

benefit. We will construct a fairer, consumer-oriented and better managed system for seniors to receive health care.

Mr. Speaker, a prescription drug benefit is the next logical step in the construction of an improved Medicare system for our seniors. Not only will we incorporate a prescription drug benefit, but we will work to ensure the solvency of the Medicare system for future generations.

I call on my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to come together in the spirit of bipartisanship, work together to pass meaningful reform to Medicare now, and to provide a prescription drug benefit for our seniors.

AMERICORP MUST BE PRESERVED

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

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, the President, in the State of the Union in 2002 vowed to increase opportunities in AmeriCorp, and he went all over the United States saying that he would increase AmeriCorp by 50 percent, from about 50,000 members to 75,000.

However, this program is being destroyed. It has not been funded, the GAO has caused problems, we have not funded the scholarship program, and, in fact, the President's request for fiscal year 2004 actually asked for \$40 million less in AmeriCorp grants than he requested in 2003.

In San Jose, California, AmeriCorp volunteers are helping young students with tutoring, recycling, doing volunteerism and really making our community better.

So I am here today to say the President did not tell the truth to the American people in the State of the Union. He lied to the American people around the country when he promised to expand this program.

Please, Mr. President, let us come forward—

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMONS). The gentlewoman is not in order. She must refrain from personal criticism of the President.

Ms. LOFGREN. I would hope the President would take steps to make sure that what he promised the American people actually comes true, instead of the sad state of deception that exists today.

SUPPORT HEALTH ACCESS AND FLEXIBILITY ACT

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about H.R. 2114, the Health Access and Flexibility Act.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, will increase access to consumer-based health cov-

erage for all Americans, regardless of income. Under H.R. 2114, the availability of Medical Savings Accounts will be greatly expanded and it will create similar types of accounts for low-income Americans.

Since the mid-1990s, Medical Savings Accounts have allowed their owners to purchase health services tax free by building funds in interest earning accounts. Medical Savings Accounts promote savings and direct health care purchasing and are designed to simplify the doctor-patient relationship.

As a physician, I know firsthand the difficulty that some patients have working through their insurance companies and what services are covered by their policies. With Medical Savings Accounts, patients can focus their attention on their medical care and they can discuss their needs with their doctors frankly and honestly, and they can proceed with appropriate treatment when medical care is necessary.

Unfortunately, these innovative savings tools are severely restricted and there have been caps placed on the number of the Medical Savings Accounts established in any given year.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ACT OF 2003

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am proud of President Bush for making positive change in our education system through the landmark No Child Left Behind legislation, which was championed by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), the chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the House.

To promote this Act, we need to help disadvantaged school districts in our country, which are struggling hard to compete for high quality teachers in the basic skills. That is why I have introduced the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act of 2003, which passed the Committee on Education and the Workforce last week.

This bill will attract highly qualified teachers to low income and rural areas by expanding the teacher loan forgiveness program from the current \$5,000 to a maximum of \$17,500 for teachers who commit to teaching math, science or special-ed in a disadvantaged district for 5 years. The goal is to ensure that America's children are prepared to succeed in a world based on science and technology.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring H.R. 438.

In conclusion, God bless our troops.

TRIBUTE TO BILL MAYS

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is not often that we come

to the floor to speak of a special person, and, when we do so, I hope that it is understood that whatever their contribution, they have had an impact on our lives.

I speak this morning about Bill Mays. Many of you would not be familiar with that name. Bill Mays was an employee of this House. In fact, he worked in the Rayburn Building, where many of us have our offices, and he served us in providing service through the elevator system.

Bill Mays was someone who we saw every day as we rushed to the floor of the House, a very generous and kind person, a very calm person, always with a smile on his face. Just a few months ago, he lost his wife after her long battle with cancer. We always heard of how they were working with each other to keep each other supported. And, just last week, not more than 3 months after her death, Bill Mays had a heart attack.

We want to pay tribute to Bill, because many times our good friends who work in this building go unnoticed. But we just want to simply say we appreciated you, Bill. Our sympathy to Annette, your daughter, and her family.

□ 1015

As I close on that note in thanking him, I would just simply say, Mr. Speaker, it is also time to tell the American people the truth about the weapons of mass destruction. So I will be filing legislation for an independent commission and a special prosecutor to be able to know what truth was known, what truth was said, and whether we as policymakers, who are obligated to the American people to be truthful as we take our oath of office, that we are always with the truth, to be able to tell the truth.

CONSULAR CARDS THREATEN HOMELAND SECURITY

(Mr. SMITH of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today the Subcommittee on Immigration will hold a hearing on consular identification cards such as those issued by Mexican consulates to illegal immigrants in the United States.

A number of cities and dozens of banks now recognize these cards for identification purposes. In several States, in fact, they can be used to obtain a driver's license.

