Medicare Economic Index, but they're not, and we need to fix that. It's not easy to fix it. It's going to cost some money. The Congressional Budget Office puts a very big number up there. Deep down in my heart I don't believe it's a real number, but nevertheless, we do need to be sensitive to that fact and we do need to fix it.

I would encourage Members to look at H.R. 2585. It is a way to sanely repeal the sustainable growth rate. It doesn't do it next year, waits a couple of years to do it, but because of some adjustments to the baseline, physicians won't, in fact, take a cut for 2008 and 2009. We need to keep them involved. And then in 2010, the SGR is repealed, with savings that are going to occur over the next 2 years. And we know savings are going to occur in the Medicare program over the next 2 years because that's the history that we've seen in the last several years.

The trustees' report that came out just this past June had some good news and some bad news. The bad news was, we're still going broke; but the good news is we're going to go broke a year later than what we told you last year. The reason is because 600,000 hospital beds weren't filled in 2005 that they thought would be filled in 2005. And why weren't they filled? Because the doctors were doing a better job. They were keeping people out of the hospital. Maybe the prescription drug benefit was allowing them for more timely treatment of disease, to treat disease earlier. So we didn't push them on that health disease continuum in the arena of disease, we kept them on the side of health. Things that are done in ambulatory surgery centers that are billed to part B, the physicians' part of Medicare, are actually savings that accrue in part A. Let's take those savings, sequester them, wall them off, a lock box, like we used to talk about back in 2000. Remember that? Put those savings in a lock box and use them to offset the cost of repealing the SGR in 2010.

□ 2030

That is the type of innovative thinking that is going to be required to get us out of this conundrum. And why is it important? Again, Alan Greenspan said, ''What worries me more is not how you pay for it, but is there going to be anyone there at the bedside to provide the service?''

I don't want to make light of what is a very serious situation. Yeah, there will always be someone there at the bedside, but I don't know that you want to look up and find it is Dr. Nick who is delivering your care, Dr. Nick, the famous physician from Springfield, Somewhere, U.S.A. who can do any operation for $199.95. That may be the physician of the future. We don't want to leave that legacy for our children. We need to correct this situation now. We can do it in this Congress if we just have the political will to work together to get this done.

Now, my time is almost up. This discussion on health care is likely to consume the better part of the next 2 years of both dialogue here on the floor of the House, dialogue on the Presidential campaign trail, and indeed dialogue in the general public. The United States is, indeed, at a crossroads. It is incumbent on every one of us here who believes, who believes in the American system of providing health care, that we be educated and we stay involved and we be committed to being at the top of our game every single day, whether we agree on every principle or not. We have to be on the top of our game every single day.

This is one of those rare instances where it is necessary, certainly on my side, to be prepared to win the debate because we don't have the votes to win much of anything in subcommittee, committee or the House floor. But it is an important topic. It is one of that the American people believe that we should be involved in.

If we adhere to the principles that I have outlined here this evening, I think that ultimately we are going to post a win for the health of the American people and for generations yet to come. That is the central task in front of us.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. HODES) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be here tonight to talk about a number of issues that are of grave importance to this Congress and to the people of this country. I will be joined by some of my colleagues tonight who represent districts all over this country.

We are going to talk about a number of things tonight. We are going to talk about fiscal responsibility, which means money. It means we are going to talk a little bit about how in this Democratic majority Congress we have now taken a new responsible approach to spending the taxpayers' hard-earned tax dollars, because that is one of the main reasons that the taxpayers of this country sent a new Democratic majority to Congress, because they saw what had happened under previous Congresses. They saw that the Congress had engaged in borrow-and-spend policies that had left us with huge deficits, where before we had big surpluses, now we were running out of balance. And everybody knew that they couldn't run their businesses that way. They couldn't run their homes that way. And so they sent us to Congress to make a change about what we were going to do.

We are also going to move to talk about health care. We are going to talk about health care for kids because that is an issue that is very, very current. The President has vetoed a fiscally responsible, that means responsible with the money of the taxpayers, bill that would provide health care for the neediest kid in the country. He has vetoed that legislation. He said he doesn't want to have health care for our kids by vetoing that legislation.

We are going to be coming up for a vote in not too long about that. So we are going to talk about what it means for kids and for health care, and we are also going to sort of compare that to what is going on with the spending on the war in Iraq because the President and his administration have come and said they want to spend $191 billion more this year on the war in Iraq but they don't want to spend $35 billion to insure our kids.

I will just talk briefly now, and I have got a chart up, that shows you where we were when we started this Congress, what had happened with the mess. It is an example of what we were sent to fix, because this chart shows public borrowing by the administrations and the annual average of what we had to borrow to run our government. What you can see is where we came in to Congress. What we saw was, if you take a look down here in the lower corner, we started with President Carter. That little blue line shows that we were borrowing about $50 billion. Then you can see what happened under Presidents Reagan and Bush. Then you can see over here that under President Clinton we were able to handle the taxpayers' money in a responsible way. In fact, President Clinton, who was a Democrat, handled money so responsibly for the taxpayers of this country that when he left office in the year 2000 we were looking at budget surpluses over the next 10 years in the trillions of dollars. But when the Republicans took control, when President Bush came in, in 2000, he turned that upside down and topsy-turvy, and what we were left with coming into this Congress was the fact that President Bush was borrowing about $300 billion during his first 6 years. He had turned surpluses upside down into huge deficits that left us in the hole as far as the eye could see.

