

needs to ensure that the people impacted most directly by this plan, our farmers, have a say in how that modernization plan is carried out.

On the latter point with respect to food stamps, I would repeat, this is not just a Texas issue. The Federal Government and taxpayers all over the country pay half the cost of running the Food Stamp Program. That means that we, the Congress, have an obligation to ensure that the program is run effectively, efficiently and in compliance with the law.

The Food Stamp Program is operating with the lowest error rate it has ever had, the results of years of work by USDA, State and local employees, and bipartisan support from this institution. We do not want to see a repeat of what happened in Colorado where the State spent millions of Federal funds on a computer system that not only did not work, but prevented thousands of needy people from getting government benefits like food assistance and health insurance. Particularly with many believing the State of Texas is counting on the White House to override any efforts by USDA officials to rein in this plan, we know Congress must address this issue and do it immediately.

In all these instances, we are reminded of the same thing, that government has an obligation to people, whether it is ensuring our most needy citizens receive food stamps or our farmers receive the services they need to keep planting, harvesting, and selling crops. This is about the Congress, this institution, its role in ensuring that the American people tackle their toughest challenges together. That is our responsibility to the American people, and fulfilling that obligation is what this motion would accomplish.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct offered by the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the

vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

PROVIDING FOR CONCURRENCE BY HOUSE WITH AMENDMENTS IN SENATE AMENDMENT TO H.R. 3971, QI, TMA, AND ABSTINENCE PROGRAMS EXTENSION AND HURRICANE KATRINA UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF ACT OF 2005

Mr. MCCRERY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 501) providing for the concurrence by the House with amendments in the amendment of the Senate to H.R. 3971.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 501

Resolved, That, upon the adoption of this resolution, the House shall be considered to have taken from the Speaker's table the bill H.R. 3971, with the Senate amendment thereto, and to have concurred in the Senate amendment to the bill with the following amendments:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted by the amendment of the Senate to the bill, insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "QI, TMA, and Abstinence Programs Extension and Hurricane Katrina Unemployment Relief Act of 2005".

TITLE I—HEALTH PROVISIONS

SEC. 101. EXTENSION OF QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL (QI) PROGRAM.

(a) THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2007.—Section 1902(a)(10)(E)(iv) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396a(a)(10)(E)(iv)) is amended by striking "September 2005" and inserting "September 2007".

(b) EXTENDING TOTAL AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR ALLOCATION.—Section 1933(g) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396u-3(g)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by striking "and" at the end of subparagraph (B);

(B) by striking the period at the end of subparagraph (C) and inserting a semicolon; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

"(D) for the period that begins on October 1, 2005, and ends on December 31, 2005, the total allocation amount is \$100,000,000;

"(E) for the period that begins on January 1, 2006, and ends on September 30, 2006, the total allocation amount is \$300,000,000;

"(F) for the period that begins on October 1, 2006, and ends on December 31, 2006, the total allocation amount is \$100,000,000; and

"(G) for the period that begins on January 1, 2007, and ends on September 30, 2007, the total allocation amount is \$300,000,000."; and

(2) in paragraph (3), in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting " (D), or (F)" after "subparagraph (B)".

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall be effective as of September 30, 2005.

SEC. 102. EXTENSION OF TRANSITIONAL MEDICAL ASSISTANCE (TMA) AND ABSTINENCE EDUCATION PROGRAM.

Effective as if enacted on September 30, 2005, activities authorized by sections 510 and 1925 of the Social Security Act shall continue through December 31, 2005, in the manner authorized for fiscal year 2005, notwithstanding section 1902(e)(1)(A) of such Act, and out of any money in the Treasury of the United States not otherwise appropriated,

there are hereby appropriated such sums as may be necessary for such purpose. Grants and payments may be made pursuant to this authority through the first quarter of fiscal year 2006 at the level provided for such activities through the first quarter of fiscal year 2005.

SEC. 103. ELIMINATION OF MEDICARE COVERAGE OF DRUGS USED FOR TREATMENT OF SEXUAL OR ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1860D-2(e)(2)(A) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w-102(e)(2)(A)) is amended—

(1) by striking the period at the end and inserting " , as such sections were in effect on the date of the enactment of this part."; and

(2) by adding at the end the following: "Such term also does not include a drug when used for the treatment of sexual or erectile dysfunction, unless such drug were used to treat a condition, other than sexual or erectile dysfunction, for which the drug has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration."

