

provide continued entitlement to status under that subsection in the case of any alien petitioner who is subsequently naturalized as a United States citizen, if a visa is not immediately available to the beneficiary under subsection (a)(1)."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) takes effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and applies to petitions filed before, on, or after such date, without regard to when an alien petitioner was naturalized as a citizen of the United States.

REPUBLICANS IN CHARGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, returning today after a week-long Fourth of July district work period, I had an opportunity over that break to meet with so many Coloradans who celebrated the 223rd anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the launching of our great Nation. Many of those individuals look forward to the future of our country with great hope and optimism for some who are disturbed somewhat by the tenor of the political process here in Washington, D.C., and that was emphasized perhaps most dramatically just this morning before I hopped on the plane to come back to Washington.

I held a town meeting, as I do every Monday morning half the distance between Fort COLLINS and Loveland in my district. It allows constituents an opportunity to meet and discuss over breakfast the many issues facing us, but there was a woman who stood up and commented on a remark that she had seen, and I had seen it as well in the media, about a colleague of ours here in the House from the Democrat side of the aisle, said that there was a Member of the minority party, saw no reason for the Democrats to cooperate or to compromise or to work with the majority party in Congress; that it would be to their political advantage to see a Congress that did nothing.

Well, it is the kind of disturbing comment that I think strikes most Americans as unfortunate certainly, and they are hoping that there are those who are willing to stand up in spite of those kinds of sentiments and lead the country regardless.

The rantings of Democrats might lead one to believe Congress is doing nothing important, but important things are being accomplished despite Democrat opposition and liberal stonewalling.

As my colleagues know, 7 months having passed since the bizarre series of events and criminal denials leading to the second impeachment of a sitting President, America is still reeling from its bewildering constitutional exercise. Self-serving claims of our liberal counterparts to the contrary, Mr. Speaker, America does not suffer a do-nothing Congress.

Still, the several important Republican accomplishments seem to have

been lost on the morass of most pathetic adventures at the White House. Much of the distraction can clearly be blamed on the unfortunate slide further into the gutter of a darkening American political culture. Months of intense persistence and live impeachment news coverage coupled with round-the-clock, Hollywood-style political analysis by neophyte pundits has cast a warped and unhealthy light on this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, our democratic republic needs and craves active participation by citizens who earnestly care about our future, and now more than ever this pursuit must emanate from a genuine desire to secure a better America to ensure a stronger republic and honor those brave men and women who lived and died defending our great country.

What we saw in 1998, however, was a sort of Jerry Springer show meets C-Span where the American people were given front row seats and encouraged to cheer whenever one politician threw furniture at another. To be sure, certain politicians supplied ample fodder for these exhibitions, and many I confess contributed directly to the further denigration of American politics. But there were many more in Congress who dutifully fulfilled their constitutional responsibility and took very seriously their oaths to preserve and protect our republic. These are the same Members who, despite the frenzied pressure and ridicule of the Oval Office and the media, advanced the vitally important process of governing.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans can be proud. Our proposals to deliver a balanced budget are on schedule, including a much-needed replenishment of our national defense and programs. Republicans are also spearheading education initiatives to return autonomy to parents and States in managing their schools; and biggest of all, we have passed the balanced budget blueprint saving Social Security and Medicare while still providing much-needed tax relief for American families and their businesses.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the balanced budget amendment resolution, H.J. Res. 1, which I introduced on the first day of the 106th Congress, will constitutionally bind the government to spending no more than it collects in Federal revenues. Republicans will keep spending in line to allow us to begin paying down the massive debt accrued over 40 years of Democrat taxing and spending policies.

But despite the surreal Clintonesque atmosphere which perverted the current political order in Washington, Mr. Speaker, there remain committed Republicans, loyal hard-working Americans who are legitimately concerned for our country and who wish to see it move forward for the good of our children. Our challenge now is to lead the rest of America to abandon Jerry Springer politics in favor of the same common sense and divine providence upon which our Founders relied when

they launched the greatest republic in the history of human civilization.

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to express my support for a Patients' Bill of Rights act in the strongest and most personal terms. I have been in office less than 200 days, and I have grown tired of explaining to my constituents why this Congress does not want to extend basic rights and protections to patients in this country.

One of my constituents who suffers from ovarian cancer was refused surgery by her HMO on the grounds that the surgery was experimental, although this particular procedure had a greater success rate than other procedures approved by the HMO.

And on a more personal basis, my wife about 4 years ago was told by her physician she needed surgery. We scheduled an appointment with her physician, and he happened to be a high school classmate of mine and treated my wife for about 14 years. During the conference with her physician, I asked the doctor what needed to be done to accomplish the surgery, and he told me that it would be simple.

Number one, we just needed to schedule surgery, and number two, he would write a letter to her insurance company in California and get authorization for this surgery. Well, he wrote the letter, and 6 days later he got back a letter from the insurance company saying:

Dear Dr. Sullivan, before we approve this surgery and authorize payment for this surgery, we want you to do this test and this test and this test.

Dr. Sullivan was furious about this letter back from the insurance company because essentially it was his attitude that she was, my wife was his patient. Everything this insurance company knew about my wife's case was from medical records provided by Dr. Sullivan to this insurance company in California, and yet they were trying to tell him how to practice medicine in Kansas.

