tank downtown that has the freedom to just pontificate, to make recommendations, to wonder how things could have been. This is a body where every single thing that we do has the potential to affect—positively or negatively—the lives of every single citizen of the land.

There are no free lunches in America, Mr. Speaker. There is no something for nothing. You can control costs through competition. You can control costs through getting consumers involved in their own health care. You can control costs by providing folks with more choices. You cannot control costs responsibly by putting providers out of business and rationing care through the long lines that are then going to result.

We are going to deal with this bill tomorrow, in fact, and I would be happy to yield to my friend from the Rules Committee to help make that happen.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5, PROTECTING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE ACT

Mr. NUGENT, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 112–416) on the resolution (H. Res. 591) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5) to improve patient access to health care services and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the health care delivery system, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

ONGOING HEALTH CARE DEBATE—Continued

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia may proceed.

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that.

I was very lucky when my friend from Florida came to file that rule because that's another example that what we're doing down here isn't just howling at the Moon. It isn't just blowing hot air.

What I'm talking about here on the floor right now is repealing this Independent Payment Advisory Board to stop this cycle of destruction that has already been put into place. And no sooner do we come down here to do it than my colleague from the Rules Committee comes down to file this rule, Mr. Speaker, so that we can do this bill not 2 years from today, not after the next election, not 6 months from now, kicking the can down the road, but so that we can bring this bill to the floor tomorrow to address the concerns that we're talking about today. That's why you and I came to Congress, Mr. Speaker. That's why this whole freshman class came to Congress.

You know, I've only been here now about, what, 14, 15 months, Mr. Speaker. And what I have found is that each and every day, my colleagues in this freshman class do not evaluate their success by how many favorable newspaper articles are written about them. They don't evaluate their success by how many times they've seen their face on TV. And they certainly don't evaluate their success based on what the mass media writes about them in this town. They evaluate their success based on whether or not the promises they made to folks before they got elected are the priorities that they've set for themselves now that they have been elected. And each and every day, I see people making that a reality. Republicans and Democrats alike, Mr. Speaker, in this freshman class came to this Congress for a different purpose, with a different mission, with a different vision. And I see them implementing it every day. It makes me proud.

Speaking of being proud, Mr. Speaker, you know, folks back home say, ROB, how come we don't see you on FOX News preaching the good conservative news? I tell them, Mr. Speaker, that anybody who is watching FOX News already knows the good conservative news. They don't need to hear it from me. The folks who need to hear from me are the folks who are watching MSNBC. That is who needs to hear my message. And I happened to bring some MSNBC knowledge down here with me today.

This is a headline recently from the Web page, Mr. Speaker. This is what it said: ''In risky election year move, Republicans offer Medicare alternatives.'' Ooh. It kind of sounds ominous, doesn't it, Mr. Speaker? Ominous. ''In risky election year move, Republicans offer Medicare alternatives.'' Why? Why? For the reason I just talked about, Mr. Speaker, where we have this freshman class, where we have these senior Members of Congress who didn't come here to pontificate, who didn't come here to grandstand, who came here to make a difference.

I don't care that it's an election year. In fact, if anything, Mr. Speaker, in an election year, we ought to do more of the right things. We ought to spend even more time each and every day getting it right. ''Risky election year move'' is what folks say. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, I would be disappointed if we did anything else. Medicare is in crisis. This IPAB board is further destabilizing the Medicare program. You are doggone right it may be a risky move, but we did it anyway because it's the right thing to do.

I sit on the Budget Committee. That is actually what they are talking about. This is a March 15 article. And they're talking about the plan that we in the Budget Committee are going to hold a markup on tomorrow, which does what? All of these things I've been talking about, Mr. Speaker: bringing choices to consumers, bringing competition to the Medicare system, investing consumers in Medicare outcomes. It does all of those things, Mr. Speaker, that we believe can control costs using the power of the marketplace, using the power of the American people, using the power of the American family, and not just by rationing care, as this IPAB board does.

This is the headline. I'm going to read it again, Mr. Speaker, just because I like it so much: ''In risky election year move, Republicans offer Medicare alternatives.'' They go on to say this: ''Running a political risk during an election year, Republicans continue to offer proposals to cut future Medicare outlays.'' Medicare outlays, that's this dramatic rise we see in Medicare spending, Mr. Speaker. It's not a rise associated with quality of care. It's not a rise that's associated with whether or not people get the services they need. It's a rise that's associated with an out-of-control Federal health care program that has absolutely no consumer involvement at all, absolutely no competition at all, absolutely no free market involvement at all. And it's going broke.

