

blocked the legislation for years now, has to recognize that the American people are rightly demanding that their elected leaders give them a fair chance at getting decent health care.

There are 47-some million Americans without health care. That is a tragedy and an embarrassment for this great Nation, but the fact the people who pay their premiums and expect to get care when they are ill, or their loved ones are in danger, end up fighting the bureaucracy of these large corporations with their hands tied behind them and virtually no rights, which is an outrage.

This House and the Senate need to come together and pass a real bill that gives citizens the right to protect themselves in these medical emergencies.

□

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Mr. ROMERO-BARCELO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELO. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning with a hopeful heart. We return to Congress at the dawn of the millennium, and we face many challenges and opportunities. I wish to remind our colleagues that during the last session, the House approved legislation that greatly impacts Americans and assures their access to health care, but today, 4 months after the Patients' Bill of Rights was approved, we are still waiting for action.

We cannot allow any more delays that place the health of Americans at risk. Millions of American families suffer from managed care decisions made by HMO bureaucrats that are based on profits and not medical need. We must return medical decisions back to where they belong, to doctors and patients.

I urge conferees to produce a strong bill that will help families and give patients the right to make health and life decisions together with their doctors and not subject to the decisions of insurance bureaucrats.

□

WELCOME BACK TO OUR GREAT CITY

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

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor to welcome back Members. Welcome back to the city that is still on the rise, about to report another surplus. Welcome back to the city that has been substantially helped by this Congress. Welcome back to a city whose improvements could be seen as one comes to the House this morning because the streets were, of course, cleared. The city now has the funds and the wherewithal to act like a city and do what cities do well.

I am very pleased that the Congress passed my \$5,000 home-buyer credit because that has helped us to get more

people in this city. We still need a couple hundred thousand more. And I am going to be coming to talk about that with bills this term, but I want to say for the people who live in this city that we are very pleased that Congress is back.

I want Members to know that if they have a problem, and inevitably even with a government in good working order there will be problems, I hope they will come to their Congresswoman while they are away from their districts, because that turns out to be me. I will be sending a letter to Members about how to do that and how they can maneuver their way through problems with the District government. Again, welcome home.

□

COMMUNICATION FROM RICHARD A. GEPHARDT, DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD) laid before the House the following communication from RICHARD A. GEPHARDT, Democratic Leader:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
OFFICE OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER,
Washington, DC, February 1, 2000.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to Section 602(b) of the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 (Public Law 106-120), I hereby appoint the following member to the National Commission for the Review of the National Reconnaissance Office:

Mr. Dicks, WA.

Yours very truly,

RICHARD A. GEPHARDT.

□

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion 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.

Any recorded votes on postponed questions will be taken up later.

□

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 409) honoring the contributions of Catholic schools.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 409

Whereas America's Catholic schools are internationally acclaimed for their academic excellence, but provide students more than a superior scholastic education;

Whereas Catholic schools ensure a broad, values-added education emphasizing the life-long development of moral, intellectual, physical, and social values in America's young people;

Whereas the total Catholic school student enrollment for the 1998-1999 academic year was 2,646,844, the total number of Catholic schools is 8,217, and the student-teacher ratio is less than 17 to 1;

Whereas Catholic schools provide more than \$17,200,000,000 a year in savings to the Nation based on the average public school per pupil cost;

Whereas Catholic schools teach a diverse group of students and over 25 percent of school children enrolled in Catholic schools are minorities;

Whereas the graduation rate of Catholic school students is 95 percent, only 3 percent of Catholic high school students drop out of school, and 83 percent of Catholic high school graduates go on to college;

Whereas Catholic schools produce students strongly dedicated to their faith, values, families, and communities by providing an intellectually stimulating environment rich in spiritual, character, and moral development; and

Whereas in the 1972 pastoral message concerning Catholic education, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops stated, "Education is one of the most important ways by which the Church fulfills its commitment to the dignity of the person and building of community. Community is central to education ministry, both as a necessary condition and an ardently desired goal. The educational efforts of the Church, therefore, must be directed to forming persons-in-community; for the education of the individual Christian is important not only to his solitary destiny, but also the destinies of the many communities in which he lives": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the goals of Catholic Schools Week, an event sponsored by the National Catholic Educational Association and the United States Catholic Conference and established to recognize the vital contributions of America's thousands of Catholic elementary and secondary schools; and

(2) congratulates Catholic schools, students, parents, and teachers across the Nation for their ongoing contributions to education, and for the key role they play in promoting and ensuring a brighter, stronger future for this Nation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER).

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

Mr. Speaker, America's Catholic schools are internationally acclaimed for their academic excellence. They also provide students more than a superior scholastic education. Catholic schools ensure a broad values-added education, emphasizing the life-long development of moral, intellectual, fiscal, and social values in America's young people. The total Catholic school student enrollment for 1998 and 1999 was 2,646,844. The total number of Catholic schools is 8,217, and the student/teacher ratio in those institutions is less than 17-to-1.

Catholic schools provide more than \$17 billion a year in savings to the Nation based on the average school per pupil cost.

Catholic schools teach a diverse group of students and over 25 percent of school children enrolled in Catholic schools are minority students. The graduation rate of Catholic schools is