(b) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed as preventing a prescription drug plan or an MA-PD plan from providing coverage of drugs for the treatment of sexual or erectile dysfunction as supplemental prescription drug coverage under section 1860D-2(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w-102(a)(2)(A)(ii)).

(c) EFFECTIVE DATES.—The amendment made by subsection (a)(1) shall take effect as if included in the enactment of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-173) and the amendment made by subsection (a)(2) shall apply to coverage for drugs dispensed on or after January 1, 2007.

SEC. 104. ELIMINATION OF MEDICAID COVERAGE OF DRUGS USED FOR TREATMENT OF SEXUAL OR ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1927(d)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396r-8(d)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

"(K) Agents when used for the treatment of sexual or erectile dysfunction, unless such agents are used to treat a condition, other than sexual or erectile dysfunction, for which the agents have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration."

(b) ELIMINATION OF FEDERAL PAYMENT UNDER MEDICAID PROGRAM.—Section 1903(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396b(i)) is amended—

(1) by striking "or" at the end of paragraph (19);

(2) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (20) and inserting " ; or"; and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (20) the following new paragraph:

"(21) with respect to amounts expended for covered outpatient drugs described in section 1927(d)(2)(K) (relating to drugs when used for treatment of sexual or erectile dysfunction)."

(c) CLARIFICATION OF NO EFFECT ON DETERMINATION OF BASE EXPENDITURES.—Section 1935(c)(3)(B)(ii)(II) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396v(c)(3)(B)(ii)(II)) is amended by inserting " , including drugs described in subparagraph (K) of section 1927(d)(2)" after "1860D-2(e)".

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to drugs dispensed on or after January 1, 2006.

TITLE II—ASSISTANCE RELATING TO UNEMPLOYMENT

SEC. 201. SPECIAL TRANSFER IN FISCAL YEAR 2006.

Section 903 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1103) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(e) SPECIAL TRANSFER IN FISCAL YEAR 2006.—Not later than 10 days after the date of

the enactment of this subsection, the Secretary of the Treasury shall transfer from the Federal unemployment account—

“(1) \$15,000,000 to the account of Alabama in the Unemployment Trust Fund;

“(2) \$400,000,000 to the account of Louisiana in the Unemployment Trust Fund; and

“(3) \$85,000,000 to the account of Mississippi in the Unemployment Trust Fund.”.

SEC. 202. FLEXIBILITY IN UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION ADMINISTRATION TO ADDRESS HURRICANE KATRINA.

Notwithstanding any provision of section 302(a) or 303(a)(8) of the Social Security Act, any State may, on or after August 28, 2005, use any amounts received by such State pursuant to title III of the Social Security Act to assist in the administration of claims for compensation on behalf of any other State if a major disaster was declared with respect to such other State or any area within such other State under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act by reason of Hurricane Katrina.

SEC. 203. REGULATIONS.

The Secretary of Labor may prescribe any operating instructions or regulations necessary to carry out this title and any amendment made by this title.

Amend the title so as to read: “To extend medicare cost-sharing for qualifying individuals through September 2007, to extend transitional medical assistance and the program for abstinence education through December 2005, to provide unemployment relief for States and individuals affected by Hurricane Katrina, and for other purposes.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY).

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

Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today is a compromise between a bill that the House has previously passed dealing with unemployment insurance benefits for the affected States on the gulf coast that were devastated by Hurricane Katrina and the Senate bill which addressed the same issue.

There were other matters included in one or other of the bills, including the extension of the Transitional Medical Assistance Program, which continues Medicaid for families leaving welfare for work, the Abstinence Education Program, and the QI-1 program through which State Medicaid programs help low-income seniors pay Medicare part B premiums.

Also, this bill is completely paid for, and the pay-for in this bill is the same as it was in the House bill when it passed the House floor a couple of weeks ago, and that is to prohibit Medicare and Medicaid coverage of drugs for treatment of erectile dysfunction.

Mr. Speaker, the compromise bill today includes the very same unemployment insurance benefits that were included in the previously passed House bill. We make a few changes in the effective days of some of the programs I referred to earlier. For example, the QI-1 program in the bill before us today is extended through Sep-

tember 30, 2007, instead of the date of December 2006 which was included in the previously passed House bill.

