

Mr. Speaker, I commend those in Congress that worked to pass this legislation in 1996, and I look forward to working with them to ensure that what we accomplished in 1996 is not undone. I urge my colleagues to build on the success of the past with a commitment to ensuring the future success of welfare reform.

### HIRE A VETERAN WEEK

SPEECH OF

### HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, July 24, 2006*

Mr. REYES. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 125, expressing Congressional support for "Hire-A-Veteran Week," and encouraging the President to issue a proclamation calling upon employers to increase employment of men and women who have served honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces.

As a U.S. Army veteran and a member of the House Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs Committees, I know of the challenges awaiting our servicemembers when transitioning from military service to the civilian workforce. While this resolution will not solve the problems of unemployment within the veterans community, it is a strong message that we as Members of Congress should send to anyone in a position to hire qualified veterans.

Having military veterans in both my El Paso, TX and Washington, DC offices, I know of the exceptional training the Armed Forces provides our servicemembers, and wholeheartedly encourage any employer to consider hiring those veterans who have served our country.

Madam Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in supporting our nation's veterans by voting in favor of H. Con. Res. 125.

### INTRODUCING THE AMERICARE HEALTH INSURANCE ACT OF 2006

### HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 25, 2006*

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the AmeriCare Health Insurance Act of 2006. I am joined by the AFL-CIO, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Nurses Association, the Center for Medicare Advocacy, Consumers' Union, Families USA, SEIU, the Universal Health Care Action Network, and the National Association of Community Health Centers in supporting this common sense solution to achieve universal health insurance coverage.

In my tenure in the House, I have been involved in many discussions about how to reform our health system. These debates tend to occur every 10 to 15 years when health costs rise to a level that attracts our attention. Unfortunately, the minor tweaks and threats of reform we have made in the past have not resulted in lasting change. As a result, we are spending more—and getting less—than any industrialized nation.

If history is any guide, we are nearing yet another health reform discussion in this coun-

try. This time, we need to get it right. To that end I offer AmeriCare—a practical proposal to ensure that everyone has affordable health insurance.

AmeriCare is based on the principles that the U.S. health system should cover everyone, be affordable, and be meaningful.

Eighty percent of the people who file for bankruptcy because of medical bills have health insurance, but their benefits do not meet their needs. Policies that are unaffordable, that discourage people from seeking care, or that do not cover necessary benefits are empty solutions.

AmeriCare builds on what works—both employer coverage and Medicare—in an effort to dramatically expand coverage with minimal disruption to the current system. It addresses the broader issues in our health system overall, and provides an important marker for a renewed discussion on health reform.

For the past four decades since it was enacted, the stability and affordability of Medicare have helped millions of seniors and people with disabilities live longer, healthier lives. Because of Medicare, families have been able to save for their children's education rather than having to pay for their parents' health care.

Since the program began, Medicare's per capita costs have grown at a slower rate than private health insurance or the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program.

Providers, too, have benefited from Medicare. Without Medicare as a consistent payer, providers would not be able to offer the top quality care they deliver today. Indeed, uncompensated care for people who are uninsured or underinsured is pushing some providers toward the breaking point. Meaningful coverage for all makes good business sense for providers.

AmeriCare also recognizes the important role that job-based benefits play in our current health system. Under AmeriCare, people would continue to obtain health coverage through their employer—as most of us currently do—or they would be covered under the new AmeriCare system. Expanding insurance coverage to all will end the cost shifting that results from the high number of uninsured we have today. This could reduce premiums for job-based insurance by as much as \$1,000 for family coverage, according to the Institute of Medicine.

Expanding coverage to all will also strengthen the economy and improve our competitiveness. General Motors recently admitted it spends more on health care than on steel; Starbucks spends more on health insurance than on coffee. The need to address health reform is more urgent than ever before.

AmeriCare is a sensible solution for our Nation's employers—many of whom are already meeting the challenge of providing coverage for their employees. I plan to reach out to the business community to begin a dialogue about how we might move forward with AmeriCare.

AmeriCare creates a new Title XXII in the Social Security Act. It uses Medicare's existing administrative infrastructure, but improves upon Medicare's benefits to address some of the current gaps in coverage, such as mental health parity, coverage for children, and family planning and pregnancy-related services for women. State Medicaid programs would remain responsible for long-term care, but AmeriCare would now cover low-income chil-

dren, women, and others who currently receive non-long term care services under Medicaid.