That is what we came in with. We came in with that, and we had to restore fiscal responsibility. Now, ''fiscal'' is a big word. It just means being responsible with the hard-earned money that the taxpayers of this country send to Washington so that an effective government honors local control but is able to get the projects done and run the programs that the people of this country expect. They expect us to be stewards of the public trust. By that, I mean they expect us to be honest about how we are spending their money. They expect us to use their money wisely. They expect us, just like they do at home and in their businesses, to balance things out and not spend more than we take in. And they want to make sure that we are spending their money wisely.

So what we did in very short order, and then I will throw it over to my good colleague from Wisconsin, was the first thing we did when we came into Congress was we established, reestablished, what are called pay-as-you-go rules. It basically means if you are going to increase spending over here, in order to keep the deficit from getting worse and making sure we are headed towards balance, we have to decrease something over here. So we put in these pay-as-you-go rules. Every bill that is covered by those rules has been a fiscally responsible thing to do. It means that we are using the taxpayers' money wisely as we head towards a balanced budget. Because the other thing we did was in the Democratic budget proposal, we set this country on a new track to be responsible about the taxpayers' money. We said we are going to establish a balanced budget by the year 2012. We are going to do that with the pay-as-you-go rules and making sure that we are restraining Federal spending, that even as we shift priorities towards health care for kids, health care for our veterans, benefits for our wounded warriors, with the greatest rise in spending in veterans' benefits in the 77 years of the Veterans Administration, even while we are spending money on competitiveness, we are headed towards a balanced budget with pay-as-you-go rules because we understand that it is not our money. It is the taxpayers' money. Our job is to spend it wisely and to spend it in a balanced way. We also got rid of something called ''fast tracking'' in order to make sure that our spending was responsible.

Now, with that as a framework, one of the things we are still facing are huge costs for the war in Iraq. As I said earlier on, the President and the administration has now come and said they want $191 billion more this year for the war in Iraq. We have had a bill that would help insure our kids that would cost about $35 billion. So really, we are faced with a choice in this country. Are we, and are my colleagues across the aisle who are supporting the President, going to decide that it is not worth the investment to invest $35 billion over 5 years in health care for kids, but it is worth the money to invest $191 billion in the war in Iraq? Is that the kind of choice we, as a country, are going to make? Is that something that is sound policy? Does it make sense for our kids? Does it make sense for health care? Does it make sense for the taxpayers? Does it make sense for the country? Those are the kinds of questions that we have to answer.

Now, I would like to turn it over to my good friend from Wisconsin, Dr. STEVE KAGEN, a man who understands what health care is about, who has been in the trenches helping kids get well, helping families stay healthy. He understands things about children's health care. I am going to turn it over to you, my good friend from Wisconsin, Dr. STEVE KAGEN.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you for yielding, Congressman HODES. It is an extreme pleasure for me to be with you this evening and with our Speaker BRALEY from Iowa. The American people have been posed a number of questions by you this evening. I think the most important question was posed to our generation many years ago by Bobby Kennedy on the evening of the assassination of Martin Luther King when he asked the country this question: What kind of Nation are we? And which direction shall we turn?

We were confronted several days ago with a Presidential veto of children's health care called SCHIP. The State Children Health Insurance Plan, SCHIP, saves lives. SCHIP saves lives for children and for pregnant mothers. We have to do all we can to guarantee access to affordable care for everyone in our country. But first and foremost, what kind of Nation are we if we don't care for our children?

I have here a placard that gives us the SCHIP facts. People may have heard a number of things in the last several days about SCHIP, but these are the facts. SCHIP is a State-run private program. The States get grant money from the Federal Government to run their own programs. It focuses on the poorest working families in America, families that earn just above what would qualify for welfare or Medicaid health care coverage. It also provides $3.50 cost per child per day. Now, if you want to compare what you can do with your hard-earned tax dollars, you can invest $3.50 of your hard-earned tax money into the health care for children who need it most, and on 1 day we are currently spending $330 million to $400 million a day in the sands of Iraq.

Now, where I come from in northeast Wisconsin people are asking me this question: ''Doc, how can I get my country back? I want my country back.'' We need to create jobs here in America, not overseas. SCHIP fact Number 4, who is eligible? The poorest working people in America. People that are three times the Federal poverty rate, which is just under $58,000, $59,000 per year. Also, who is it going to cover? It is going to cover 10 million, 10.8 million, we hope, children who need access to their pediatricians, children who require their family practitioner to guide them and make them healthy.

If our children are not healthy, they can't learn in school. If they are unable to learn in school and progress with their education, what kind of future do they have? Our children, after all, are our own future. Our future depends on the good health of our children.

So these are the SCHIP facts that we are going to be taking about in the next several days. You will see more and more Congressmen and Congresswomen talking about health care for children. But I haven't seen in my medical practice over 30 years a single child in my examination room without a mother, a father, or a caregiver.

So we have to begin to broaden this discussion not just about children's health care, but access to health care for every citizen everywhere in these United States. So SCHIP is a proven program. I hold it against no one that it started out as a Republican program. It is a Republican-inspired private program administered by States with moneys appropriated through the Federal Government. It focuses on working families, the poorest among us, and focuses on putting children first.