In addition, the bill before us includes the Senate-passed extension of the Abstinence Education Program which was not included in our earlier-passed version of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge all Members today to do the same thing they did 2 weeks ago and support this bill and pass it to give badly needed assistance to those States along the gulf coast who are experiencing very much increased unemployment due to Hurricane Katrina.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by giving a weather report. In the Caribbean there is another hurricane developing called Wilma. It is a stage 5 and it is headed toward the Florida keys. So I think Members ought to be listening if they live in the State of Florida because 13 days ago we stood right here and called for an appropriate Federal response for the people in the gulf coast.

□ 1400

One that would rise to the same level of responsibility as the waters that rose and flooded the homes, hopes, and communities along the gulf coast. Our response was inadequate then, and it is only worse today. I certainly want to exempt the gentleman from Louisiana from what I say here because I know that this is not a bill that he produced. He is being sent out here by his leadership to put this bill on the floor, and it is not what he would do for the people of Louisiana.

Tens of thousands of Americans are without housing, health coverage, protection of children, and without unemployment benefits or their employment. Tens of thousands are filing for unemployment benefits; benefits are running out for thousands more. The magnitude of the disaster is unmistakable, and the Republican response has been unconscionable. This is a continuing disaster. The storm was weeks ago, but this continues.

In this time of domestic crisis, the Republican survival kit has been to give people in the gulf a teaspoon to empty the ocean out of their lives, and here we are 13 days later doing what we did 2 weeks ago. It is unlucky 13, because the Republicans have redefined the Federal response to a natural disaster to include a legislative disaster, this bill. Republicans wring their hands and they exude political concern for people affected by the hurricane, but they do not walk the talk.

Mr. Speaker, I think you can tell the President he can go to the gulf coast as many times as he wants. He has been there six already. It will not do any good, because all those people down there read the Bible and go to church

on Sunday, and they know that Bible verse that says: By your deeds you shall know them. It is not the fact that you go down there and stand around for photo ops; it is what you do when you come back to Washington, D.C.

Now, there is not enough of anything, most especially the strong shoulders of the Federal Government, in this bill. This legislation offers no real relief to jobless disaster victims. It did not 13 days ago, and it does not today. We continue to ignore three major problems:

First of all, 6,000 people have already exhausted unemployment benefits in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. There is no extension for them. Another 20,000 jobless workers in these States are projected to run out of benefits by Christmas. Nothing is done for them. These workers need a federally funded extension of their benefits while they put their lives back together and search for employment.

Secondly, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana had the three lowest levels of average weekly unemployment benefits in the entire Nation. In all three States, the average benefit is less than \$200 a week. That is about half the poverty level for a family of four. Now, ask yourself, is that the best we can do? I mean, after we spent all that money in Iraq, is that the best we can do for the gulf coast, offer people half of poverty? The Federal Government should step in and help people get up on their feet, not down on their knees.

The third problem with this bill is the disaster-affected States are seeing an enormous surge in unemployment claims. In Louisiana alone, new claims for unemployment benefits have surged 10 times the normal level, 10 times the normal level; and State officials expect Katrina-related unemployment benefits to exceed \$800 million. That money is supposed to come from a State economy that has been devastated by the loss and dislocation of 70,000 businesses. It just does not work. If you do not have people working paying unemployment insurance, you are not going to have the money to pay benefits.

Under Louisiana law, once their unemployment trust fund slips below a certain level, automatic benefit cuts for jobless workers and tax increases for employers are triggered into effect. This bill does nothing about that. That means people receiving unemployment benefits in Louisiana of less than \$200 a week will see their benefits slashed by as much as \$37 a week starting in January, the way things are right now.

From the beginning, the Federal response to this national disaster has been bungled, inept, and very suspect. We owe the people of the gulf coast something more than our sympathies. We know the problems, and the Federal Government can solve these problems; but we are not going to do that again today. Instead, again, the Republicans want to pass a bill that sends a lump sum of money to these hard-hit States to bear yet another burden.

The lump sum is not enough, because it covers less than half the cost of regular unemployment claims caused by the disaster. If you are going to do a lump sum, at least do a lump sum that meets what you know is happening. Do not give them half. Where are they supposed to get the other half, give them a tin cup and stand on the corner? There is no money at all to extend expiring benefits or to supplement the meager benefits currently available. With an effort like this, the Republican House is using Michael Brown's FEMA as a model, that is, Way to go, Brownie.

