

but who got injured in that process. Often, due to the emergency nature of the injury or illness, the Border Patrol does not have time to officially take the person into custody, and, more, than likely, they do not want to take that person into custody because they know there will be money involved that will be charged against the Border Patrol account. So we have built in an institutional mechanism not to take that undocumented person into custody.

Then they will drive the injured person to the hospital, or call for an ambulance, and the hospital and the ambulance service will provide the necessary care and the person may be released and sent on his way.

Now, what is wrong with this picture? One, the hospitals and the ambulance services are out every single penny that it costs to give that person medical care; and, two, the undocumented person is not released into anyone's custody and has successfully entered the country illegally, courtesy of the Border Patrol and the emergency room.

What a great country. Apparently the best way to come in illegally is to injure yourself in the process. You will get top quality medical care for free, and then you will be released out into the community.

Now, I know the Border Patrol is stretched to its limits. What is more, in emergency situations they do not have time to check someone's documentation and officially take them into custody. However, it seems like a very big security breach that would put such a huge burden on our health care system and then, on top of it, let that person into our country without documentation.

I intend to introduce a bill to try to take care of this problem. It is called the Pay Up Act, "pay up" meaning "pay for all your undocumented procedures."

This will ensure that the Federal Government reimburses the hospitals and other health care providers for the care that they provided for people who are brought in by the Border Patrol or other Federal agencies, and that they are then released into the custody of that Border Patrol person after the care has been given. This will allow both for the emergency care to be given in a timely manner and ensure that the health care providers are paid, and gives the Border Patrol time to do the procedures necessary to take that person into custody.

Of course, we must authorize and provide the necessary funds to make sure that the Border Patrol and other Federal agencies involved are reimbursed properly. So I provide in this bill double security; security for our hospitals financially, and security for our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill and to support our health care providers.

#### MAKING OUR HOMELAND SECURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, we know that September 11 was now almost 2 years ago, and that my country has a limited attention span. Even so, I cannot believe that 2 weeks after a bipartisan report told us that we are terribly unprepared for a bioterrorism attack, there have been no hearings.

Specifically, the report, compiled after interviews and assessments around this country, said that our first responders, the first line of defense and response in any kind of terrorist attack, is not even close to being prepared. Yet we have hardly heard a whimper up here, which makes me wonder if we have heard what the report said. So I want to use this time to just highlight a few things, that hopefully will finally get everyone's attention.

First, while there may be a few places that are ahead, on the average fire departments cannot communicate or protect their staff in the case of a WMD attack. Only 10 percent have the capability to respond to a building collapse. Neither are police departments prepared, and most cities do not have the means to identify a hazardous agent.

They are underfunded by almost \$100 million. But even if the money was there, it is not likely it would improve the situation, because the task force found that underlying all this, there is no preparedness, coordination or standards. Local jurisdictions have had to develop them on their own, so we probably have a zillion plans, uncoordinated and with no clear guidance and direction from the Department of Homeland Security. This has been a stated concern of many of us on the committee.

Also cited as a major obstacle is the finding that the appropriations process, and, I would add, the whole process, is too politicized. Then, when the money gets appropriated, the conflicting bureaucracies and the red tape, as well as probably some politics at other levels too, keep it from getting to the first responders where it is needed.

But I want to spend my remaining time on one of my greatest concerns, the lack of readiness of our public health system, also cited in the report, as well by many on the committee, time and time again.

Labs are not equipped and hospitals are not prepared to respond to the need for increased capacity, despite the fancy center at the Department of Health and Human Services. There is a severe shortage of trained personnel, a fact that is continuously being made worse by the deployment of many first responders to Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important report. If the people on the ground, the ones all of us will depend on in those critical first hours of an attack, do not have the tools, the training or the manpower required, we can all forget it.

There are some simple, but very well-researched and important recommendations, that need to be implemented. Just because they are what Democrats have been calling for from the outset should never get in the way of our protecting our American family from a future terrorist attack which everyone agrees will likely come.

All of us have the responsibility to make sure that every corner of this great country and all of the wonderful people who live here have a chance of making it through. Let the committee do its work, and let us all work together to make our homeland secure.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 40 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon today.

□ 1200

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY) at noon.

#### PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

God of revelation and Lord of salvation, throughout our sacred history You call people together to enhance life and guide people to organize themselves and help each other to build a future. Be with this Nation and gift its leaders with wisdom and prudence during this coming week.

Every community needs a common vision in order to live life to the fullest and grow in unity. May our common vision for what is best for this Nation and most fitting for this moment in world history arise from a renewed unity of mind and heart in this Nation and be brought to reality by faith, hard work, and a transformation of spirit.

As a living vision, may today's decisions and tomorrow's plans evolve gradually by constantly integrating new experiences and new knowledge with great traditions, respected history, and treasured values of the American people.

To you, O Lord, be the glory, power and honor now and forever. Amen.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.