

greatly benefit prospective college students of all ages from across the country.

The Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act will transform the way student loan programs operate by boosting Federal loan rates across the board, including a \$40 billion increase in Pell Grant scholarship programs. It will keep interest rates low and make loan application forms simpler to understand and complete, doing away with the cumbersome paperwork that now makes applying for aid a daunting task.

I have 14 colleges and universities in my district. In many cases, these institutions are the main economic engine for the towns and cities in which they are located. This piece of legislation will benefit all of them as more students can go to college and come to these great towns that provide an economic boost for the surrounding regions.

This legislation will also have a positive impact on our economy's sustainability, as it will save taxpayers \$87 billion over 10 years by switching to the cheaper Direct Loan Program.

I think this piece of legislation is a win-win.

OCCUPIED TERRITORY

(Mr. GOHMERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOHMERT. President Obama has indicated before that, basically, Israel needs to not be occupying land that was acquired during war. Yesterday, to the U.N. he said that a big part of the goal is this: a viable, independent Palestinian state with contiguous territory that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and realizes the potential of the Palestinian people. Well, he has also indicated this Nation, the United States, will not be hypocritical any longer around the world.

Terrible news this is for California—all of California, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, most of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming, because it means you're about to be given back to Mexico, territory that we acquired in 1848 as a result of a war.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 766 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 766

Resolved, That it shall be in order at any time through the legislative day of September 24, 2009, for the Speaker to entertain motions that the house suspend the rules relating to the bill (H.R. 3631) to amend title XVIII to provide for the application of a consistent Medicare part B premium for all Medicare beneficiaries in a budget neutral manner for 2010.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. MATSUI. For the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART). All time yielded during the consideration of the rule is for debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. MATSUI. I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials into the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. MATSUI. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this rule provides for consideration of H.R. 3631, the Medicare Premium Fairness Act, under suspension of the rules. It allows this body to consider time-sensitive legislation under an expedited process to shield millions of Medicare beneficiaries from harmful premium increases for the coming year.

Due to the struggles facing our economy today, many seniors will not receive Social Security COLAs this year, even though the Medicare part B premiums will still rise. The Medicare Premium Fairness Act addresses this problem by protecting Medicare beneficiaries from bearing the burden of increased premiums because of an economic downturn largely outside of their control. And it does so without adding to the deficit.

Without today's bill, seniors who are new to the Medicare program will see their monthly premiums jump dramatically. Other part B recipients will shoulder an unfairly large share of cost increases because of the way current law requires part B to be funded. Cash-strapped States will be forced to bear the burden of higher Medicare costs for dual-eligible beneficiaries.

For these reasons, I believe my colleagues will agree with me that inaction is not an option here today. As our country begins to climb back out of one of the largest recessions in recent memory, now is the worst possible moment to saddle our seniors with increased premiums.

Many respected outside groups agree with this statement and have endorsed the Medicare Premium Fairness Act. AARP, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, the Center for Medicare Advocacy, and the Alliance for Retired Americans have all endorsed H.R. 3631.

These groups understand that we're living through a time when rising costs have threatened the health care people in this country have and deserve. This is true for Medicare beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike.

For this reason, making health care more affordable for all Americans is our top priority. And protecting and strengthening Medicare is an essential

part of this vision. I urge my colleagues to support today's rule and the underlying bill so that beneficiaries can continue to see their doctors; so that they can continue to afford their prescriptions, especially medications; so that they can continue to have money to spend and cycle back through our recovering economy.

By acting quickly and decisively on today's bill, we underscore our commitment to preserve Medicare for millions of people who have earned the security it represents and who count on the stability and the dignity it provides. In doing so, we will keep our collective promise to stand with America's seniors as they age and to ensure they have the health care they need to live long and fruitful lives.

We must never forget that Medicare is an essential part of our country's social contract. It guarantees that America's seniors will not be forced to fend for themselves when the economy momentarily turns sour or when they get sick or as they age. This is the living legacy of the Medicare program, and it is a legacy we build upon today.

But we do not have much time to act, Mr. Speaker. We must pass this legislation before October 1. This is so that the Social Security Administration can program updated premiums into a system in time to ensure that Medicare premium increases do not hit seniors in their pocketbooks and in their doctors' offices. Speed and bipartisan cooperation are of essence if we are to avoid this problem.

The suspension authority this rule provides will allow the House to move quickly and decisively to move this fix over to the Senate. The sooner we have this bill on the President's desk, the better off millions of Medicare beneficiaries will be. I urge my colleagues to recognize that passing this bill quickly is in the best interest of our constituents, of the Medicare program, and of our country.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. I'd like to thank my friend, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI) for the time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

House Resolution 766 provides that it will be in order at any time on the legislative day of today to consider H.R. 3631, the Medicare Premium Fairness Act. That underlying legislation would freeze the Medicare part B premium for 2010 at the 2009 rate for beneficiaries who, under current law, will see a premium increase, along with an expected freeze in the Social Security cost-of-living adjustment, COLA, for 2010 and 2011. Both of those combined would leave seniors with less income next year if Congress does not act. So I support underlying legislation.

Although I support the underlying legislation that is being brought to the floor under this rule, I have reservations with the process the majority is proposing today. And I'm not the only one who has reservations with that process.