Ask people in the shelters, ask people with no place to call home, ask Americans on any street corner, and they would be embarrassed all over again. We are giving \$500 million. It sounds like a lot of money, right? We have \$25 billion in the fund that we could use for this purpose. We are out of touch, and the people in Louisiana and Alabama and Mississippi are running out of time.

As things stand, it is really getting worse every day for disadvantaged Americans, and we are making them pay for the folly. The majority will locate the storm directly over the heads of every disadvantaged and disenfranchised American. Fiscal offsets did not concern Republicans when they gave every millionaire a \$100,000 tax break or charged the people of the United States \$215 billion for an illegal war in Iraq. We could put that on future generations, but not this bill. This one we have to put on the backs of the people. We had to find offsets; we had to cut something to meet the needs of Americans affected by one natural disaster.

Republicans demanded that the disadvantaged pay the price. Their response is to put food on the table of one American family by making it harder on the folks next door. Share the pain? No, no, no. Republicans shift the blame and the pain to the least able to fight back.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush went down and promised that we would do whatever it took to help these people get back on their feet. Well, it takes more than going down and standing in front of a mike and giving a photo op and then coming home and doing nothing. You have to come up here and insist that the Congress respond. The President has not done that. The people in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama are waiting for the President to make good on his promise. My advice to those folks is do not hold your breath.

People across America are watching and hoping for the President to say something other than, Brownie, you have done a heck of a job.

Denial is not an appropriate response to this natural disaster, and that is what this House is doing. Responsibility and relief are what is needed and required by the Federal Government. The Republicans are in charge from top to bottom. It is time they lead with

their heart and their head and not their chin. Meager is the only word that I could use here to describe what their response to Hurricane Katrina is, but that is where the Republicans are heading, another meager response.

There is still time to change the course. There is still time for the Federal Government to be an agent of good that it is supposed to be. Mr. Speaker, domestic security includes a roof over your head, a hot meal, and a helping hand to rebuild the life lost through no fault of your own. What the Republicans continue to provide is a tarp and a can and a good luck sign. We do not need thumbs up. We need wheels down, and bring the help.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), chairman and ranking member of the Ways and Means Committee. I also want to thank the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT), my distinguished colleagues on the committee. A lot of people have worked hard on this issue of unemployment insurance. I also want to thank the staff of the Ways and Means Committee on both sides of the aisle, Democrat and Republican, for jumping in very early after Katrina hit to start dealing with all of these issues within our jurisdiction that affect the victims of this disaster. Thanks to the hard work of members of the committee and staff, we have been able to pass already a number of bills that the President has signed to help mitigate the disaster.

This bill before us today is one that I can assure the Members of this House and the gentleman from Washington that my State very badly wants right now; it is very badly needed. They are in fact spending money from their unemployment trust fund at a very fast clip, and their part of this \$500 million will give them a badly needed infusion of cash to stop the bleeding in their own unemployment trust fund.

So although the gentleman from Washington may be right in saying that this is not enough to cover everything that the State will lose as a result of this disaster, nonetheless, it is a very, very important infusion of cash right now to my State and to Mississippi and to Alabama to help them in this very bad time shortly after the storm when unemployment is reaching its peak.

So, again, just as I did 2 weeks ago, I would urge the gentleman from Washington and others in this House not to stop this bill from passing. Work with us later to perfect other bills which may be needed when we get more evidence in as to the financial effects on these States because of the effects of the disaster, and we will certainly

work with them to provide additional assistance.

Mr. Speaker, I must add that this House and indeed this Congress has passed and the President has signed over \$62 billion of relief for the disaster stricken States along the gulf coast. I do not know of anyone who would call that a meager response. That is indeed a very robust response. Yes, we are experiencing some difficulties in getting that money out the door, on the ground, to the purposes for which it was intended; but those are bureaucratic problems that we have with any large government program. But the money has been appropriated, Congress has taken action, the President has signed those bills, and the money is there waiting to be spent. So I do not call that a meager response. I call that a robust response, a very quick response; and today's bill is just another step in providing an immediate response to the problems.