It only involves U.S. citizens. If you are not a citizen, you are not a legal resident, you are not going to get these benefits that come with it. It is a private, private-run plan, private doctors, private health care plans, and children up to 19 years of age can be covered.

This is a program that works for kids. In my view, in the view of most people living throughout the United States and especially northeast Wisconsin, the President was being morally unresponsible. It is morally unacceptable to say ''no'' to our children.

I yield back my time for a few moments, to my good colleague from New Hampshire as we talk more about health care and its relationship to Iraq. Because the way I look at it, Iraq is a health care issue. They are using real bullets, real people are being killed, about 700,000 Iraqi civilians are dead, and they are not coming back. Thousands of our soldiers have given everything, have given their lives as they have served with courage, with honor and with incredible skill. We have done our job in Iraq. We have taken down Saddam. We have done everything the Iraqi Parliament needed us to do for them to help them in their religious civil war.

□ 2045

Mr. HODES. Well, it is really an important point to underscore, and I appreciate your saying it, which we all agree, that there is nobody on whatever side of the debate you're in about Iraq who doesn't understand that our troops have served with extraordinary bravery and courage. They have performed. It is really up to the policymakers. It is up to the administration, who makes the policy. It is up to Congress, who makes the policy, the Senate. It is up to the policymakers, who send our military to do the job to make the right judgments and right decisions about when they should be sent, under what conditions they ought to be sent, and what their mission is.

Mr. Speaker, one of the real sad failings is that the mission here has changed so many times, nobody knows what it is anymore. Seventy percent of the American people now understand that whatever it is that we have tried to do in Iraq hasn't worked. The Iraqi Government has not stood up. We have spent lives, our brave troops have given their lives, thousands and thousands of wounded, at a huge cost, because so far we have spent about half a trillion dollars in direct costs for the war in Iraq.

Half a trillion dollars. That has got so many zeroes that I really have trouble figuring out and contemplating wrapping my brain around what half a trillion dollars is. That is $500 billion.

That is an awful lot of money to experience what we have experienced in Iraq, because it's clear now that the war hasn't made us safer and more secure. It's clear that, unfortunately, al Qaeda and the Taliban are still strong and resurgent in the Pakistan-Afghanistan area, and still threatening to us. The region is more unstable.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear we need a new course. But we don't often talk about the costs, because it is not just the $500 billion or half a trillion dollars we have spent in direct costs in Iraq, but we are facing $1 trillion-plus in total costs for the care of all those who have served in Iraq, who are going to come home and need care on an ongoing basis as we go forward. And the costs in lost productivity to society are huge.

When you think about the comparison of the costs between what we have spent in Iraq and what we could spend that money on in terms of providing health care for our kids, as this Democratic Congress in a bipartisan way has proposed, because the SCHIP bill that we sent to the President was a bipartisan bill, we passed a bill in the House and then we sent it over to the Senate. They compromised. We worked with the Senate and we compromised on the bill. The Senate had some different ideas. They sort of reduced things in some areas and sent it back to us. We then sent this compromise bill to the President.

But even though it was a compromise bill, and even though it was supported by 45 Republicans in the House and numbers of Senators on the Republican side in the Senate, and I can talk about some of what they said later on, the President decided that $35 billion was too much to spend on our kids. He decided that $35 billion over 5 years for kids' health care wasn't worth the investment; that $35 billion for American kids who needed health care, American kids at the lowest income levels, struggling families trying to make ends meet, was not something that the President of the United States was willing to invest our money in. This, despite the fact that in previous speeches he had promised that he was going to cover millions of new kids for health care. But for some reason, when the Democratic-controlled Congress sent it to the President, he decided that it was too much. He also decided that he could ask us for $191 billion more for a failed policy in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, here is how it breaks down. Here are the facts. Here are the figures. They are shown on this chart that I have.

What this shows is that 37 days in Iraq would pay for 10 million children to have health care every year. It shows 37 days in Iraq, 10 million kids with health care. One day in Iraq is costing us $330 million. That money, $330 million in the SCHIP program, would cover more than 270,000 kids. Just stop for a minute and think about those numbers.

Dr. KAGEN, I don't know about you, but where I come from, $330 million is a significant amount of money. That is what we are spending every day in Iraq. It would cover more than a quarter of a million kids for a year of health care. When you get into a week in Iraq, we are spending $2.3 billion, that is billion dollars, $2.3 billion every week, and that amount of money, if we spent it on SCHIP, would cover 1,891,000 kids. That is a huge number of kids, for 1 week of Iraq war spending. And it is hard to say we are spending our money wisely in Iraq.

Let me just tell you a little bit about a hearing that I was on. I have the privilege of sitting on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and one of the issues we took up in the past couple of weeks was the issue of the cost of corruption in Iraq.

Now, the Middle East has always been a difficult place when it comes to how governments spend money, how they account or don't account to their citizens, what kind of accounting practices they have, and the issue of corruption has traditionally been one that throughout the Middle East has been a significant problem. So you would think, for instance, that maybe in Iraq, now that we are there in such strength, we have 160,000 of our troops fighting there, we have support personnel, we have a huge number of contractors, another bit of a problem that we ran into. But with all these contractors and all these people and all the American money and all the oversight and all the planning, you would think that maybe after 5 years of the Iraq occupation we would be in a position to do something about the corruption in Iraq, to make sure that money was being spent wisely, because if you are going to spend $2.3 billion in one week in Iraq, which otherwise would cover almost 2 million kids for health care for 1 year, you want to make sure that it is going to be spent well. You would think you would want to make sure.

