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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GARAMENDI).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 7, 2009.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN GARAMENDI to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, as we listen to the debate in the other body, there are two missing factors that would create the momentum for reform and revitalization of our health care. There is a stunning disconnect between the two sides on the nature of the problem and the impact of government's involvement in health care.

Opponents argue, with apparent sincerity, that America has the best health care in the world and it would

be "destroyed by Federal involvement undermining the quality of existing care", while supposed cost increases would make health care unaffordable for individuals purchasing insurance and ultimately for the taxpayer as well.

What opponents describe could not be more different from what my research, my constituents and my personal experience tells me. For many in Congress, there is no sense of urgency to compel action because Members of Congress are perhaps the most health care secure people in the world and all can enjoy the finest health coverage in the world.

No one in Congress is likely to go bankrupt this year, or the next, from their preexisting conditions. It doesn't matter because all are eligible for participation in the Federal employees health benefits program. They are able to access the House physician. When they travel overseas, they have military doctors. About a quarter of the House and Senate are eligible for Medicare and for veterans' programs. No wonder there's no sense of urgency, and Senators and Congresspeople can be sincere in their conviction that America has the best health care in the world.

The disconnect is my colleagues' failure to recognize the government's role in all that they enjoy. There is a simple solution to break this deadlock—support my bill to end government involvement in the health care of Members of Congress. I propose, until comprehensive health care reform is signed by the President, there be no Federal investment in health insurance for Members of Congress. No Federal involvement in negotiating their Federal Employees Health Benefits. They would not be eligible to be participating in the dreaded government single payer program—Medicare. There would be no veterans, no House physicians, no military doctors. Those, after

all, are socialized medicine. Members of Congress would be in exactly the same position as over 200 million Americans who are currently underinsured, uninsured, or are relying on the good intentions of a spouse's employer, or their ability to negotiate insurance on the private market, contending with their preexisting conditions and the fine print.

Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely confident that within 6 months of Members of Congress experiencing the health care world of most of America, dealing with the fine print, the preexisting condition, the uncertainty, the bureaucracy, we would have the consensus necessary to be able to move forward with the comprehensive health insurance reform that Americans want, need and deserve.

I would urge my colleagues to join me in sponsoring this legislation to get government out of the health care of Members of the House and Senate until all Americans can enjoy such health security.

JOB CREATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 2 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, a headline in the Wall Street Journal last week read, Job Cuts Loom as Stimulus Fades. Therein lies the jobs problem. The Democratic stimulus plan was poorly designed as a job creator. Government money doesn't do a very good job of stimulating the private sector to invest. The American people know that true economic stimulus starts with tax relief for working families and small businesses. They know that burdening those same families and businesses with an expensive health care program with unknown consequences is a job killer. They know that placing additional energy taxes on

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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