Again, I can assure this House that my State very badly needs the provisions of this bill today and very badly wants this bill to be passed and signed by the President. Then, if there is more needed down the road, we can come back and address that at the appropriate time; but today I believe this is an appropriate response of this House and this Congress to help these States with their immediate unemployment insurance needs to keep the taxes on their employers in those States from going up at the very time when we need to encourage businesses to restart, to reinvest, and to retire employees.

Mr. Speaker, again, I would urge passage of this very badly needed legislation today.

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN).

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today the House of Representatives is doing the right thing about health care. The QI program helps low-income beneficiaries cover the cost of the Medicare premium. Without this program, many elderly Americans would sink below poverty as they attempt to pay for doctors' visits out of pocket. That not only places the elderly at risk; it is wasteful from a fiscal perspective. When Medicare eligibles cannot afford the premium associated with doctors' visits and other outpatient services, Medicaid becomes their insurer of last resort. Absent QI, this program, more elderly Americans and individuals with disabilities would need Federal and State assistance through Medicaid in addition to their Medicare hospital coverage.

□ 1415

Investing in premium assistance now saves both Federal dollars and State dollars.

This bill also extends the Transitional Medical Assistance Program,

TMA. It provides health insurance to families as they move from welfare to the workforce. It is both a public health imperative and a jobs initiative.

Similar to the QI, it is an investment to the Federal budget in the long run, in this case by promoting workforce participation.

Ideally, today's legislation would make QI and TMA programs permanent so that these all-too-frequent reauthorizations would no longer be necessary. I hope we can work on a bipartisan basis to secure a permanent authorization.

At the beginning of my remarks I said today the House of Representatives is doing the right thing about health care. Unfortunately, yesterday they were not, this body was not. The day before this body was not doing the right thing about health care, and week before, week before, week before this they were not doing the right thing about health care.

Now, as we talk about Katrina, paying for this terrible tragedy that happened along the gulf coast, some Republicans want to cut Medicaid by \$12 billion, \$15 billion cut, cut other kinds of programs, increase Medicare premiums, cut out all kinds of programs that serve the working poor. Other Republicans simply want to add this cost of Katrina, as they add the \$1 billion a week for the Iraq War, to the national deficit so that our kids and our grandkids can pay the cost.

Unfortunately, no Republican, to my knowledge, is standing up and saying maybe we ought to cancel the tax cuts that are for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. So the choice has become this. My friends on the other side of the aisle say let us give tax cuts to the wealthy, and then we have to cut Medicaid. Then we have to raise Medicare premiums. Medicare premiums already having gone up 50 percent in the last 4 years, 50 percent in the last 4 years. Seniors were just notified they are going to pay almost \$90 a month for their Medicare premium, and do my colleagues know why? It is because my friends on the other side of the aisle are slavish devotees to tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

So, as wealthy Americans see their incomes go up and up and up, as the minimum wage has stayed flat for 5 years, as wages for 95 percent of the American people have been stagnant, we have got to give tax cuts for the wealthiest people in this country, to the richest people making over \$250,000, \$300,000 a year, and then we have to cut Medicaid. Then we have to increase Medicare premiums. Then we have to take from the middle class and the working poor.

It is immoral, it is wrong, and my colleagues should listen to what the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) said when he quoted from the New Testament and talked about we will be judged by our deeds. We also should think about our faith in terms of social justice. We also should think

about our faith in doing to the least of these among us.

We ought to think about our faith in making this country a better place, and frankly, my friends on the other side of the aisle have failed miserably on that account.

Mr. MCCRERY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself so much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio for his contributions to perfecting the part of this legislation that concerns the QI program and the extension of that program. His input, as well as many others in this House, were very valuable in allowing us to reach a compromise and get this bill to the floor. So I thank him for that.

With respect to Medicare premiums, we are all concerned about that. The gentleman makes a valid point. He, of course, knows very well that the Medicare premiums are simply a function of the cost of the Medicare part B program and have nothing to do with taxes of any sort in this country. We are all concerned about trying to hold down the increases in medical costs, not only for Medicare beneficiaries but for everybody in our society.

I would urge the gentleman from Ohio and others to join us in trying to attack the root causes of those cost increases, such as medical malpractice reform, which we passed through this House but we cannot quite get through the Senate. Maybe with the gentleman's help, we can get those things passed and get those costs under control so we can control the increases of the Medicare part B premium.