So at this oversight hearing we had on October 4, we had the chief judge from Iraq who was dealing with corruption and accountability under the new al Maliki government that we have supported come to our hearing. By the way, he is no longer in Iraq, because he fears for his life. So not only is there a problem on the money side, but there is a problem when people try to do something about it. He now fears for his life, so he is over in this country, and he came to testify. His name is Radhi Hamza al Radhi, former head of the Iraqi Commission on Public Integrity.

He took the oath, and testified as follows. He told us that the corruption within the Iraqi Government has cost the Iraqi people $18 billion. So instead of its original purpose, infrastructure, new hospitals, electricity, things that the people need, he told us the money is now being used to finance terrorist militias in Iraq.

Also of note with this government of al Maliki that we are supporting, what the judge said was, when we asked him, why are you here and what happened when you tried to do something about the corruption? What he said was, well, I tried to investigate many cases of corruption within the government of Iraq and with Iraqi officials. It was my job. I was set up. I was supposed to coordinate with the Americans who were overseeing the corruption and coordinate with the Iraqis who were overseeing the corruption. My job was to investigate corruption.

But he ran into a bit of a roadblock. You know what he told us the roadblock was? The roadblock, for example, was Prime Minister Maliki himself, who blocked his attempts to uncover the truth and to deal with corruption. Why did he do it? He did it because the people that the judge was investigating were Shia, so the Prime Minister didn't want those people investigated, or because they were related in some way to the Prime Minister, so those people couldn't be investigated.

So with the money we have poured into Iraq, the money we have poured in for reconstruction and other things, the Iraqi Government is missing $18 billion worth in corruption. That is what we are dealing with in Iraq. That is where our money is going. And instead of covering our kids for health care, we want to spend another $191 billion more in Iraq.

Dr. KAGEN?

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you for yielding. One of the nice things about being in the majority is we have an opportunity now to have oversight, to ask questions seeking the truth about where our hard-earned tax dollars are being spent.

I have always believed and I believe everyone in Wisconsin believes that your family values are reflected in how and where you spend your money. The values of this administration, of this President, will be reflected in how and where he is attempting to direct us to spend our hard-earned dollars.

We have heard from you, Congressman HODES, the voice of the administrator from the new Iraq, the freely elected government of Iraq. I would like to share with you now some of the words of people from my district who have concerns about money and their health and where we are going.

Albert from Crivitz writes, ''Without a job that pays a fair wage, I won't have money to pay for health care, gas, a war, Social Security or anything else.''

Albert in Crivitz understands. He has to balance his checkbook every month and he can't spend money that he doesn't have.

Lloyd in Wisconsin, who I spoke with this evening before coming down to the floor, he is from Kaukauna, said, ''Do

something to help your senior citizens for health care and drug programs. Thank you.''

When I spoke with him this evening, he went beyond his postcard to me to explain that he has two daughters who are retarded who are dependent upon him. And even though he is trying to retire, he is a retired paper worker in the paper industry and his wife has diabetes, he is having a hard time making it. And without the role of government, what kind of future would he and his daughters have?

From Waupaca, Dianne writes to me, ''We know numerous people over 50 who have lost their jobs so companies can cut health care and payroll costs, and cannot find any other work and no longer have health insurance.'' No health insurance for 4 years.

In speaking with Dianne's husband this evening, Ken, he explained that his son is shipping out on the 26th of this month to Iraq as a member of the Guard. He is a gunner on a Humvee. He is a college graduate, and he is making a sacrifice.

No one in this administration has asked the American people to sacrifice for this poor judgment of entering into the Iraqi civil war. But who is he really asking to pay the price? He is asking us to forgo health care for the poorest among us and for our Nation's children who are near poverty. That is a poor choice. It is poor judgment that got us into Iraq. But we have to stand up in this House, in this, the People's House, expressing citizens' points of view. It is their money, and that is who we represent.

From Appleton, Wisconsin, my hometown, Leroy and Lois: ''We are retired, over 80. We need drugs for high cholesterol, but the cost for this drug is extremely high. Also it would be great to have some alternative auto fuel.''

These people in Appleton really get it. And they are listening tonight. I called them to tune in on C–SPAN, because we are expressing their views here this evening.

From Fremont, Wisconsin, Larry writes, ''My wife and I spend over $900 a month for drugs now. When we hit the doughnut hole, that is when we really will pay.'' In speaking with him tonight, his wife is in the doughnut hole. That is over a $2,400 hole, and their copay is $600 for their medications.

We have some values that we have to reflect here in the People's House. Where are we going to spend the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars—overseas, or here at home?

□ 2100

Bonnie from Biron, Wisconsin, writes, ''We need to start worrying about the people of U.S.A. before we worry about others in the world.''

Robert from Green Bay, ''Iraq, bringing them home. If taxpayers can't get the same health insurance as Congress, at least get drug costs down to the VA amounts.''

