

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

(Ms. ESHOO addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. WYNN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. STUPAK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. RUSH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. PASCRELL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. MARSHALL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### THE REPUBLICANS' MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROPOSAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for half the time until midnight as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, many of my Democratic colleagues took to the

well this evening to talk about their concerns over the Republican Medicare bill, the Republican Medicare prescription drug bill that we expect to come to the floor here in the House of Representatives tomorrow. But I have to start out this evening by pointing out unfortunately that we do not really know what bill is going to come up tomorrow. We are waiting. Many of us are actually waiting right now to see what the Committee on Rules will do. The Republican bill has not actually been filed yet, and the latest information is it may not be filed until 11 or 12 o'clock and Committee on Rules will then consider the bill an hour after that, which might be one or two o'clock in the morning, and at that time Members, particularly Democratic Members, would be asked to come, review the bill very quickly obviously, and suggest any amendments or changes they might have to the Republican bill.

And I would suggest that that is certainly not the way to operate, particularly on a bill that is so important. I think all of us agree that Medicare is one of the most important programs that the Federal Government has ever offered, and to think that most of us will come here tomorrow and will not have even had the opportunity to see the bill and that the Republicans in having this Committee on Rules meet late at night where they would consider amendments would do such so late when most Members will not even be able to offer an amendment, it is just really a travesty of the process; and I have to believe that it is intentional. I do not think there is any question about it. The last vote today in the House of Representatives was about 5 o'clock. Why could all this not begin during the day or just after the session ended? Why does it have to take place at 12 o'clock midnight or even later?

It puts a great deal of fear in me, and it is pretty obvious from looking at some of the proposals that have already been considered in the committee, both in the Committee on Energy and Commerce, where I serve, as well as in the Committee on Ways and Means, that what the Republicans have in mind essentially kills Medicare. And I know that is a very severe thing to say. Many of my colleagues have said that this evening, that the Republican Medicare prescription drug proposal actually kills or destroys Medicare, and one might say to oneself how could we make such a statement? What is the basis for our making that statement? And I would say that the real reason we say it is because if we look at the Republican bill here in the House, it essentially privatizes Medicare. What does that mean?

The Federal Government operates a Medicare program. It is a Federal program operated by the government. And what the Republicans are proposing in this bill is that rather than have the government run a health care program

for seniors and pay out the money for the program to the doctors and the hospitals, that rather they would give seniors a certain amount of money. We call it a voucher. And those seniors would instead under the Republican plan be expected to go out and purchase their health insurance privately just like somebody might who is younger.

The problem with that, though, is that historically when Medicare was started back in the 1960s under President Lyndon Johnson, the majority of seniors could not find health insurance. They were unable to buy health insurance because the way insurance works, it is like a pool, and people who are older tend to be frailer, tend to be sick or tend to have to go to the hospital more. Those are not the people that insurance companies want to sell a policy to because they cannot make any money. And most of the insurance companies have told us that effectively they are not going to sell those insurance policies because they still cannot make any money today.

Nothing has changed from the 1960s until this year. Seniors are still the most vulnerable and the sickest population, the population that has to go to the hospital and to the doctor most often. Why in the world would anybody want to sell an insurance policy to seniors or at least to a lot of seniors?

What we are seeing here is that the Republicans, maybe because of their ideology, maybe because of their being beholden to the insurance companies, whatever reason there is, they essentially want to set up a system whereby the traditional Medicare that we have, which is a government program that guarantees certain benefits, would now essentially be privatized and they would get a certain amount of money and hope that they could go out and buy health insurance in the private market. It is a very vicious, in my opinion, thing to do. It is a wrong thing to do because Medicare has been a very successful program.

If we look at Medicare at the time when Lyndon Johnson signed the first bill, the situation for America's seniors has just changed dramatically. Most seniors had no health insurance. Many of them could not afford any kind of significant health care. They had to go to a clinic or they had to go to charity care in order to pay for their health care, but all that has changed. Right now America's seniors have high-quality medical care, and they have protection from the devastating causes of illness because of this Federal program. And each of the 40 million Americans served by America today can attest to the program's stability, its affordability, and universal nature that has touched all seniors as well as disabled people alike. So why do the Republicans want to change that? What possible reason could they have to change it?

I would hope that the Republican majority would realize that if they do pass