be signed by the President and would send 20,000 children to school and help them quickly improve their standards.

HONORING AMERICA'S WORD TO OUR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, when millions of older Americans decided to begin their military careers, one of the primary selling points used by the recruiters back then was the Federal Government's promise of retirement benefits. Those benefits included free lifetime health care.

The sales pitch went sort of like this: ''The pay is not very good, your family will have to move every couple of years, and there is a distinct possibility that you might be killed or crippled. But if you can live through it for the 20 years, you will have the satisfaction of having served your country along with a decent retirement. And you will not have to worry about health care costs eating up that retirement check because you will have free health care for life at military hospitals, as long as they have room for you.''

Well, Mr. Speaker, today 400,000 American veterans are dying prematurely. Many of these veterans are military retirees and now have no medical care option left but Medicare. Some do not even have Medicare coverage. They counted on the lifetime military health care promise, the promise that they were given upon entering the military, and did not sign up for Medicare Part B, not ever considering that the Federal Government might go back on its word. Now these men and women do not even have health coverage this Congress provides for draft dodgers.

While numerous good bills have been introduced in the 105th Congress to address this problem, there is one that I believe deserves some special attention, H.R. 1356, introduced by my very good friend the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. J. C. WATTS). H.R. 1356 offers the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, or FEHBP, as an alternative for those beneficiaries who have lost access to the Department of Defense-sponsored health care.

This legislation has been cosponsored by 66 Members of this House. If it is modified with cost control caps, it would provide a cost-effective quick fix for those military folks and their families that are truly hurting today. It will go a long way towards solving the problems of all 8.2 million military retirees.

H.R. 1356 would require the Department of Defense to restore the current CHAMPUS/TRICARE Standard program to the quality benefit intended when the CHAMPUS program was enacted in 1966. It would allow Medicare-eligible retirees the option to enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. Those under the age of 65 would be provided with the plan option if the restored benefit is not available.

This legislation is very similar to the Military Health Care Justice plan proposed by the National Association of the Uniformed Services to provide care to all military beneficiaries without harming readiness.

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FEHBP, the Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan, is a wonderful example of the Federal Government providing great health care at a reasonable cost, a Federal program that has actually been working for the past 37 years. In fact, according to the Heritage Foundation, it is the most efficient health care system of its kind in the country. I, as well as my staff, know this because we are currently enrolled.

As a veteran, I feel it is essential that the Federal Government honor the commitment it made to provide quality health care to those veterans who have served a minimum of 20 years of active Federal service. These are the men and women who have defended our Nation and protected our freedom. If the military health care crisis is not corrected through legislation that provides a solution in the next couple of years, these men and women could be denied the promise, the promise, from the Federal Government of lifetime medical care that was made to them when they first enlisted.

Nine million Federal civilian employees, including DOD civilian personnel, and 1.6 million DOD and other Federal civilian retirees and their dependents have the Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan. Let us honor our promise to the men and women who have protected us and let us pass H.R. 1356.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MORELLA addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LANTOS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RANGEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

LUNAR PROSPECTOR MISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor for me to rise today and speak out in support of the men and women at NASA and at Spaceport Florida who are responsible for the recent very successful Lunar Prospector mission. And actually, this is an ongoing mission. The probe is still orbiting the Moon.

First of all, let me talk about Spaceport Florida. Spaceport Florida is a new entity. Some people may ask, ''What is a spaceport?'' Traditionally, most of the launches that have been done at Cape Canaveral have been done by the Federal Government, either the Air Force or NASA. Years ago, the State of Florida realized that, with the emerging commercial launch industry, that it would be very helpful to have a State agency that would actually launch rockets.

To my left on this easel is the first mission, the Lunar Prospector mission; and what we have here shown is the Lockheed Martin Athena II launch vehicle, which is this rocket right here. There are several State-sponsored spaceports, as we call them. They are like an airport or seaport, a place where you take off to another place. Instead of in an airplane, it is a rocket that is taking off.

Florida has the first successful launch of a rocket from its State-sponsored spaceport. And one of the big advantages of this is that it saves money. By having a spaceport handle it, we can cut back on a lot of bureaucracy and costs and be able to do things more efficiently. This whole mission, this Lunar Prospector mission, is part of what they call the faster, better, cheaper mode of doing things.

The reason this mission went off was because several years ago there was another mission. It was called Clementine. That was sponsored by both the Department of Defense and by NASA, which showed a suggestion that there might actually be ice on the Moon.