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

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

I think the gentleman from Louisiana should hear our comments as being supportive of the problems. It is not that we do not think they have done something. It just needs to be more, and I say it for two reasons.

One is that I think that the people of the gulf coast really are going to need more. I can predict almost without any fear at all that we will be back out here in 3 months or 2 months or 1 month or whatever asking for more money to fill up the problems. I think this paying a little at a time is just not the best way to do it, but if my colleagues have to do it that way, they have to do it that way.

The second reason I stand up here and respond in this way is that I know I come from a place where we have earthquakes, and there are Members on this floor from California who come from earthquake areas. There are places all over this country where tornadoes are a real problem, and I think we have to think of ourselves as a Federal Government that deals with the problems of any part of the United States that needs it. It may be the gulf coast right now, and we can find all

kinds of problems with whatever the gulf coast did or did not do, but the people deserve our best effort here in this House.

For that reason, I intend to support this bill, and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) will, I am sure, and I think the gentleman has a unanimous vote here, but we took this time because we wanted to say that we thought it was necessary to think much more broadly and comprehensively about this than I think the leadership on the Republican side was willing to look at at this time. They are going to have to face it soon.

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

Mr. MCCRERY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself so much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, just in closing, again I would like to thank the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT), my colleague on the Committee on Ways and Means, for being so constructive throughout this process. He has tried to offer constructive suggestions for inclusion in this legislation. Unfortunately, we have not been able to accommodate all of his requests, but we have included, for example, the flexibility with the use of this money for the States to increase benefits if they so choose on a temporary basis, to do some of things that the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) was so rightly concerned about.

So, again, I appreciate his input, as I do the input of other members of the committee on this issue, and urge all of us to continue to work together to try to appropriately respond to this disaster, as well as any others that we unfortunately experience in this country.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would urge passage of H. Res. 501.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the reauthorization of the Qualified Individual (QI-1) program, which helps over 161,000 low-income elderly and disabled Medicare beneficiaries with incomes between 120 and 135 percent of poverty to pay their Medicare Part B premiums. This critical program expired on September 30, 2005.

The Qualified Individual program saves eligible participants approximately \$1,000 per year. We're talking about individuals who usually pay for most of their living expenses out of checks that range in amount from \$1,097 to \$1,464 per month. Just to emphasize, that equates to a meager \$13,164 to \$17,568 in total income per year. Needless to say, this assistance serves as a vital resource for a very vulnerable sector of our population.

Mr. Speaker, both the House and the Senate have passed bills to reinstate the program. Today, I am happy to see that the Social Services Emergency Relief and Recovery Act of 2005, H.R. 3971, a bill designed primarily to provide relief to the Hurricane victims, includes an extension of the QI-1 program, an essential subsidy for some of our neediest Medicare beneficiaries. This program comes with a comparably meager \$300 million price tag and the benefit it delivers is priceless. I urge my colleagues to support passage of this bill.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if Congress does not act soon on reauthorizing the QI program, in

December of this year, over 161,000 beneficiaries will receive a Social Security check that is reduced by a whopping \$234.60 for the month. That is why over thirty-five senior organizations, including the AARP, the Gray Panthers, Alliance for Retired Americans, National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, National Council on Aging and the United Jewish Communities to name a few, have contacted Members of Congress urging immediate action on reauthorizing this program.

As many of my colleagues know, the Qualified Individual program has suffered from uncertain reauthorization and funding since it expired in 2002. Since its expiration, it has hobbled along on a series of Continuing Resolutions—falling on the mercies of our oft-hurried appropriations process. I firmly believe that this program is of utmost importance—that costs us so little when we consider its impact. We should reauthorize it with all due speed, not subject it to the hurricane relief tennis match between the House and Senate leadership.

In the alternative, H.R. 3800, a bill introduced last month by Representatives KUCINICH and LATOURETTE, of which I am a cosponsor, is a straightforward bipartisan bill to extend the Qualified Individual program for one year. I applaud these Members for their leadership on its introduction.

