

I did also take a trip just up the street to Bethesda, Maryland to meet with Dr. Anthony Fauci to talk with him about a vaccine development. There are some remarkable things that are going on as far as vaccine development.

I guess one of the important aspects of bird flu is we are going to develop more capacity for delivering more vaccine for just the regular flu as a consequence for the preparedness that is happening with getting ready for the possibility of a worldwide pandemic.

This may not be the one. Avian flu may sputter out and never be the pandemic that everyone fears. But the fact remains that almost for every century that anyone has kept track, about three pandemics per hundred years do occur. We did indeed have three during the last century, and even a relatively mild pandemic of the Hong Kong flu still claimed 50,000 lives in this country. So it is a matter of no small importance.

Additionally, we have got to be certain that, just like the nursing home in Louisiana that left their disaster preparedness plan on the shelf with the shrink wrap still on it, we have got to be certain that we take those plans down and we talk to our local first responders, our local health departments. And I had such a roundtable just last week in my district, very well received by the folks at the health department, by the administrators in all three hospitals in one of my counties. I wish we had a little more participation of the medical staff, but we did have some and I did at least receive an invitation to talk at one of their medical staff meetings.

But the key for us here in Congress is when faced with whether it be the avian flu, terrorist attack, another hurricane, we have got to be honest. No spin, no sugar-coating, no BS. And, above all, we have to communicate with our constituents and with our first responders back at home.

One other thing that I want to talk about as time runs short here is, and I mentioned this earlier, about a bill that is out there to reduce or restructure the number of mandates that are on health insurance. Again, Aetna Life and Casualty might look at 46 million uninsured individuals as potential market share if they only had a product that they could sell.

Now, in our Committee on Energy and Commerce we had a debate on a bill that would reduce significantly the number of State mandates on insurance policies in the individual market. This wasn't even discussed in the group health insurance market, but just the individual market. It was a pretty contentious debate and there wasn't a lot of agreement across both sides of the aisle, and that is unfortunate, because when the American people watch what this body does, they are really not interested in the tennis match or volleyball match that goes on from one side or the other. They want results.

They want more affordable health care, health insurance. They want Aetna Life and Casualty to be able to look at that 46 million uninsured as a potential market share.

Well, what if we could get together across the aisle and discuss what is that basic package of benefits that we would like to see available in a health insurance policy, one that could be sold on the Internet from State to State. It seems like an almost impossible task, or at least it seemed almost impossible that night when we were debating this bill in the Energy and Commerce Committee. But the fact is we have already done that work. I say "we." I wasn't here 30 or 40 years ago when the federally qualified health center statutes were first written. But in fact, in that statute in law is identified a basic package of benefits that has to be offered at every federally qualified health center.

Well, we have already agreed then in principle what that basic package of information is. Now, the information may be 30 or 40 years old, but perhaps we could sit down and decide which of those things we could eliminate because they are no longer necessary, which of those things we would have to add because we have learned some stuff since then, and then go to our private insurers and say, here is a basic package of benefits that, if you will abide by these rules and make certain people know what they are buying, that there is full disclosure about what is covered and what is not covered in these insurance policies, that you can then market this to the uninsured. And then give individuals who are unemployed a voucher or a pre-fundable tax credit to purchase that insurance. Or give that family that is of a low-wage earner, give them some additional health, buy down that premium.

These are the types of concepts that, really, the American people are anxious to see us work on, and I for one would really welcome the day that we could do that.

Just one last brief thing about the Medicare part D, the Medicare prescription drug program that actually started the first of this year. At the end of the enrollment period, well over 38 million people had prescription drug coverage under Medicare. This was the population, the Medicare population that was the largest population that didn't have access to a prescription drug plan if their employer or retiree insurance did not offer it.

This is a tremendous benefit. We will and do hear a lot of discussion about people who are caught in the so-called gap coverage. But remember, there are plans out there that if a person is willing to consider a generic compound, there are plenty of plans that cover in the gap; and in my home State of Texas, there was at least one insurance company that would cover both brand and generic in the gap.

So I would encourage people who have looked at the difficulty they are

having with the so-called donut hole, when they re-up on their insurance plan, their prescription drug plan in November in that open enrollment period, look at one of those plans that will provide for coverage in the gap.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CULBERSON (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today after 2:30 p.m. on account of illness.

Mr. KELLER (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of personal reasons.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BUTTERFIELD) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KIND, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SHERMAN, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. SOUDER) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, September 19 and 20.

Mr. WAMP, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and September 14.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 58 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, September 14, 2006, at 9 a.m.

#### EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

9321. A letter from the Executive Director, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Joint Final Rules: Application of the Definition of Narrow-Based Security Index to Debt Securities Indexes and Security Futures on Debt Securities [Release No. 34-54106; File No. S7-07-06] (RIN: 3235-AJ54) received August 9, 2006, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

9322. A letter from the Executive Director, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Foreign Futures and Options Transactions — received August 14, 2006, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.