AmeriCare is financed through premiums, paid 20 percent by individuals and families and 80 percent by employers, general revenues, and state funds. People with incomes under 200 percent of poverty would be fully subsidized, and premiums and cost-sharing would be phased in for those with incomes between 200–300 percent of poverty.

There is also a limitation on out-of-pocket spending to ensure that no one spends a disproportionate share of their income on health care. Employers could continue to offer their own coverage, so long as it is equivalent to AmeriCare. Payment of premiums would be reconciled at the annual tax filing in April.

Everyone in the room should be aware that there is an effort underway to reform our health system, but not in the way we would like. Republicans have been pursuing stealth reform for the past decade in their dogged determination to dismantle the employer-based system and force everyone into high deductible health plans, regardless of whether they open or benefit from a Health Savings Account.

Their rhetoric makes it sound like you "own" your health care. But what they really mean is that you are on your own. It's not just that you have to fend for yourself when purchasing health care, it's that for most people—especially the currently uninsured—the Health Savings Account is purely theoretical. Employers don't have to contribute to these accounts, and most don't.

The Republican agenda expands the class of people who are underinsured, putting both patients and providers at greater risk. More and more doctors and hospitals are being forced to act as bill collectors rather than care providers, and patients are saddled with debt and even bankruptcy because their insurance benefits are inadequate. For example, many high deductible policies do not cover maternity benefits. The situation will only get worse if we continue to allow high-deductible health plans to take hold.

Without the security of a universal health plan that covers everyone, each of us is at risk. For years we have accepted that people fall through the cracks in our health system. No parent should ever have to deny their child a lifesaving treatment because they cannot afford the cost. No family should ever lose a parent because their condition was treated too late.

We need a strong alternative vision for health reform. That is why I am putting AmeriCare forward today. This proposal promotes shared risk and responsibility, not individual risk and greater fragmentation. AmeriCare offers an alternative vision that is simple and straightforward, fair and manageable.

Our Nation is at a crossroads. Our legacy should be a future where our children are not saddled with debt, where they do not fear financial ruin due to an illness. Whether we build a healthy future for our children or not depends upon the decisions we make today. True compassion means offering real solutions, not empty promises.

Working together, applying common sense approaches that build on what works, we can ensure that no-one risks the loss of insurance coverage. All we need is the will to do it.

As we edge closer to our next discussion on health reform, we need to ask, is medical care a civic and social right like police and fire services, education, and environmental protection?

Or is health care “you’re on your own?”

This decision must be made. I hope I can count on my colleagues and our endorsing organizations to advance a shared vision for health reform by adopting AmeriCare.

Attached is a short summary of AmeriCare. More can be found on my website at [www.house.gov/stark](http://www.house.gov/stark).

AMERICARE HEALTH CARE ACT OF 2006—BILL  
SUMMARY

Overview: The AmeriCare Health Care Act (“AmeriCare”) is a practical proposal to ensure that everyone has health coverage in our country. It builds on what works in today’s health care system to provide simple, affordable, reliable health insurance. People would continue to obtain health coverage through their employer or they would be covered under the new AmeriCare system, modeled on Medicare.

Using the administrative efficiencies within Medicare and building on the existing coverage people receive through their jobs today, we can create an affordable, efficient, and stable universal health care system in America—and guarantee access to medical innovation and the world’s most advanced providers and facilities.

Benefits: All residents of the U.S. and its territories are eligible to receive benefits through AmeriCare. The practical AmeriCare benefits package is tailored to meet the needs of working people and their families, including: preventive services; physician services; hospital services; maternity coverage; prescription medications; mental health services; affordable cost sharing and a realistic limit on out-of-pocket costs.

AmeriCare provides additional benefits for children under age 24 and people with modest income. Supplemental benefits could be offered by employers or purchased through private insurance companies. It also improves Medicare’s existing benefit structure to conform with AmeriCare, providing streamlined cost-sharing and lower drug prices—without a donut hole.

Financing: AmeriCare is financed through contributions from employers, individuals, and states, all of whom pay into our current health care system. Unlike today’s system, however, AmeriCare will save billions of dollars by utilizing Medicare’s highly efficient administrative infrastructure that operates on a 2% margin. Requiring the Secretary to negotiate with the pharmaceutical industry for reasonable prices and expanding the use of health information technology in the clinical setting will achieve additional savings. The efficiencies gained from these steps will keep AmeriCare’s premiums affordable.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. STEVE ISRAEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 25, 2006*

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, on July 19, 2006, I mistakenly voted “no” on rollcall No. 384. I intended to vote in support of Mr. WATT’s amendment to preserve the authority of the United States Supreme Court to hear or decide any question pertaining to the interpretation of, or the validity under the Constitution of, the Pledge of Allegiance, as defined in 4 U.S.C. section 4, or its recitation.