We have a proposal to fix it. What is our proposal? Well, I didn't just bring our proposal, Mr. Speaker. But I brought our proposal, and I want to compare it to the President's approach. There are two things we need to talk about when we talk about changes to Medicare, Mr. Speaker, and you know this better than most. There are changes to the Medicare program that save it for future generations, and then there are changes to the Medicare program that destabilize today's seniors. A big difference in those two things.

□ 1800

I'm in my forties, Mr. Speaker. My Uncle Sam has to come to me today and say, ROB, I know you've been paying your Medicare taxes in every single paycheck since you were 16 and I know we promised you that Medicare was going to be there for you like it was there for your grandparents and your parents; but ROB, we've got bad news. It turns out we overpromised and we're underdelivering and we've got to renegotiate our Medicare contract with you.

We do.

That is the bad, bad news for your generation, Mr. Speaker, for my generation, and for everybody younger. The government—surprise, surprise—has overpromised and underdelivered. And the time to tell me that is now, not when I'm 65 and I can't make any more choices about my life, but today while I can still make accommodations.

So I've divided this chart, Mr. Speaker, up into two categories—what are our proposals for current seniors and what are our proposals for future seniors—and I've done the same thing for the President's plan, because it is important that we do keep our promises here. It's no senior's fault in this country that they're dependent on Medicare. They paid into it their entire life for the part A through the Medicare taxes. They were promised it would be there for them in their time of need.

They didn't ask for it. They didn't solicit it. The money was taken from them and now they deserve those benefits.

So here's what we do. The program that's coming out of the House Budget Committee, the program similar to what was passed on the floor of the House last year and it's coming before the House next week, Mr. Speaker, has absolutely no changes—no changes, Mr. Speaker—for today's seniors. If you're on Medicare today, no changes, no disruptions in our plan, Mr. Speaker. That service, it's already begun for you and it is going to continue uninterrupted for as long as you need to utilize the program. But the program is going bankrupt, Mr. Speaker, and so we're making some changes that will preserve and protect it for this current generation of seniors. If we do nothing, bankruptcy looms on the horizon. And if current seniors want it, we'll allow them to get what I'll call personalized Medicare like what Members of Congress have.

Mr. Speaker, folks often think—in fact, my mom sends me that email about once a week that says, ROB, I can't believe you're getting all that free health care in Congress. You know that's nonsense, Mr. Speaker. We have exactly the same health care plan in Congress that every Federal employee across the country has. And that plan is this: You open up a book that has about 30 plans to choose from and you choose the one that works best for you. Imagine that.

Imagine that our seniors today have had a lifetime of health care choices, and the day they turn 65, Mr. Speaker, they surrender their freedom as an American and they are forced into a health care system that they cannot opt out of—cannot opt out of. Oh, you're in it. You can opt out of Medicare part D, you can opt out of Medicare part B, but you cannot opt out of Medicare part A. You are in it.

And if you want a doctor that won't take you—he'll take other Medicare patients but he won't take you—the Federal law of the land prohibits you, Mr. Speaker, from paying cash out of your pocket to see your doctor. That's the law of the land where? Russia? China? It's the law of the land in America.

You turn 65, you enter the Big Government health care program, suddenly your freedoms begin to be eroded. We say no. We say let's make Medicare have the choices that we as Members of Congress have, and let's make those available to current seniors.

So to recap, Mr. Speaker, no changes or disruptions in our plan. We preserve and protect the program for current seniors for the 30-year life of the program and we personalize Medicare to make it more like what we have in Congress so that we can give those folks choices.

What does the President do for current seniors? He empowers 15 unelected bureaucrats to cut Medicare in ways that will most certainly deny seniors care. Do I need to go back to the 40 pages, Mr. Speaker, of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, section 3403, the advisory board, IPAB? This is what it does. It's the 15 unelected bureaucrats that have the power to cut Medicare in ways that, as we have discussed, will most certainly deny care.

If your plan is to cut reimbursements to doctors, fair enough. I think it's shortsighted; I think it's destructive. But if that is your plan, embrace that plan, I say to folks who support the President's health care bill. Embrace it and defend it. But be honest with the American people who most certainly know that if you cut those reimbursement rates to a level that doctors cannot see patients, they will not see patients.

And here's one that doesn't get talked about much, Mr. Speaker. The President's plan raids the Medicare program and removes $682 billion. This is a program that's already going bankrupt. This is a program that already needs substantial reform to protect it and preserve it for another generation.