The cards are not reliable, not secure, and make it easier for illegal immigrants to stay in the U.S. A person's identity is not verified and false identities are easy to obtain. To anyone worried about homeland security, these cards should be seen as a red alert.

The Treasury Department recently approved these consular identification cards for bank use, yet no major bank in Mexico accepts them. So we have U.S. banks relying on Mexican identification cards that even Mexico will not recognize.

Perhaps the Treasury Department did not hear that the President is concerned about homeland security. Treasury officials may want to call the White House.

SUPPORT OUR MILITARY FAMILIES

(Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice concern over the undue hardship that President Bush is placing on our military families.

At a time when our Nation is asking a tremendous amount from our armed services, the administration has proceeded to deliver blow after blow to our men and women in uniform.

The Bush tax cut failed to extend a child tax credit to nearly 200,000 low-income military personnel. And then, of course, \$200 million has been cut from programs providing assistance to public schools on military bases.

The Bush administration said they would Leave No Child Behind. Well, what is happening to the children of the brave troops who are in Iraq?

The latest tax cut also scrapped \$1.5 billion away from military housing. Furthermore, it cuts \$14.6 billion over 10 years from veterans benefits.

During the 2000 campaign, the President vowed to give our Armed Forces better pay, better treatment, and better training. Well, Mr. President, it is time to keep your promise.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMONS). The gentleman will state it.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN) called the President of the United States a liar. My question is, is it too late to ask that her words be taken down? This is inappropriate by our rules.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has already ruled on that matter. At the time the Chair ruled that the gentlewoman was out of order.

Mr. HAYES. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It bothers me. I appreciate the ruling.

AMERICA'S SENIOR CITIZENS DESERVE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT UNDER MEDICARE

(Mr. HAYES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of legislation that is vitally important to our Nation's seniors: a prescription drug benefit for Medicare.

We know that treating diseases with prescription medications can help re-

duce the chance of costly hospital stays and expensive medical procedures. I urge my colleagues to work together to ensure a fair and responsible Medicare plan that lowers the cost of prescription drugs now so that senior citizens can better afford the medicines they need to live healthier lives and to improve their quality of life.

No American should be forced to choose between food, shelter, or prescription drugs. Last August, I toured the eighth district of North Carolina with a petition gathering signatures of seniors who agreed that we need that prescription drug benefit now. At each stop, seniors told me of their disappointment of promises that were made, but not kept. The time is long overdue for us to make good on this promise.

Medicare is a program that has been helping millions of older Americans meet their health care needs since that first day back in 1965. We can and should strengthen Medicare to make it even better for our seniors. One critical way we can make this program better is by adding a prescription drug benefit.

Our seniors deserve no less.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 660, SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH FAIRNESS ACT OF 2003

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 283 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 283

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 660) to amend title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to improve access and choice for entrepreneurs with small businesses with respect to medical care for their employees. The bill shall be considered as read for amendment. The amendment recommended by the Committee on Education and the Workforce now printed in the bill shall be considered as adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, and on any further amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except—

(1) one hour of debate on the bill, as amended, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce;

(2) the further amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, if offered by Representative Kind of Wisconsin or his designee, which shall be in order without intervention of any point of order, shall be considered as read, and shall be separately debatable for one hour equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent; and

(3) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 283 is a rule that provides for the consideration of H.R. 660, the Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2003. The resolution makes in order a minority party substitute that provides ample opportunity to discuss this important legislation before us, while addressing certainly the concerns of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

The rule provides 1 hour of general debate, evenly divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

This is a bipartisan bill. In fact, the legislation has 162 cosponsors on a bipartisan basis, and many, many groups that are interested in this issue are supporting this legislation.

H.R. 660 was introduced by the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. FLETCHER). It has the strong support of the Speaker, of the Committee on Small Business chairman, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. MANZULLO), and the Subcommittee on Employer-Employee Relations chairman, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON).

Association Health Plans, or AHPs, allow access to needed health insurance for many who do not have health insurance. The House, I believe, Mr. Speaker, must act now to pass this long overdue legislation.

Really, the Nation is at a crossroads. We currently have over 40 million Americans without health insurance, approximately 60 percent of whom work or depend on small employers who often cannot afford these very important and needed benefits. This bill will help small business, in turn, help working families.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 660 will allow for small businesses across the country to band together through established and respected trade or professional organizations to lower health care costs. This same model already works for large companies. We believe that small businesses should also be allowed to benefit from it.

Estimates predict that anywhere from 350,000 to 8 million uninsured workers will receive health care benefits through these AHPs even at the lowest projection, and that means positive progress for many currently uninsured men and women.

Now, we may hear all sorts of arguments concerning, for example, state-by-state regulations. We have already, however, seen many large companies provide health insurance because they