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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Ms. PRYCE of Ohio].

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 20, 1997.

I hereby designate the Honorable DEBORAH PRYCE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] for 5 minutes.

BUDGET NEEDS TO REFLECT DEMOCRATIC PRIORITIES

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, today Congress will likely vote in favor of a historic balanced budget proposal and at the same time we as Democrats must not forget that this is merely an outline, a road map, that gives general spending guidelines. Many of the details still need to be worked out, and that is basically where my concern lies this morning.

While President Clinton and Republican leaders have articulated a general agreement on the budget, I am very

leery of the Republican leadership's true priorities. A recent memorandum dated May 16 from Speaker GINGRICH's office emphasizes that "there is not a limit on the size of the capital gains and estate tax relief" in the budget resolution. The Republican leadership has consistently made tax cuts for the wealthy a cornerstone on any budget agreement, and I believe that once we pass this resolution Republicans will attempt to do this again.

Democrats have consistently indicated support for a balanced budget agreement, but one that benefits the average American family, and we will be vigilant in protecting the family first priorities that are paramount in any budget agreement.

Now after Congress passes the budget resolution this week, the real process of determining fiscal priorities will begin. Democrats stand ready to roll up our sleeves and ensure that our priorities; that is, education, health care, and the environment, are worked into the final details. I mention this because last year the Republicans are on record for voting to cut education spending, gut Medicaid, and cripple environmental protection and enforcement, and this year it is really unknown what the Republican leadership will produce by way of details on many of these budget questions.

Madam Speaker, Democrats will fight to make sure that the Republicans stay true to their word in providing \$35 billion in tax cuts for education initiatives. These initiatives are but a small investment to ensure America's competitive edge into the future. At the same time, the additional moneys for increased Pell grants and HOPE scholarships will benefit those Americans who want to better themselves and remain productive citizens in our society.

The Democratic education proposal is an important part of this budget agreement, and it must remain intact

throughout the long process to ensure my support and the support of my Democratic colleagues.

In addition to the Democratic education initiatives, it is equally important that the money set-aside for children's health care coverage be used for just that, the expansion of children's health care coverage for approximately 10 million uninsured children.

Now Democrats again have worked hard to get children's health care moneys into the budget since last summer. In January of this year I authored a letter with 32 of my Democratic colleagues to President Clinton urging that funding for children's health care should be a cornerstone of any budget reconciliation. Today's budget agreement appears to include approximately \$16 billion to expand children's coverage, and Democrats remain committed to ensuring that these moneys truly benefit families with uninsured children.

We as Democrats have a task force on kids' health care, and we have worked out a proposal that we think can be used to implement this \$16 billion budget package. Our plan is to build on three prongs, strengthening the Medicaid Program for lower income children, providing matching grants to the States targeted to children and working families who are uninsured and require private, and the third point, I should say, is to require private insurance reforms to benefit children and families of all incomes.

We believe that with this pot of money in the budget, if we implement this 3-pronged approach, we can actually cover most, if not all, of the 10 million children that are now currently uninsured, and it is a very reasonable approach within the confines of the budget.

Again, as with the education investment, Democrats will find it difficult to support any budget that does not provide families with assistance to provide health care for their children and

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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