My friend, people in Wisconsin understand the deal they are being handed. My honorable friend, Congressman HODES, you point to a chart that shows $330 million a day being spent in Iraq. I can build 10 brand new hospitals in Wisconsin with that amount of money. Each and every day, 10 hospitals in your State, Texas, California, Missouri, everywhere in these United States and that money is gone and it is not coming back.

Mr. HODES. As I hear the stories that you are telling me from the folks back home in your district in Wisconsin, it literally breaks my heart to think, as a Member of Congress, we are having to fight, we are having to fight hard for the people of this country to override a Presidential veto which says we are going to spend money on a failed war instead of spending money on health care for our people. Health care for our people. We would rather spend the money over there on something that isn't working. But questioning whether or not we are being wise about making a basic investment in the health care for kids with a program that has worked well to help lift kids out of poverty and into health, because when kids are healthy, they can learn. When the kids are learning and productive, their families are working better. Those are the kinds of things that the American people expect us to be spending our money on.

They are asking those questions. Why are we spending so much money in the sands of Iraq and with so little to show for it and why aren't we investing for kids at home. And they may not even know where all that money is going because the numbers are so big; $191 billion, what does that mean to anybody? When I carry around a $10 bill in my wallet, I can handle those sums. But $191 billion, what is it going for? What is it paying for? What kind of value are the taxpayers getting for what they are spending?

Mr. KAGEN. That brings up a good point that Linda DePere writes, ''I do not want the government involved in health care. The government mismanages money and thinks funds are endless.''

We agree with Linda, but we also believe in good government. And I believe good government can make a real difference in people's lives. That's why I left my medical practice to come to Congress to speak up for people who can't pay for their prescriptions.

Mr. HODES. It is a fair thing for the American people to expect competence from their government. They expect us to manage their money well, to manage it wisely, to be smart and be prudent and to be basically competent. That is one of the things that an effective government does.

When you think about some of the ways that our government has unfortunately mismanaged the effort in Iraq, the imagination cannot even keep up with what kinds of things have gone on.

Here are a couple of things. We know that the Bush administration has tragically mismanaged the war. The money we have spent on contracting has just been like throwing it out the window because we have had contracts upon contracts and subcontracts, nobody knows where the money has gone. Somebody is making a lot of money in Iraq. It was a free-for-all from the beginning with no-bid contracts, contractors piled on top of each other, and millions and billions of dollars.

We heard in one of our hearings in the Oversight Committee how we shipped $12 billion in cash over to Iraq during the early days of the occupation. The money was just given away to the ministries in Iraq and spent without any kind of accountability. And there have been how many prosecutions for war profiteering? Very few.

Luckily, our Congress in the past few days has enacted the War Profiteering Act, and we hope that will mean some real accountability. But there are billions unaccounted for. We have spent more than $50 billion on U.S. contractors for relief and reconstruction activities in Iraq alone; yet we heard in our hearings how these contractors who were being paid millions and billions of dollars weren't getting the jobs done. Things were left unfinished. The money was being wasted, and with all that, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction had a report recently. He said that the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, that was the government that we set up under Mr. Bremer, who is a good friend of the President, we set up this Coalition Provisional Authority. He said, I am the ruler of everything, I'm running the show. He ran the show. They can't account for $8.8 billion. I will say it again: They can't account for $8.8 billion.

If you look at what that involves, that is about the money to insure over 8 million kids under SCHIP, $8.8 billion. That is about the equivalent that it means. Gone, unaccounted for, can't figure it out. That is not competent management.

Take the issue of Blackwater that we have dealt with in hearings the other day. We found out that this company, Blackwater, which is providing security in Iraq and which now is under question for a terrible incident in which many Iraq civilians seem to have been gunned down, it is now being investigated by the FBI. Well, Blackwater is charging the government $1,222 a day for the services of a private military contractor. Each person they have got, $1,222 a day. That is $445,000 a year for each of these security guards, and that is over six times what we pay an equivalent U.S. soldier.

When we heard that during the hearing, we sat there stunned. We scratched our heads. We brought in the State Department and asked them what they knew about it. They couldn't give us any good answers. They were being

guarded by these guys at these exorbitant costs, but they were not willing to talk to us. They weren't able to talk to us and couldn't give us any answers. We wanted to know why shouldn't we have U.S. soldiers perform these duties at a much lower cost.

Now, one of the things that we expect from our government is competent management. We certainly haven't gotten it in this effort in Iraq, and we want to make sure that our kids are covered. We have incompetent management in Iraq, or are we going to cover our kids. Those are the kinds of choices that we are facing. They are pretty basic choices.

Mr. KAGEN. Being a songwriter and a singer yourself, I understand, you remember the song, ''There's a Hole in the Bucket.'' Well, when we came to Congress, we discovered there is a hole in the bucket. We feel, and I will just speak on behalf of myself, I feel just as frustrated as everyone back home that change can't happen fast enough, that we can't plug the leaks as fast as humanly possible.

We have not got the ability. I wasn't elected President; I was elected to be one of the 435 Members of Congress who express the people's view. We are not the administrators. Our job is to do oversight, to legislate, and to fund those things and place our values on the table and put our money where we believe the people best want it spent.

And people watching have to ask themselves: Whose side are we on? Are we on the side of large insurance companies? Are we on the side of no-bid contractors?

