

phone calls about the ongoing occupation of Iraq. So many of them are touching, and they are impassioned. They urge me, they call on me, and they even beg me to get the administration to bring our troops home, and to allow the Iraqis to restore the security of their Nation.

Last week I received a set of letters that stood out among all of them, from Ms. Rene King's students at Sheppard School in Santa Rosa, California. Most of the children are 9 through 13 years old, yet their thoughts are mature and beyond their age. In fact, their words speak so much truth, a truth which we can absolutely not ignore.

From Marcos, 10 years old, "Can you please stop the war in Iraq? Because the people in Iraq aren't safe. Their villages and houses are destroyed. I do not like fighting."

From Arturo, 11 years old, "Can you please stop the war in Iraq? There is a lot of killing, a lot of people have died. People want to get out of fighting. I feel sad when people die."

From Freddy, 11 years old, "Can you please stop the war in Iraq? I do not like fighting and killing people. Some people are dead. Don't send my people, please. We don't like to fight all the people. The people are sad. We need to save money for poor people here in America. Ms. King (my teacher) is sad. Stop sending people into the war."

From Tony, 11 years old, "Can you please stop the war in Iraq? There are a lot of sad and crying families. I feel sad in our country. I don't like when people are mad at our country. I do not feel safe and other people do not feel safe."

From Genaro, age 13, "Can you please stop the war in Iraq? There is a lot of killing. More than 3,000 Americans have died. Stop sending people to the war. We need to save the money for poor people here in America."

From Yovany, age 12, "Can you please stop the war in Iraq? There is a lot of killing. We need to save money for the poor people. More than 600,000 Iraqis have died. Please stop sending people to the war."

From Jose, 10 years old, "Can you please stop the war in Iraq? The people of Iraq aren't safe in their villages, and houses are destroyed. More than 3,000 Americans have died. Please stop sending people to the war."

From Tomas, age 9, "Can you please stop the war in Iraq? There is a lot of killing. A lot of people have died. More than 3,000 Americans have died. Families are being broken apart."

From Steven, age 12, "Can you stop the war, please? A lot of people have died. Please, I don't like wars. No one feels safe. If you keep sending soldiers, more people will be sad."

One student, Angelina, wrote directly to the President, and here is what she wrote. "I think you are making a big mistake. I like you, but your choices make me mad. You need to ask your people about war. I know these people said they will serve the Army. They

never said they wanted to die there. If you were ever able to run again, Mr. President, I would not vote for you. I wish I could say you are helping, but you are not. There is another way to handle things other than guns and bombs. I think you should be more like Martin Luther King, Jr., Mr. President. He thought there was another way to handle things than war. I think the United States needs a different President."

These words are honest, these words are true. If only more people listen to the children, the future of this Nation may be different. What a better world we could be living in.

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AMERICANS WITHOUT HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Speaker, the United States is the world's leading, industrial Nation. We are the wealthiest Nation in the world, and we are a country at the cutting edge of medicine and health care, leading the world in discovery of new medicines, treatments and methods of care.

Yet we are a Nation that, despite spending the most per capita on health care, has some of the highest rates of infant mortality, the lowest rates of life expectancy, and the highest proportion of uninsured, when compared to other industrialized nations. We are a Nation where nearly 45 million Americans do not have health insurance. We are a Nation where over one-half of all uninsured are adults working full time, and we are a Nation where 9 million children are without health coverage.

Too many Americans, too many hardworking families, too many children, are without care and they are suffering the consequences. Democrats believe something must be done, and Democrats will lead our Nation in a new direction. We have solutions to drive down the cost of care. We have a plan to expand health coverage opportunities for working families, for small businesses, and for the self-employed. We understand that we must provide Americans with access to affordable health care, and we will start with America's children.

America's uninsured children are twice as likely to forego needed care. They are more likely to use costly emergency services for routine care, and they are more likely to miss school and to underperform, compared to their peers who have health coverage. America's uninsured children come from working families. Six million children have at least one parent who works full time.

