health care quality. Managed care must be more than managed cost. Every American deserves quality health care. Managed care reforms are necessary at the Federal level to ensure that managed care is quality care. Even in my home State of Maine where strong patient protections have been enacted at the State level, my constituents know that we need a national solution to a national problem.

The Republican legislation only applies to Americans in self-insured plans. They ignore two-thirds of Americans with private health insurance. One hundred thirteen million Americans are left out in the cold by the Republican bill.

The Republicans have a patchwork approach to dealing with the real problems such as access to specialty care and the choice of physicians. Furthermore, the Republican bill is laced with poison pills such as health marts and malpractice limits.

My constituents want real protections. They do not want a watered down bill. They want the Democratic Patients' Bill of Rights Act.

WITHER THE BUDGET SURPLUS

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the Federal budget will be in surplus for the foreseeable future. Leaving aside the fact that this is not entirely accurate given that the Social Security surplus is masking the true size of the budget deficit, the question before us is what to do with the surplus.

The Democrats, naturally, want to spend it. The Republicans, not surprisingly, want to see it used to begin paying down the national debt or they want to use it for a tax cut. I will leave it to the other side to explain to the American people why they want to spend more money on failed, wasteful social programs and I will only consider the real choice for Congress, paying down the debt or tax relief.

My instinct is to go 50–50, half towards tax cuts and half towards a down payment on our $5.4 trillion national debt. But then I think about the likelihood that liberal spending politicians in Washington will keep their hands off the budget surplus and I start to lean more strongly towards tax relief.

The bottom line is this: Do not spend the surplus.

PASS THE DEMOCRATIC PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Mr. STUPAK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, Democrats want to make sure that good health care is the right of every American. You pay for it. You deserve it. And you should have the right to demand the medical treatment you need.

The Republican leadership and insurance companies believe that they and not you will determine your medical coverage. So the insurance companies and the Republican leadership continue to allow gag orders on doctors and nurses in managed care plans. HMOs tell doctors and nurses and you what medical treatment you will receive, not what medical treatment you need. They gag your doctor.

Democrats believe you and your doctor should decide what medical treatment you need. No more gag orders. The Republican leadership continue to place a gag order on the American people and refuse to hold hearings on the Patients' Bill of Rights. So Democrats want to lift the GOP gag order. We are holding hearings on the Patients' Bill of Rights in Room 2237 of the Rayburn Building.

Democrats want to make sure that health care is the right of every American. You pay for it, you deserve it. You have the right to demand the medical treatment you need. Lift the gag order, Mr. Speaker. Pass the Democratic Patients' Bill of Rights.

SCHOOL CHOICE

(Mr. ROGAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, we Republicans find ourselves in a strange position. On the one hand, we benefit politically when the defenders of the status quo oppose choice in public schools. We benefit politically because school choice is something their own constituents favor. But on the other hand we Republicans despair at finding leftist opposition to school choice because many kids are denied the opportunity of attending a good school and thereby are forced into failing schools. And so we have this bizarre situation where left-wing opposition to school choice means that Republicans win politically but we win at a terrible social cost.

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The remarkable thing about this bizarre situation is that the defenders of the bureaucracy accept this national disgrace, because it benefits their union monopolies. No wonder so many Americans are fed up with many posturing politicians and the special interests they protect. We need to give parents control over their kid's education, and that will only come from school choice. That is what we Republicans are fighting for.

E-RATE WEEK

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

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise to announce E-Rate week. Today I join many Members of Congress in kicking off a week of discussion, information, and emphasis about the importance of the E-Rate program to our schools, our children, and our country. The E-Rate is designed to bring discounted Internet services to children in schools and libraries across America.

In the world of tomorrow, technology and the Internet will be the tools essential to our Nation's workforce. Technical literacy will determine whether a person has a high-paying job or whether that person is frozen into a low-wage, low-opportunity profession.

Currently, only a few wealthy school districts can afford this technology. The E-Rate ensures that needy schools receive discounted services so that every American child has an equal chance to succeed.

Those who attack the E-Rate undercut the future of our children and of our country. Americans want to provide their children the skills and tools of the 21st Century. Through the E-Rate, this is one way we can accomplish this goal.

JUDGE STARR ONCE PRAISED BY DEMOCRATS

(Mr. GUTKNECHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, let us listen to what some people have said about Judge Ken Starr's character and integrity. I quote, ''Starr has the confidence of most of those of us who know him and, I suspect, the confidence of most of us in the Senate.'' A Republican? No. That was Senator JAMES EXON, Democrat of Nebraska.

Here is another, and I quote, ''Judge Starr is certainly a neutral party. No one, I think, has accused him of being on a fishing expedition.'' A Republican? No. That was Senator JOHN KERRY, Democrat of Massachusetts.

Mr. Speaker, these two comments represent many, many comments made by Democrats about Judge Ken Starr's character back in 1993 when Judge Starr was asked to investigate sexual misconduct charges against former Senator Bob Packwood on behalf of the Ethics Committee.

Democrats once praised Judge Starr, but now they either criticize him or stand silent in the face of White House attacks on his character. What has changed? Well, it could be that Democrats praised Judge Starr because he was investigating a Republican. We can only wonder.

SCHOOL VIOLENCE

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to address the very important issue of school violence. I was recently pleased to learn that this administration will finally hold a national conference on school safety sometime in October of this year.