I am a Democrat. I am not on their side. I don't sit in the boardrooms. I sit and stand with you on the House floor speaking their voice.

All these issues come together. You cannot solve our situation in Iraq and health care and education and our environment and the safety and security of this Nation without talking about how we are going to spend our hard-earned money. It always requires money, and that's obvious. It is simple. Money is a problem solver. If you have a problem, you throw money at it and the problem should go away. Well, we are throwing money into Iraq and the problem isn't going away.

Here are the words from Tom and Sue from New London: ''Number one, 51 million people without health care is a disgrace. Number two, the war in Iraq is like Vietnam all over. Number three, outsourcing is unacceptable and morally wrong.'' Tom and Sue from New London understand. There is a connection between outsourcing by hiring people offshore, lower wages, lower tax base that we don't have the money to solve our problems here at home.

Vicki from Green Bay writes, ''Better medical care for poor seniors.''

Well, SCHIP is not focused at seniors. It is focused first at our children who are most at risk, those with lower-income families. Those are the people I think we have to focus on first, and never think for a moment we are going to neglect our seniors, our military veterans and active military people who have served and put their lives on the line. They covered our back. It is time we cover theirs as well.

This is Kathleen from DePere: ''It is time for all Americans to have the same health care benefits as their representatives in Washington.''

Well, Kathleen, you don't want my coverage because I respectfully declined the health care benefits here until everyone in my district and the State and the country is offered the same cafeteria menu of choices. I felt it was wrong.

Deb from Little Chute in my district. ''I want to see lower drug prices for everyone, not just seniors.''

People back home get it, Congressman HODES. It is not just about kids, but we have to start somewhere. If we can't stand up and say—what kind of Nation are we, that we would turn our back on those most in need, children from hardworking families, what kind of Nation are we? It is morally unacceptable for the President to have vetoed this bill. This bill is paid for, and it is paid for in a responsible manner. It is a good deal for the American taxpayer. It is a great deal for our future to invest in our children's care.

Mr. HODES. It is extraordinary to stand on the floor of the House of Representatives and have the privilege of representing hardworking families in this country who get it. I believe the people of this country know in their hearts that our kids are important. The kids are not Democrats or Republicans; they are American kids. That is why the SCHIP bill is a bill about American kids. It is not a partisan bill. In fact, it had enormous bipartisan support. That's why 45 Members of the House of Representatives who are Republicans supported the bill. That's why it was supported in the Senate by so many Republican Senators.

Some of the things that were said by Republicans about the SCHIP children's health care bill which our President has now vetoed and which we are trying to override so we can bring health care to the most needy American kids, so we can make the investment that the American people understand is the moral thing to do, the smart thing to do with money, the smart thing to do for our future, they understand our kids are our future. Here is what some Republicans have said about that bill.

Representative REHBERG from Montana said: ''I think it is a sensible, reasonable compromise.'' Sounds right to me. He said that on September 25.

Representative THOMAS PETRI, a Republican from Wisconsin, said: ''A lot of hard work has been put into this bill, including the successful efforts of Senators ORRIN HATCH of Utah and CHUCK GRASSLEY of Iowa, both good Republicans and conservatives. So,'' he said, ''I am comfortable that this bill is the right compromise, that it will provide much-needed health insurance for the Nation's low-income children, and do it at a reasonable cost.'' He said that in the Northwestern in Wisconsin, a paper, on September 25 of 2007, this year.

Representative WAYNE GILCHREST, a Republican from Maryland, says, ''This is a compromise version of the bill which has the support of a broad coalition of groups. It focuses on the lowest-income kids, and fixes a lot of problems with the current programs.''

Now, these aren't the words of Democrats. These aren't the words of people who some folks might even dismiss as liberals. You know, when you use the word ''liberals,'' just trying to spend people's money, they say.

□ 2115

These are the words of my Republican colleagues who sit here day after day and have come together in a bipartisan coalition, in a bipartisan way, as good Americans to send the President a reasonable compromise that represents the best thinking, the best work that we could produce to cover our kids. Because the children's health care bill that we sent the President is not only good health care for kids, it's good health care, period. And it's done in a responsible way because what we did was we said we'll spend $35 billion over 5 years, we'll fix some of the problems with the current program, we'll not only insure the 6 million kids who are now the beneficiaries of this SCHIP program, but we'll expand it to about 3.8, almost 4 million more kids, but we're going to pay for every penny of that investment. How are we going to pay for every penny of that investment? We're going to frankly ask smokers to pay some more than they're paying now and use that money to pay for our kids.

So there's a trade. We have health care for kids and sound health policy because when we have smokers, we've got secondhand smoke, we've got huge rates of disease. So we're going to be sound fiscally. That means spending the taxpayers' money wisely. We're not going to spend new dollars. We're going to take from over here and pay for our kids over here.

So that's what we proposed, and as I said, all these Republicans, good, good Americans, and our colleagues here decided that it was worth it on a bipartisan basis, and here's what the President proposed. Here was the President's approach to what he wanted to do for America's kids.