America's population of uninsured children is growing. Last year, for the first time since 1998, the number of uninsured children in our country has in-

creased. This trend is alarming, it is unacceptable, and it cannot continue.

That is why Democrats are committed to continuing and expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program, which is commonly known as SCHIP, by reauthorizing this initiative and dedicating an additional \$50 billion over the next 5 years so that we can expand coverage to qualified families. This is a significant and wise investment, and it demonstrates that we as a Nation understand why health coverage matters for families, for the healthy development of children, and for the continued economic competitiveness of our Nation.

More than 14 years ago, the Pennsylvania State legislature enacted legislation establishing one of the Nation's first state-supported public/private children's health insurance initiatives for children of working families. I authored this proposal and I championed its enactment. This is one of my proudest accomplishments in my years of public service. I am proud of this effort not only because it led to a dramatic increase in the access to care for Pennsylvania's children, but also because it inspired Federal action.

Five years after Pennsylvania enacted its CHIP program, the U.S. Congress recognized that providing America's children health coverage is one of the most cost-effective worthwhile investments we can use as a Nation. So using Pennsylvania's law as a model, we enacted SCHIP. SCHIP has been an unqualified success, which is why the Democratic-led Congress wants to significantly strengthen it, and Governors like Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania want to expand it. Unfortunately, President Bush does not.

The President's budget did not include funding to even maintain coverage for those children already enrolled in SCHIP. It would also severely restrict those children who qualify for SCHIP. At a time when there is broad bipartisan support for moving forward and expanding our efforts to cover more children, sadly the President wants to move us backwards and cover fewer children.

Mr. Speaker, every child in America deserves access to health care. Our children deserve access to primary doctors who will help make sure that they enter school healthy and ready to learn, and that their hardworking parents deserve the ability to afford the insurance that provides for their care.

We have a plan to insure all of America's children. I look forward to working with my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans alike, to enact this top priority for this Democratic Congress and for America's families.

HEALTH CARE UNINSURED AWARENESS WEEK

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, this is Health Care Uninsured Awareness Week. The number of Americans without health insurance has grown about 5 million since President Bush took office. The health care crisis is America's single largest domestic issue, but the President has offered Band-Aids to cover his lack of leadership. And the people have noticed. Nine out of ten Americans told a recent CBS/New York Times poll that the American health care system needs to be completely rebuilt.

Today, the number of Americans without any health insurance surpasses the combined population of 24 U.S. States: Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. That is the population without health insurance.

But the crisis is even worse than that. Millions of Americans are underinsured, and millions more can't afford the copay, or have to fight constant battles with the big drug companies and the HMOs.

In Seattle, my congressional district, here is what one constituent wrote to Health Care for All Washington, one of the organizations I work closely with:

"My dad has prostate cancer and has taken a turn for the worse. We had to postpone a quarterly injection of his drug because we are having trouble with the health insurance over the cost of the drug. It has been extremely frustrating as the insurance company has the drug in the wrong category. They sent us a letter admitting as much, but every 3 months we have to fight with them again, anywhere from \$180 to \$1,800. Anyway, since we postponed it, my dad has suffered."

Does that sound familiar?

The pain inflicted by the health care crisis is hurting families across the United States. According to the Census Bureau, almost one-third of Latinos are uninsured, one-fifth of African Americans, 15 percent of children, 18 percent of full-time employees, and 11 percent of middle-class families.

In other words, only the rich can afford to live without risk. Only the rich are immune, because they have been coddled by the Republican-imposed income tax shelters that can pay for health care. Every other American is one layoff, one major accident, one major illness or divorce away from being uninsured and facing financial ruin.

Since the President took office, health care premiums have risen 87 percent. Have your wages gone up that much?

Here is another personal story from a letter: "I have always worked and I have never taken welfare or asked for help from anyone. Last month, I was diagnosed with follicular lymphoma. There is no cure for this slow-moving

cancer. I will not be able to buy health insurance now because I have a pre-existing condition. Even if I can find it somewhere, I would not be able to afford the big premiums. The only solution I can come up with is to leave America and move to another nation where I can get health care coverage."