If we cannot wrest the QI-1 program out of the political volley surrounding hurricane funding, I urge the House leadership to bring H.R. 3800 to the floor for immediate consideration and passage. We have the power to fix this and I urge my colleagues to reauthorize the QI-1 program now.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 501, legislation that will extend the important Transitional Medical Assistance and Qualified Individuals programs. Over the past few years, these programs have been reauthorized by short-term extensions that offer low-income beneficiaries of the programs few assurances that they will be able to depend on the benefits in the future. While I support this extension bill, Congress should be acting I today to make these programs permanent.

The TMA program provides an important incentive for low-income individuals to move off of welfare and into employment by ensuring continued access to health care. Health insurance is a critical factor in everyone's employment decisions. Without TMA, many families would have little incentive to move off of welfare and leave behind the Medicaid benefits that TANF beneficiaries often receive. TMA allows for extended health care coverage when low-income families lose traditional Medicaid benefits due to an increase in income. While four months of TMA coverage is assured under current law, the six-to-twelve month extension that families so often need falls under a legislative sunset. While our action today will extend this coverage, we should be making this extension permanent.

Likewise, we should be acting today to make Medicare's QI-1 program permanent. This program is critical for Medicare beneficiaries whose income is between 120% and 135% of the federal poverty level, as it provides these individuals with assistance with their Medicare Part B premiums. Since Qualified Individuals are not otherwise eligible for Medicaid, the QI-1 program is critical in ensuring low-income seniors' access to physician care.

Mr. Speaker, I support the efforts of the bill sponsor to swiftly enact this important legislation. However, I regret that it includes extraneous provisions that would limit Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries' access to certain classes of prescription drugs. Physicians, not Congress, know best when a prescription drug is medically necessary, and the government should not interject in decisions between a patient and his doctor I about the proper course of treatment.

Despite those reservations, this bill offers important benefits to low-income individuals' access to health care, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the House and Senate have finally worked out their differences to extend two programs that provide important health care assistance for low-income elderly and working families.

The Qualified Individual, QI, program provides assistance with the cost of Medicare premiums for certain low-income individuals. The Transitional Medicaid Program, TMA, provides temporary Medicaid coverage to families moving off of welfare to the workforce.

This legislation considered today merely provides a short-term extension. I continue to believe, however, that these programs should be made permanent. First, they are good programs that provide much needed assistance. Second, we should avoid the situation we find ourselves in now, particularly with respect to the QI program, where States and CMS were unsure whether or how to continue the program as funding expired on September 30.

We must also consider making program improvements to both programs that would simplify enrollment and retention of eligible individuals. I recently reintroduced legislation, H.R. 3980, the Medicare Beneficiary Assistance Improvement Act, to address this matter in the QI program. And I have also included such provisions for the TMA program in H.R. 2071, the Family Care Act of 2005, which I reintroduced earlier this year.

Finally, I have concerns about the provision we are using to pay for these extensions. This provision strikes Medicare and Medicaid coverage of particular drugs that had been previously covered. The provision, in the out years, raises more revenue than is needed for these short-term program extensions. We should have saved the remainder to use for another day. But despite these reservations, there is great urgency in extending the QI and TMA programs, so I am supporting the package.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATHAM). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 501.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair

declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 23 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1615

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON) at 4 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that further proceedings on the motion to instruct conferees on H.R. 2744 will resume tomorrow.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY IN KATRINA'S WAKE

(Mrs. SCHMIDT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I attended a Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure subcommittee meeting entitled "A Vision and Strategy For Rebuilding New Orleans." I found it to be interesting, and I am excited for the opportunity to help rebuild one of America's great cities. It is an undertaking that we must take seriously.

Amid the allegations that Katrina evacuees' relief supplies were found in the garages of government officials, it is obvious that there is a lot of potential abuse for misspending \$100 billion of Federal money. It is with this in mind that I felt the need to urge my colleagues to exercise discretion when authorizing additional funding.

Following yesterday's subcommittee meeting, I knew that I had a duty to speak on behalf of the American taxpayers. Only after intense scrutiny and with due diligence should we appropriate additional funds, making sure that government is doing its job, rebuilding the schools and infrastructure.

There were two statements given in testimony that were particularly troubling to me. First was the mayor, who wants now to have a light rail system to facilitate future evacuations. Now, I am all for rebuilding New Orleans, but this is not an opportunity to get your Christmas list out and go fishing on pet projects.

The other was the statement from the Governor. Someone on the committee asked how much money Louisiana had spent to date. She had no