Economic Committee hinted broadly that the Federal Reserve is about to raise short-term interest rates. It would be a serious mistake for them to do so.

When asked why it was necessary to raise interest rates at this time, the Federal Reserve Chairman was at a loss to give a good reason. The only reason he could point to was that unemployment was now at about 4 percent, and they felt that that was too low.

To raise interest rates now would choke off the kind of economic progress that we have been enjoying for the last several years; and, it would create a situation whereby people who are just now beginning to benefit from this economic circumstance would be deprived of the ability to do so.

Wages and benefits of the average working people are now just beginning to go up over the course of the last couple of years. The Federal Reserve would cut that off. People who have not been able to find a job up until now are working. The Federal Reserve would cut that off.

It is a mistake to raise short-term interest rates, and we need to make it clear to the Federal Reserve that they ought not do so.

NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION CARD BAD IDEA FOR AMERICA

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, the American people strongly oppose the instituting of a national identification card. The authority was given for a national I.D. card in 1996. I have been working very hard to try to repeal this authority.

Today, we would have had an opportunity under the transportation bill to repeal this authority and to prevent a national I.D. card from coming into existence.

Unfortunately, that will not be permitted, due to the rule that is coming up for the transportation bill. I think this is a serious mistake. It is not just 30 or 40 or 50 percent of the American people who reject a national I.D., but almost all Americans reject this idea. I find it a shame that we are not able to vote on the repeal authority.

It was never intended that the Social Security number would be the universal, national identifier. It is given to a child at birth and one cannot even be buried without it. So the national I.D. card, when instituted, will be used for everything: To get on an airplane, to get a job, open up a bank account; whatever we want to do, we will have to show our papers.

This is un-American. It is something that we should not be doing, and unfortunately, we will not get to vote on it today.

DISCHARGE PETITION FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM

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

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I have introduced a discharge petition today, number 3. I am urging all of my colleagues to join in signing it on both sides of the aisle.

The discharge petition provides for essentially an open rule. It allows full opportunity for open debate, and it allows full opportunity for amendment. It permits the minority to do what they feel is necessary, but it also assures that my colleagues on the Majority side will have full opportunity to participate.

There is no funny rule here, no cooking of the process. It is a full, open and fair process, both with regard to the amendment process and with regard to the actual handling of time and other parts of the legislation.

I urge all of my colleagues on both sides to join in signing this discharge petition on the patients' bill of rights. It is almost the first of July. The important part of the session is almost behind us, and all that we really are going to have time on from now on is to address budget appropriation and spending matters.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to do something that the American people want. Sign the discharge petition and support the patients' bill of rights.

PUTTING POLITICS BEFORE OUR CHILDREN

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, as a father of four, I was very disappointed in the White House's behavior last week and many of the Democrat leadership Members in the House. We had a gun control debate. We had a good debate on juvenile justice, and we agreed, ultimately, on four out of five key issues. Included in that was closing the loophole for gun shows, stricter enforcement, stricter penalties that involved guns, trigger locks, and yet, because it was not exactly what the White House and the Democrat leadership wanted, they put politics over children and torpedoed the bill, killed it, voted it down, and now we have nothing.

In the political body, something is always better than nothing if we want to advance the cause, but it is just obvious that politics count more than children's safety. As a father, I take off my Republican hat and I say, I regret it as a parent.

Something is going on out there with our children. We need to look at all aspects of the pop culture. Is it the violent video games? Is it the fact that the average TV-viewing child has seen 16,000 murders on TV by the time he is 18 years old? Is it a problem in our schools that maybe our classrooms are too large? We should look at all of those things. I am sorry that the White House put politics over children.

SUPPORT THE PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, for the past 2 years, the American public has been very clear in its desire for managed care reform. It has sent the same consistent message time and time again that medical decisions should be made by doctors and patients and not by insurance company bureaucrats.

Yet, the Republican leadership foiled meaningful HMO reform in the last Congress, and they are stalling as we speak. Today, congressional Democrats are signing a discharge petition calling for real managed care reform to be brought to the House floor immediately, because the Republican leadership will not bring that bill to the floor of the House.

This petition calls for a very, very simple set of comments: the ability to choose one's own doctor, an easy thing to grasp on to, guaranteed access to emergency rooms, guaranteed access to specialty care. Freedom from gag rules to prevent doctors from offering care, and the ability to hold HMOs accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to sign on to the discharge petition. The families of this country should be able to make their medical decisions free from the heavy hand of HMO accountants. Let us sign our names today and support a real patients' bill of rights.

SUPPORT MANAGED CARE REFORM

(Mrs. JONES of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, last week, our children and families were denied protection from guns. This week, and for 2 years, we have been denied protection from managed care. We have been denied a patients' bill of rights.

I promised the people of the 11th Congressional District of Ohio that when I got to Congress, I would work for a patients' bill of rights and campaign finance reform.

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I am chagrined, however, that I have not had the opportunity to debate these two issues. This is the second discharge petition I have had to sign. Over 122 million Americans are not insured with enforceable patient protections without a Federal Patients' Bill of Rights. Over 5,960,000 persons in Ohio alone are denied that protection.