The President's health care bill, which isn't something that might happen, it's something that's already the law of the land, takes $682 billion that was intended for Medicare beneficiaries and cuts it out—''saves it'' is the term of art they use around here, Mr. Speaker, as you well know—cuts it and saves it. What do they save it for? So they can bring it over here and spend it on the President's new health care plan for the rest of America; the nonseniors.

The program is already in trouble. Current law under the President's health care plan removes $682 billion designated for Medicare beneficiaries, takes it out, moves it to the rest of the population, again, exacerbating the challenge.

Future seniors, what are we going to do? Well, our plan, Mr. Speaker, coming out of the Budget Committee, coming here to the floor as passed by the House last year, is personalized Medicare not just for current seniors but for future seniors, Mr. Speaker. For folks like you and me and our generation, when we get to Medicare age, we would have choices. All Americans would have choices to choose the plan that works best for them.

Do you need a plan that covers prescription drugs? Choose that. Do you need a plan that is flexible so you can summer in Florida and winter in New Jersey? Though I suspect, Mr. Speaker, they'd probably be summering in New Jersey and wintering in Florida; but if they travel like that, maybe they need that plan. Maybe they still have young kids in the house and so need a plan that speaks to youngsters as well.

Folks could choose the plan, Mr. Speaker. Personalized health care, just like what we have here in Congress. Our plan, Mr. Speaker, means that wealthy families will get less and sick and low-income families will get more.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about shared sacrifice around here all the time, and I am not in favor of raising taxes on the American people. The American people can't afford it. The economy can't survive it. But what we can do is start giving away less from Washington, D.C.

And so what we say for future seniors—folks in my generation, your generation, Mr. Speaker—is that your support from the Medicare program is going to be less than low-income families. If you've done well in your life and you can afford to help with the cost of your Medicare, we're going to ask you to do that. We're going to means-test these things.

We're still going to be there for you; the Medicare program is still going to be there for you. The promises we made to you are still going to be kept. But in the renegotiation, we're going to confess what America already knows, which is that this program is going bankrupt and cannot be sustained, and that in order to sustain it, we're going to ask folks who can't afford it to pay more and recognize that folks who can't afford it will pay less. That's our program for the future to save and strengthen Medicare.

What does the President propose? And this is so important, Mr. Speaker. Can I go back to what my good friends at MSNBC said? This is how they described this plan that I'm just describing to you: In a risky election year move, Republicans offer Medicare alternatives.

The President, for future seniors, offers no serious plan to save Medicare. If I had the President's budget down here with me, Mr. Speaker, it would be about 12 inches tall. And it's a serious budget. I don't fault him for submitting the budget. I'm glad he did. It lays out his priorities and his strategy for saving America. But there's not one Medicare reform proposal in those 12 inches of budget. Not one. Not one.

Why?

Because traditional politicians, Mr. Speaker, think it's risky in an election year to propose things that shake up the status quo. Mr. Speaker, it ought to be risky in an election year to maintain the status quo when you know a program depended on by millions upon millions upon millions of seniors is going bankrupt today.

□ 1810

Not tomorrow, not 10 years from now. It's happening today. It's under way today. The time to stop it and save it is today. And I don't care if folks think it's scary to propose it; that's what we came here to do.

What happened, Mr. Speaker? What happened to folks that caused them to believe the reason they came to Congress is to get reelected? What happened? You didn't come here to get reelected. I didn't come here to get reelected. We came here to make a difference for families back home, we came here to draw a line in the sand

for saving America, and we came here to get the American Dream of a successful economy and freedom back on track. It ought to be risky to sit here and do nothing, Mr. Speaker. That ought to be the risky thing.

What has happened to this country that the risky thing for those who call themselves public servants is to do something instead of nothing? Because that's what the President proposes in his 10-year budget plan: nothing, nothing that does one thing, that takes one baby step forward toward saving Medicare. In the Budget Committee, we are proposing serious alternatives. Are they going to be frightening to folks in my generation? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. You and I have a long time until retirement. Despite all our gray hair, we've got a couple of decades left before we get there; and we've got time to prepare, and we will, and America will. But it is our responsibility to offer those alternatives. The President offers nothing, and Medicare goes bankrupt.

This chart says it all, Mr. Speaker. There is a path to prosperity for America that we are proposing here in this House, and there is the President's approach, and they could not be more different.