Under the President's budget, 840,000 of our kids will lose their SCHIP coverage. Eight hundred forty thousand kids under the President's proposal will lose their health care. That's what he wants to do, and what we proposed, in a bipartisan way, in this Congress, one of the stunning achievements of the 110th Congress was doing what the American people asked us to do, because one of the things I heard when I came to Congress was we want to see

you folks get past the bickering. We want to see you folks get past all that gridlock in Congress. We want to see Republicans and Democrats come together, come together and put the interests of Americans first.

And so on this bill, the kids' health bill, that's exactly what happened. Republicans and Democrats came together, sent it to the President, and said, Mr. President, this stunning example of bipartisan cooperation is ready for your signature, pick up the pen and help America's kids, Mr. President.

And what the President did and I personally in my heart of hearts find it not just disappointing but disgraceful, that what he did was he vetoed that bill. And now we're faced with trying to bring some of our Republican colleagues along to help override that veto so our kids, our poorest kids can have health insurance.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you for yielding. One of the lessons I learned when I entered the world of politics and politicians was that it's politicians that determine who will live and who will die. It was, after all, politicians that took us to war based on lies and deceptions, and it's politicians today who are preventing my patients, my constituents and those who are most in need from having access to their health care that they require to survive. It's politicians that are very important.

So our politicians I believe on every level, whether you're a mayor, an alderman, a county board person, a Governor, a President, our elected leaders must now, more than ever, have good judgment, and good judgment will yield good results.

Now, this bill isn't just paid for with SCHIP. It saves money. Instead of a low-income family taking their children with a strep throat to the emergency room, they will get to go to a doctor, and you know, I can share with you a scientific fact you already know, but sometimes people who point out the obvious are called geniuses. You know, a cataract never had a name on it like Republican or Democrat. Strep throat never had a name like Independent or Progressive or Republican. Human disease has no political affiliation. I have not asked my patients what political party they're in before we decide what's best for them. The motto is, the thematic idea is, do what is best for your patients if you're a physician.

Here in Congress we have to have that same mantra, that same idea: do what is best for our constituents. That's our duty. That's our job, but we have to have good judgment.

Now, the other thing I've discovered here, when I served in the Veterans Administration hospitals as a physician during my training days, we had a slogan that said, hey, wait a minute, if it makes sense, don't do it; it's the military. If you served in the Marines or the Army, you might have that same idea, wait a minute, if it makes sense, what are we doing it for?

But we have to now make sense of our judgments, especially with health care for our children. They are the ones most at risk. Early in life, the early development of the human brain, the first 5 years of development are so critical to the future health and psychology of that person. We have to invest in our children's health care. SCHIP is not perfect but it is the best way forward. It just makes too much common sense for many people.

I'm hoping that tonight people watching throughout America will understand, yeah, it does matter who my politician is, who my congressperson is. They should call and write their congressman and congresswoman today. Don't wait till tomorrow. This is far too important.

This is a matter literally of life and death. It's not just your pocketbook. We're talking about your neighbors, the people that live just down the street that don't have access to care that they require.

We can change it. I believe in good government. I know you do as well. I know people listening want good government. This is their opportunity to participate. We have shared their stories here tonight. It's their story, and it's their lives that we're attempting to improve. Their quality of life is on the line on the 18th of October.

This President has failed to listen to ordinary people, people from my district who are asking for access to their doctor, who are asking him to take a new and different direction away from Iraq and back after Osama bin Laden and his followers.

The President, who I believe is a good man, has poor judgment on this one, is listening to some people that are giving him bad advice. We'd like to work with the President.

The third lesson I've learned: One congressperson can't make a tremendous change, but they don't have to give up trying. What really matters here in our government is who's in the White House. I'm convinced, now more than ever, with this recent battle over health care for children that makes sense, that's paid for, that saves money, saves tax dollars, if we can't win over this President and the Republican Party on this argument, they don't deserve to be in the White House for a generation. Their judgment is ill, spoken like a physician, and no joke meant.

I cannot tell you how hard I took it when the President said ''no'' to our children, to our Nation's children most in need. It's the most unkind act, other than taking us to war based on poor judgment and deception.

Mr. HODES. Well, I hear you loud and clear, and I think the American people do, also.

You know, there's often a mistrust of politicians, and you and I came to Congress not from lives as professional politicians. You and I came to Congress because we saw trouble in our country. We saw priorities that weren't being handled right. We saw policies that weren't working for hardworking American people. We saw a country we loved where the Constitution was treated as a nuisance, where the American people weren't told the truth, where the real needs of hardworking folks in our districts, in our home States, the needs for health care, for good schools, for good jobs, for rational trade policies, for an end to wars that didn't work weren't being answered by the politicians when we ran for office.

You were a doctor. I practiced law for years. I was never in the State legislature. I don't think you were either. We came here to do the most good for most of the people all of the time.

And on this bill in particular, it is such a shame that it has become any kind of political football. We didn't make it that way. What we did on this bill was we reached across the aisle and we said to our Republican colleagues, come on, this is for America; we can at least agree on this, that we're going to get past the gridlock, we're going to help kids because that's what Americans are about.

We're good, decent people who understand that our kids are our future, and whatever political party we're in, our kids are our future. We love them and we want to help them. They shouldn't be sick. The sight of one sick child who otherwise could have been helped with the SCHIP bill, who goes ill, who lies there sick because his family or her family can't afford to take her to the doctor because this President has decided that a war in Iraq is worth spending $191 billion on but our kids aren't worth $35 billion over 5 years is something that I think you and I have a hard time understanding. It has a direct impact.

