

[Mr. TOWNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE CHRISTOPHER REEVE HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. ESHOO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, today I introduced a bill in the House of Representatives, H.R. 3030, and it is entitled the Christopher Reeve Health Insurance Reform Act. I think that that name, rather than the number 3030, is a name that Americans know and respect. Christopher Reeve is an accomplished actor, someone that has appeared both on stage and screen in our Nation and, I believe, now is playing one of the great roles of his life as he advocates for the reforms that are necessary to our health system. And so I am very pleased that he would lend his name to this piece of legislation that seeks to reform a very, very important part of our health insurance system in our country.

□ 1930

What this bill would do would be to lift the lifetime cap limit that exists in health insurance policies today. People that own life insurance policies may not be, and most are not, aware of the fine print that exists within that policy.

Back in the 1970's, a \$1 million cap was placed on the usage or the ceiling for health insurance policies. One million dollars in 1970 was a lot of money. Today \$1 million, when a catastrophic incident happens in an individual's life, as it did and came into Christopher Reeves' life, \$1 million will be used up very, very quickly. So I think it is important that that standard lifetime cap on individual health insurance policies be raised. That is what this bill accomplishes.

Specifically, the legislation would prohibit insurers from placing limits on health insurance policies of less than \$10 million, so those that insure themselves, their policy would have a ceiling of not \$1 million, but \$10 million. I think this is an important and necessary reform measure that needs to be accomplished.

Last year, Madam Speaker, in our great Nation, 1,500 individuals exhausted their lifetime caps under their health insurance plans. Price Waterhouse estimates that between 1995 and the year 2000, an additional 10,000 Americans will reach their lifetime caps because they require continual medical care. This legislation will protect frequent users of health insurance from being stranded, because a \$10 million limit better reflects today's medical inflation.

The \$1 million cap, as I said, was adopted in the early 1970's. That reflected very much the times. But that

has never been adjusted with inflationary figures, and we know if there is anything that has inflated, that is the cost of health care. Lifting the lifetime caps. Madam Speaker, would also save the Federal Government money.

Price Waterhouse estimates that removing lifetime caps would save the Medicaid Program \$7 billion over 5 years. The American Academy of Actuaries estimates that lifting the lifetime caps will cause only a slight increase in premiums, about 1 percent to 2 percent, for employers. I think we can all agree that the \$1 million lifetime cap is something that has outlived itself. That is to say that it does not fit with the times. This bill, H.R. 3030, will accomplish that.

Let me close, Madam Speaker, by paying tribute to Christopher Reeves. As I said earlier, he is a recognized name by Americans because of how he distinguished himself on stage and screen. He has been a great advocate for the arts and the humanities, and now, today, he is moving into a new role, and that is being an advocate for the necessary, important reforms that we can bring to the health care system. His eloquent voice, I hope, will be matched by the eloquent act of this Congress.

That is what I urge my colleagues to support and to cosponsor, so we can correct this in the law, and recognize that Americans will be helped, and that with that, we help move America forward. I salute Christopher Reeves for his courage, and I hope Members of Congress will try to match what he has exhibited by supporting this legislation, and indeed, making it the law.

#### IT IS THE ECONOMY THAT IS A PRIORITY TO MOST AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Madam Speaker, after two Government shutdowns and a near default on our obligations, today this House has passed a short-term bill to raise the debt ceiling and to pass a continuing resolution for the work we have not done on four major appropriation bills, bills that contain important funding for domestic programs.

It is important that America pay its bills and meet its obligations. It is also important that we do all that we can to keep the Government running. We do not need a third Government shutdown, but we are now almost halfway through the fiscal year and we have done nothing to bring relief from the daily struggles to make ends meet for working families of America.

today, once again, the continuing resolution cuts education funding. We want to lead the world in education, but we do not want to provide the resources to do so. Because of what Congress did today, there will be fewer teachers, more crowded classrooms, less money for equipment and supplies,

and not as much help for those who need a healthy start or a head start.

The answer Congress has been giving to the working families who are working just as hard as ever before is that inflation is low, economic indicators are good, the stock market is rallying, and jobs are on the rise. All of that means nothing to the unemployed father or to the single mother or to the family of four with children in college, or to senior citizens who are now being told their lifetime work has no value.

The fact of the matter is that the quality of life for most Americans is not getting better. The fact of the matter is that most of our citizens have little confidence in the economy, and less confidence in government. The fact of the matter is that while Congress is fighting over balanced budgets and spending limits, the public is losing faith in the American dream. The reason the public is losing faith is because more people have less money, while less people have more money. The rich are getting richer and the working families are suffering more of the losses that we are suffering.

It is by now widely known that the income gap between those with a lot of money and those without much money is growing faster, and is very troubling. This Congress must not ignore these harsh realities, and heed the cries for help coming from all quarters of working America.

It should concern us that the industries that have led this Nation over the last 5 years in job production are temporary employment agencies. It should claim our immediate attention that bankruptcies are skyrocketing and bad credit is more and more common.

What can we do to restore faith in our economy and our Government and recapture the American dream? What can we do to bring some relief to our citizens? We can start by passing the modest minimum wage increase bill that has been languishing in Congress for months and months now. We can go further by treating ordinary citizens with respect and the care with which we treat corporate America. We can do it best by passing a fair tax reform legislation aimed at working Americans and not always only at wealthy Americans. We can move America forward by ensuring quality health care, especially for our seniors, by protecting our environment and preserving education.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, college graduates earn 24 percent more than workers with high school degrees. Why, then, are we cutting education and claiming these cuts are necessary for progress?

High-wage jobs are needed to close the income gap. High-wage jobs require more education, not less education. Why do we think China and Japan and other countries in Asia and other parts of the world are concentrating on sending their young people to America to get educated? They know what Congress seems to ignore, that the key to a better quality of life is through our schoolhouse doors.