After about 5 months of wrangling back and forth, finally there was approval and authorization for this surgery, and it worked out fine. But the point is every time I tell this story back in my district, I see heads nod in the crowd because people have had a similar experience with an insurance company; and I think it is time in this country that we extend basic protections and rights to patients who need them to assure a balance between insurance companies and patients to make sure that we are talking about patients here and not just about profits.

Mr. Speaker, the Senate is debating managed care reform this week. Let us give this issue a fair hearing in the

House of Representatives and give my constituents the fairness they deserve.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2465, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

Mr. DREIER, (during the Special Order of Mr. PALLONE) from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106-227) on the resolution (H. Res. 242) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2465) making appropriations for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closure for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2466, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

Mr. DREIER, (during the Special Order of Mr. PALLONE) from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106-228) on the resolution (H. Res. 243) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2466) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this evening I have some of my colleagues, and I want to thank the previous speaker, my colleague from Kansas (Mr. MOORE), for talking about the Patients' Bill of Rights and the need for managed care reform.

The reason that we are here tonight to talk about the Patients' Bill of Rights and managed care reform primarily is because the Senate began debate today on the Patients' Bill of Rights, and I wanted to point out, Mr. Speaker, that while it is true that the debate has begun today in the other body, and we are certainly appreciative of that, it was only because Democrats over the last few weeks before the July 4 break insisted almost to the point of filibustering and saying that they would not continue the appropriations process in the Senate if there was not an opportunity to bring up the Patients' Bill of Rights and deal with the issue of HMO reform.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will suspend.

The gentleman will refrain from characterizing Senate actions.

The gentleman from New Jersey may continue.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, what I wanted to point out this evening, though, is that even though it is true that the HMO reform debate has begun, that we still have a problem in the sense that the Republican leadership is unwilling to support or, I think, ultimately even have considered particularly here in the House of Representatives the Patients' Bill of Rights, and I just wanted to start out this evening, if I could, by pointing out a few things that occurred and that were in the newspaper the last week or so on this issue, and then I want to yield to the two Congresswomen that are here tonight to join me.

One of the things that was in today's paper, in the New York Times, was an article by Robert Pear which is entitled, Managed Care Lobbyist Is Ready For The Debate; and essentially what this article says is that the HMO industry has commenced because of what is happening in the other body, that the HMO industry has commenced a huge lobbying effort not only by hiring lobbyists and paying them a lot of money to try to put an end to the Patients' Bill of Rights and not allow true HMO reform to pass, but also by spending millions of dollars on TV and in advertisements to try to kill any kind of HMO reform.

And just to give my colleagues an example of this, this is in today's New York Times. It says, it says specifically here, that the association and its business allies, and this is the HMO industry, have flooded the air waves and newspapers with advertisements opposing legislation to regulate HMOs through an umbrella group known as the Health Benefits Coalition.

They spent \$2 million on advertising last year and have already spent more than that this year with a new burst of advertising planned for this week while the other body debates this issue. The advertisements attack the main democratic bill by name, and of course it goes on to explain that HMOs are mostly profit making.

The other thing that particularly galled me was that when they talked about the lobbying effort here in the Congress, it says that what they are trying to essentially say is that it is not necessary to have new laws to regulate HMOs because the HMOs are being told now that they should voluntarily adopt a code of conduct that will provide for patients' protections.

I thought that was interesting given the fact that just in the last week since we had the July 4 break, we have seen articles in the same newspaper, in the New York Times, talking about the long delays by HMOs that were cited in a New York report. This came out in New York. It was put out by Mark Green, the city's public advocate, and it talks about how patients' rights are being ignored.

Again, if it is not necessary to pass HMO reform, why is it that we have a report showing that it is needed and in fact that patient protections are being ignored?

Also the previous Friday in the New York Times was an article that said that HMOs will raise Medicare premiums or trim benefits. So not only do we have the HMOs essentially saying that they are not going to provide the patient protections on a voluntary basis, but also they are talking about raising premiums, trimming benefits for their patients who are part of their plan.

□ 1930

So I would maintain, and we are going to talk about this for a long time tonight and other days, that in fact we do need legislation. We do need the Patient's Bill of Rights. I am pleased with the fact that the other body has at least started the debate on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I have two Members who are here tonight and who are joining me.

I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), who I know has been an advocate for the Patients' Bill of Rights and for HMO reform ever since she started here in the U.S. Congress.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and also for conducting this special order tonight, and for his hard work on this.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say that I rise in strong support of the Democratic Patients' Bill of Rights, which will provide fundamental measures to fix the current health insurance system, as well as provide patients with access to basic needed care.

Patients should not have to face numerous obstructions when they seek basic health care services. The Democratic Patients' Bill of Rights will allow patients to have more access to the care that they need. With the passage of this bill, individuals will have more access and the ability to receive emergency medical services, essential medication, as well as necessary services from specialists and OB-GYN care.

It also has provisions for women's and children's health benefits. Prescription drugs will be made more readily available to patients. Many patients cannot obtain certain prescription drugs because many HMOs refuse to pay for them. Unfortunately, patients do not get adequate medication needed to successfully treat their condition in these instances.

The Democratic Patients' Bill of Rights allows patients to obtain the needed medications, even if their HMO does not have them on their approved list. We should not have to gamble with patients' health. The quality of life should be a priority in all debates surrounding health care issues.

This bill will allow for more access and freedom for our patients and doctors when making decisions concerning an individual's health. Appropriate