And for us as politicians here in Washington, sitting in the House of Representatives, it's a great privilege, great honor, great obligation which we take seriously, but ultimately, the way change happens in this country is at the grassroots. It's people around America, and there are probably a lot of folks who are listening to us tonight because this goes out all over the country, and what I'm begging the people of this country to do, what I'm asking is that it's up to them, Mr. Speaker. It's up to the people in this country to say to the President, to say to their representatives, whether they're Republicans or Democrats, who haven't voted for the SCHIP bill and who have got to vote to override this veto, it's up to the people of this country to step up, step forward, use e-mail, use mail, use the telephones. Don't let this go.

We need the people of this country to step up and speak to their representatives and say this veto must not stand. It's not right for America. It's not who we are. It's not the moral thing. It's not the right thing to do monetarily. It's not the right thing for our kids, to send a message loud and clear to the

President of the United States that says we're not going to stand down with you, we're going to stand up for our kids.

Because if we don't do it, if the people of this country don't do it, if the House of Representatives, if the Congress won't stand up for kids, we know the President won't, who will? We have the opportunity in the next week or so to come to a vote, and I think it's going to come up to the floor of this House on Monday next week. Maybe I'm off on my date. It will be the 18th of October. There's going to be a vote right here on this floor where you and I are standing of whether or not we are going to override the President's veto, and I want my colleagues and especially those who we need on the other side of the aisle who are thinking about whether or not to support the President or support the kids to hear from the people of this country, because I'm betting, as sure as I'm standing here representing the good people of New Hampshire, I'm betting the people of this country want the President and the Congress to stand up for kids, not to stand down with the discredited President.

That's what I'm betting. That's where I am putting my money. I'm putting my money on the kids, and I'm putting my money on the people of the United States of America. What do you think?

Mr. KAGEN. I appreciate your sentiment, your energy, and I agree with everything that you have been saying, and I would ask another question of the American people, not just what kind of Nation are we, but this essential question that you will recognize. If not now, when? And if not you, then who? This moment does matter.

I am so grateful for our leadership in giving us this opportunity this week to have an ongoing conversation with constituents and voters and parents and children all across the country. We need to have a discussion about what kind of Nation we are and in which direction we're going to turn, shall we invest in the health of our children, those who are most in need, or shall we be unkind and immoral and turn away from them? I think most people would agree with us, that it's a great idea to be healthy and especially to invest in the health of our children.

□ 2130

In the State of Wisconsin, the SCHIP program under BadgerCare, what we call BadgerCare, 16,527 children are covered. We can enhance with this bill up to 37,000 additional children who have access to health care. My friends, if not now, when? And if not you, then who? You must contact your representative to make sure that he or she is speaking the way you want them to speak.

We have been listening to you all throughout our election and all throughout our careers, we will continue. Because a politician is someone who is looking forward to their next election. We are statesmen looking out for our next generation.

Mr. HODES. You know, in my home State, the bill would preserve care for 11,000-plus children, and we could add 8,000 children with our bill. I think, as we have talked tonight with each other and with the American people about what this means for our children, it is clear, certainly, that you and I are here listening to the American people, trying to do the best we can for hard-working families and our kids.

There is nothing as simple. It's a pretty simple proposition we face. Are we going to stand up for our kids, or stand down with a discredited President, and we both said that we need the American people to speak loud and clear, because we are two voices among many. But the American people can speak on this issue with a solid unified voice, send a message to Congress, send a message to the President, that we will stand up together for our kids. It's the least we can do. It's the best we can do. Together, we can make a difference for the kids of this country.

Mr. KAGEN. By working together, we will.

Mr. HODES. Thank you for having a great evening and a great chance to talk together on this important issue.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CUMMINGS (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today after 5 p.m.

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 Ms. LEE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

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

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. LEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HINCHEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. NADLER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PAYNE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LOEBSACK, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. ELLISON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. SOLIS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HARE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KAGEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. COHEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GRIJALVA, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCGOVERN, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

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

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, October 17.

Mr. KIRK, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at his own request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DOGGETT, for 5 minutes, today.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Ms. Lorraine C. Miller, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 1124. An act to extend the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Friday, October 12, 2007, at 11 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

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

3674. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Mexican Fruit Fly; Removal of Quarantined Area [Docket No. APHIS-2007-0051-3] received September 25, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

3675. A letter from the Assistant to the Board, Department of the Treasury, transmitting the Department's final rule — Expanded Examination Cycle for Certain Small Insured Depository Institutions and U.S. Branches and Agencies of Foreign Banks [Docket ID OCC-2007-00014] (RIN: 1557-AD02) received September 25, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

3676. A letter from the Assistant Secretary For Export Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting the Department's final rule — Implementation of the Undertanding Reached at the June 2007 Australia Group (AG) Plenary Meeting; Addition to the List of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convetion (CWC) [Docket No. 070705267-7492-01] (RIN: 0694-AE08) received September 17, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3677. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Use of Campaign Funds for Donations to Non-Federal Candidates and Any Other Lawful Purpose Other Than Personal Use [Notice 2007-18] received September 25, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on House Administration.

3678. A letter from the Director, Reg. Management, Office of Regulation Policy and Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final