When American citizens consider leaving the country as the only viable option, that is not a solution, that is an indictment of a failure to act. The only solution to America's health care crisis is a single payer, universal health care system. We have tried everything else except the right idea.

Under H.R. 1200, my bill, every American would be guaranteed a package of benefits. States would administer their own programs, with decisions made closest to the patient. The health care system today is all about profits, not patients. My bill would put patients back in charge. It would provide predictable and lower cost for American businesses, and everyone would be covered.

The special interests have run the health care system into the ground, and millions of Americans have been ground into financial ruin as a result. The single most common cause for going into bankruptcy in this country is health care costs.

America stands virtually alone in the industrialized world in not caring for its citizens, and being a loner is insensitive, incomprehensible, and intolerable. If all we do is read these poignant stories and ring our hands, we will turned our backs on the people who elected us to serve them by leading. It is time to pass universal health care. We can do it, but it will take some leadership in the White House. Unfortunately, we may have to wait until 2009 to get a President who understands that all Americans should be protected with health insurance.

THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to come before my colleagues and those that might be looking in to speak about the war in Iraq.

We have heard colleagues speak about the issue tonight in poignant and, no doubt, sincere terms. Mostly, the words of my Democrat colleagues register their objection to the ongoing war in Iraq, and that is expected, as Democrats will prepare to bring to the floor of the House of Representatives by this weekend a war spending bill that will include timetables for withdrawal that will add unconstitutional provisions which will necessitate the beginning of troop withdrawals by July 2007, with the goal of ending U.S. combat operations no later than March of 2008.

I want to leave for a little later, Mr. Speaker, the discussion of whether or not Congress has the constitutional authority that will be contemplated in this legislation, but for now I want to speak specifically to the state of the war. And I want to say, as President Bush said yesterday in the Oval Office, this is a tough time in Iraq.

In my role as the ranking Republican member of the Middle East Subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee here in the House of Representatives, I am regularly and routinely briefed both about our surge strategy, the efforts of U.S. and coalition and Iraqi forces on the ground, and of course regularly briefed on the efforts of insurgents and al Qaeda and those attempting to foment sectarian violence and to generate a civil war in Iraq. It is a tough time in Iraq.

This week, we will hear from our commander in Baghdad. General David Petraeus is on Capitol Hill as we speak, preparing to meet tomorrow with Members of the United States House of Representatives to present his report on the progress of the surge. And that is specifically what I want to speak about tonight, because, Mr. Speaker, I suspect my colleagues will hear tomorrow what I heard from General David Petraeus in Baghdad just 3 weeks ago when I traveled with colleagues in the House and Senate to tour literally the streets of Baghdad and to tour our progress in Ramadi and in al-Anbar province.

I believe what General Petraeus will tell our colleagues on Capitol Hill tomorrow is that despite a recent wave of insurgent and horrific bombings, this war is not lost. In fact, because of the President's surge and the brave and courageous conduct of American soldiers on the ground and brave Iraqis on the ground, we are making modest progress in Iraq in the early months of this surge.

But, as General Petraeus will say, while Congress will this week contemplate embracing a resolution that will be built upon the predicate that the war is lost, in fact there is evidence that this new surge strategy both in Baghdad and in the al-Anbar province are beginning to have a good effect.

In Baghdad, for instance, as I will chronicle tonight, despite recent and horrific bombings, sectarian violence is down significantly in the past 2 months. Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the deployment of more than two dozen U.S. and Iraqi joint operating centers throughout the city. And now, perhaps most compellingly, in the al-Anbar province in Ramadi, more than 20 of the Sunni sheik leaders have come together to form what they call the Iraq Awakening Movement. For the first time ever, Sunni leadership in the al-Anbar province are standing with the American soldier and with the government of Nouri al-Maliki.

Again, let me say, this is a tough time in Iraq. But we are in the midst of