort.

Most managed care plans are for profit. The theory that they can sustain significantly lower costs than traditional Medicare simply is not panning out. Because managed care plans are profit-driven, they do not tough it out when those profits are not so forthcoming. We learned that the hard way

last year, when 96 HMOs deserted more than 400,000 seniors because the business did not meet their profit objectives.

Before the Medicare program was launched in 1965, private insurance was the only option for seniors, and more than half of them were uninsured. Insurers did not want to sign seniors up because they tend to actually use their health care coverage.

The private insurance market has changed a good deal since then, but it still avoids high-risk enrollees, and tries not to pay for high-cost services. The fact that 43 million Americans under age 65 are uninsured and the broad-based support for managed care reform in this Congress and all over the country should at the very least give us pause when we consider turning over the Medicare program to the private sector.

Medicare Commission leaders would also save Medicare money by raising the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67. It is interesting timing for such a proposal, given the growing number of uninsured in the 55 to 64 age range. These individuals cannot find an insurer now who will take them, and they were certainly a better risk as 55- to 64-year-olds for insurers than 65- and 66-year-olds.

Shell games simply do not work in health care. Someone still has to pay the bill when a person not yet eligible for Medicare becomes sick. Delayed care received in emergency rooms does not serve the individual or the public.

What is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the Medicare Commission likely proposal is what it does not tell us. It does not tell us how we could make the current program more efficient while still maintaining its egalitarian underpinnings and its orientation in providing the right care to everyone, rather than simply the least expensive care.

The bottom line is this, Mr. Speaker. If we privatize Medicare, we are telling America that not all seniors deserve the same care. We are betting on a private insurance system that may not save us any money in the long run, and certainly minimizes care by avoiding individuals who are health care risks.

All this is to avoid the difficult questions. Selling off the Medicare program, privatizing Medicare, turning over America's best government program to insurance companies may be easy, but it is simply wrong.

AMERICA'S SALMON STOCKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an issue of great importance to me and to my constituents in Washington State. I have long been deeply concerned about our salmon stocks. I spent two summers working on salmon rehabilitation in Alaska more than 50 years ago. This little salmon pin that I'm wearing was a symbol for the organization my father started in 1949. I have not come just lately to an interest or commitment to salmon recovery.

Recently the Pacific Northwest salmon runs have drawn national attention as the Puget Sound chinook salmon has been proposed for listing as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act later this month. This listing could have a devastating impact on the economy and lifestyle we enjoy in the Northwest if we do not use our technology and common sense. Disaster can be averted if we are granted enough funding to make salmon recovery measures effective, and if we can continue to engage local communities in the fight.

Of course, we must utilize all of the available science and technology in our efforts to restore salmon populations. The people of the Northwest have been around salmon all their lives. I believe the will exists in our community not only to save but to enhance the salmon runs.

Grass roots organizations have sprung up all over the region to deal with this problem, and local governments in the area are forming their own recovery plans. As long as citizen involvement remains a part of the process and we rely on sound science and proper use of technology available, I am confident that salmon runs can be shepherded back to historic levels.

Federal dollars are absolutely essential if we are serious about restoring salmon runs. The President has included $100 million in his budget to help the salmon recovery. While I am encouraged that the administration is turning its attention to this issue, the amount of money the President has announced is wholly inadequate to address the problem.

We cannot afford to waste time or money with small, ineffectual measures. A large investment is necessary now if we want to avoid larger costs in the future. It will be up to the Pacific Northwest to spend our salmon dollars wisely, to make good on our commitment to restore salmon runs.

Many people focus only on habitat restoration and natural spawning when talking about this issue. These are vitally important, but we must not lose sight of other elements in salmon recovery. Sound science and technology must play a crucial role in any plan. We cannot use 1924 technology to solve a 1999 problem.

During my lifetime we in the Pacific Northwest have developed salmon technology that has been successful around the world to accomplish miracles in salmon production in Japan, Chile, and Scotland. It would be foolish not to use it now in our own State. We know how to successfully use remote egg boxes, spawning channels, over-wintering sloughs, culvert mitigation, small stream rehabilitation, the downstream migration of salmon stocks, returning adult salmon, and predator control, and, yes, hatcheries. We have the technological knowhow to avoid the pitfalls of the past. Thoughtfully and carefully, we can bring the salmon back if we use all the tools that are available.

Finally, our research into the life cycle of the salmon must continue. We do not know all the factors that have led to a decline in salmon populations, but we do know that more research is needed on the subject. More data must be included on the GIS maps. Research is needed on a variety of ocean and near-shore issues.

Bringing the salmon back to robust levels will not be an easy task, but with the determination of the citizens of the Northwest, combined with state-of-the-art technology and the proper level of Federal support, we will be able to accomplish our goals with minimal impact.

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY, AND WHERE WE SHOULD GO FROM HERE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me join my colleague who spoke earlier to acknowledge Texas Independence Day, today, March 2nd, 1999. But as my 7th grader said, who has the challenge of studying Texas history, what a difference a century makes. I am very proud that we can stand before us today acknowledging Texas Independence Day, in a State that is diverse and recognizes all of the contributions that all of the citizens have made to this great State.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about where we should go from here. The impeachment process is over and the Constitution has been preserved. Although this week we will see a number of confessions and testimonies on television, I believe the American people want us to move forward. Now is the time for reconciliation and healing, mending and building relationships that were damaged that can be replaced.

Furthermore, I am ready to begin working toward enacting legislation that will enhance the quality of life for all Americans. The President's behavior, yes, was unacceptable, but they were not impeachable offenses of treason, bribery, and other high crimes and misdemeanors. To dwell on that, Mr. Speaker, does not get us where we need to go.

I would simply like to ask us to get on with the people's business. There is great responsibility in saving social security and preserving Medicare. Social security is an obligation that Congress must protect now and in the future. Millions of Americans are depending