Our approach tells the American people the truth. There are a lot of political pundits out there that believe telling people the truth is a risky thing to do in an election year. Mr. Speaker, I tell you it's our solemn obligation. I tell you the oath we took requires us to tell folks the truth. I tell you the responsibility that our voters back home have entrusted us with requires us to be bold.

And if the consequence for trying to save the Medicare program—not just for this generation of seniors, but for a generation to come—if the consequence of that is that I frighten voters back home and I get defeated, so be it. So be it. No one sent us here to get reelected year after year. They sent us here to do the work that they asked us to do. They sent us here to follow through on the promises that we made during the last campaign. They sent us here to offer serious solutions to what we all know, Democrats and Republicans alike, are serious problems threatening the future of our Republic. And none is more serious when it comes to a social safety net here in this country than the giant fiscal crisis looming in Medicare.

I'll leave you with this, Mr. Speaker. We have the law of the land that's already on the books. It's in the President's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, that bill that raids Medicare in order to fund his other social priorities, that bill that hastens the demise of Medicare rather than preventing it. And in that they find 15 unelected bureaucrats that they say will not ration services; they'll just cut reimbursements for docs. And we have testimony after testimony after testimony after testimony that says, go ahead, if you think you need to cut docs, cut docs; but just know those docs will not be there for you when you need them to be because they can't—because they can't.

Do you really believe it, Mr. Speaker? Does anybody in America really believe it? Find your primary care doctor that lives down the street from you. You know him or her. They're in your Sunday school class and they coach your kids' soccer team. You know who they are. Do you really believe that they're the ones that are driving the Medicare program into bankruptcy? Do you really believe it? Or does the Washington establishment just use our docs, the healers in our community, those folks who are there for us when we need them the most? Does the Washington establishment just use those folks as the scapegoats for what is a much more serious, much more systemic underlying problem with the way that we finance federally funded health care systems in this country?

Competition has served this country well, Mr. Speaker. Individual responsibility has served this country well. Entrepreneurship and innovation have served this country well. And we have a choice now to embrace those functions that are so indicative of who we are as Americans and where we've come from, and use those tools to set Medicare on a new and sustainable course; or we can go back to business as usual, more pages of Federal regulation, more blaming other people for the problems we've created, more unelected boards of bureaucrats who make health care decisions for us instead of letting us make those decisions within our family.

The choice for me is clear. Mr. Speaker, you know these aren't things that we're just down here to talk about. You know these aren't just ideas that are being brainstormed. We have a real opportunity to make this change not 2 years from now, not after the next election, not 6 months from now, but tomorrow. Tomorrow we'll bring a rule to the floor of this House to allow for a consideration of a measure that will repeal IPAB once and for all. IPAB, this word that was not in our lexicon 2 years ago but now threatens to control the health care decisions of every senior in America.

With a successful vote tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, we can make that a thing of the past.

And with that, I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BACHUS (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of minor throat surgery.

Mr. MARINO (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today and the balance of the week on account of illness.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 6 o'clock and 16 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, March 21, 2012, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

5313. A letter from the Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter on the approved retirement of General Peter W. Chiarelli, United States Army, and his advancement to the grade of general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5314. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter on the approved retirement of Lieutenant General Edgar E. Stanton III, United States Army, and his advancement to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5315. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter on the approved retirement of Lieutenant General Jeffery A. Remington, United States Air Force, and his advancement on the retired list to the grade of lieutenant general; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5316. A letter from the Chief Counsel, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Final Flood Elevation Determinations [Docket ID: FEMA-2011-0002] received February 12, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5317. A letter from the Chief Counsel, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Final Flood Elevation Determinations [Docket ID: FEMA-2011-0002] received February 12, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5318. A letter from the Chief Counsel, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Suspension of Community Eligibility [Docket ID: FEMA-2012-0003] [Internal Agency Docket No.: FEMA-B-8217] received February 12, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5319. A letter from the Chief Counsel, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Final Flood Elevation Determinations [Docket ID: FEMA-2011-0002] received February 12, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5320. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Office of Electricity Diversity and Energy Reliability, Department of Energy, transmitting a report entitled ''2010 Smart Grid System Report''; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

5321. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting Annual Report to Congress on FDA Foreign Offices Provisions of the FDA Food Safety and Modernization Act, pursuant to Public Law 111-353, section 201(b); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

5322. A letter from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Department's final rule — Implementation of the Commercial Advertisement Loudness Mitigation (CALM) Act [MB Docket No.: 11-93] received March 1,