A TRIBUTE TO DEBORAH MARICA  
CLEMONTS

**HON. G. K. BUTTERFIELD**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 25, 2006*

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Deborah Marica Clemonts one of my most deserving constituents who is being honored as Small Business Owner of the Year by the Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Deborah Clemonts is a small business owner in Halifax County who owns a beauty shop, barber shop, restaurant and has held the food service contract for Halifax Community College and the local community Adult Day Care for the past 3 years. Many of the special events that I have held in my Weldon Congressional Office have been catered by Deborah so I know first hand of her impressive, conscientious, professional work.

With all of the activity associated with managing these businesses, Deborah still finds the time to dedicate to the youth of First Baptist Church in Weldon, North Carolina, where the dynamic Reverend Quientrell Burrell is the pastor. Deborah is responsible for all of the youth-related activities of the church which include the Youth Choir, Junior Usher Board and the First Baptist Church Praise Dancers. I have learned that any evening of the week you can see Deborah driving around in the First Baptist Church van picking up and dropping off children or taking them to the Pizza Hut treating them to a pizza before turning them back over to their parents. Deborah is compassionate about the community youth and is trying to do her part in assisting in their growth as grounded, productive citizens. Mr. Speaker, I have learned that the youth have a special affection for Deborah such that they often willingly confide in her and look to her for advice and counsel with many of the problems that they are forced to confront daily. Whenever there is an opportunity, Deborah hires some of the youth to assist her with restaurant-related activities and takes every opportunity to mentor them about work ethic, professionalism and the importance of putting their best foot forward.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Clemonts family well and I know that Deborah’s father, Reverend James Clemonts would be so proud of this honor bestowed upon her by the Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce. I know that none of what Deborah has accomplished was easy. But in spite of the many obstacles, Deborah pressed on and I wish her continued success. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to one of the pillars in the First Congressional District, Ms. Deborah Marica Clemonts.

HONORING FORMER MEMBER OF  
CONGRESS THOMAS J. MANTON

SPEECH OF

**HON. NITA M. LOWEY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, July 24, 2006*

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the legacy and accomplishments of our recently-passed colleague Thomas Manton.

Tom Manton’s life epitomized the American dream. Born to Irish immigrants in 1932, he worked to put himself through college and law school and eventually rose to become one of the most influential politicians in New York City.

After attending Catholic school in Queens and Brooklyn, Tom enlisted in the Marine Corps, serving from 1951 to 1953. He went on to graduate from St. Johns University in 1958 and earned his law degree there in 1962. In addition to his service defending our country in the armed forces, Tom put his life on the line protecting the citizens of New York in the police force from 1955 to 1960.

After serving on the New York City Council from 1970 to 1984, Tom was elected to Congress. He served proudly and responsibly for seven terms in the House of Representatives, during which he also became Chair of the Queens Democratic Party.

In his work with the Queens Democrats, he brought those of all different racial and ethnic backgrounds into the political fold. Although he followed the tradition of Irish Catholic influence in New York City politics, he recruited candidates of all ethnic backgrounds to truly represent the diversity that exists throughout Queens on all levels of government.

It is a testament to the respect Tom Manton earned and to the counsel he provided that during the 1992 Presidential campaign, then Governor Bill Clinton visited the Queens Democratic Party Headquarters in Forest Hills to speak with Tom. Additionally, Tom advised Mayor Michael Bloomberg during his initial city-wide campaign in 2001.

On a personal note, I will miss the plain-spoken style of Tom Manton. When I first came to Congress in 1989, Tom provided me with a bevy of candid advice. During our time in Congress together, I considered him a close advisor, was honored to call him my colleague, and more importantly, always valued our friendship.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in paying respect to the family of Thomas Manton and offering condolences to all those who have benefited from his service to our country.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. XAVIER BECERRA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 25, 2006*

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, July 24, 2006, I was unable to cast my floor vote on rollcall Nos. 394, 395 and 396. The votes I missed included motions to suspend the rules and pass the Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2005 (S. 1496), the National Heritage Areas Act of 2005 (S. 203) and a bill to establish a grant program whereby moneys collected from violations of the corporate average fuel economy program are used to expand infrastructure necessary to increase the availability of alternative fuels (H.R. 5534).

Had I been present for the votes, I would have voted “aye” on rollcall Nos. 394, 395 and 396.