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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Reverend Saul Santos, Jr., Fountain of Truth Church, Fontana, California, offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for being the God of all people, believers and non-believers. You are the God of all thrones, dominions and rulers. All authority in heaven and Earth are in Your hands. You are the founder of the Earth and established the heavens. You formed us from the dust of the ground and gave us the breath of life.

Today, I ask that You establish this House full of Your knowledge, Your wisdom, understanding and love.

As we pray, I ask that You extend Your hand of protection over each Representative and their families. Give them strength as they lead. Lord God, I know that You are never absent from them when they need You.

I thank You for freedom and America.

As we pray, this House is stronger; as we commit our work unto You, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING THE REVEREND SAUL SANTOS, JR.

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, I stand here today to recognize a charitable, compassionate young man from my Congressional district in California, Minister Saul Santos, Jr. Minister Santos blessed us with the wonderful prayer we just heard this morning. And while only 27 years of age, he is already a licensed minister at the Christian Life Center Apostolic Church in Ontario, California.

In a world where too many of us have turned a blind eye to the problems of our neighbors, Minister Santos has led a life filled with service to others. And I say service to others. He is the founder and president of Affirming Community Initiatives, a nonprofit organization that provides food, clothing and youth programs to the underserved in our Inland communities.

Let us thank Minister Santos for serving as our guest House Chaplain today, and recognize him for the example he has set for many others to follow. He is truly a role model for us. We should all strive to live our lives in such a selfless and truly Christian manner, as he has done.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. TAUSCHER). The Chair will entertain up to 10 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

OVERRIDE PRESIDENT'S VETO OF CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, a new report by the Joint Economic Committee shows 1 million more children a year may need public health insurance due to the worsening economic conditions, even apart from the growing trend in coverage in our Nation. But State budgets are already strained by the weak national economy and the growing housing crisis.

This is a perfect storm that can be avoided, if Congress votes today to override the President's veto of legislation that would bring health care to 10 million children in need.

Over the next 5 years, our bill would preserve coverage for more than 6 million children currently covered by the Children's Health Insurance Program and extend coverage to nearly 4 million children who are currently uninsured.

I urge my colleagues today to vote to override the President's veto of children's health insurance.

IN MEMORY OF PRIME MINISTER BENAZIR BHUTTO

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, last week the House of Representatives passed unanimously a resolution condemning the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Included in the resolution was a reaffirmation of our commitment to assist Pakistan in the global war on terrorism and to help promote democratic principles there, a cause for which Ms. Bhutto ultimately gave her life.

I had the honor with Congressman DAVID DREIER and Congressman DARRELL ISSA to have breakfast with Ms. Bhutto at her home in Islamabad just 4 weeks prior to her murder. I was tremendously impressed with her passion for the principles of democracy and

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dedication to seeing democracy spread throughout Pakistan and the region. No doubt, these are principles which her assassins were determined to stop.

It is incumbent on us to continue to stand up for the principles Ms. Bhutto championed, to help our partner work toward a more open and democratic Pakistan, and, above all, not to tire in our stopping of the terrorists who wish to stand in the way of free and democratic societies. Stopping terrorists overseas is the best way to protect American families at home.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11th.

GIVE CHILDREN A CHANCE AT A HEALTHY FUTURE: OVERRIDE THE PRESIDENT'S SCHIP VETO

(Ms. TSONGAS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. TSONGAS. Madam Speaker, today I will proudly vote to override the President's veto of a bill to expand the Children's Health Insurance Program, for the second time. This bill provides coverage to children whose families cannot afford private insurance and would expand access to health insurance to 10 million children nationally, 200,000 of whom live in Massachusetts.

I was thinking of our children when I first voted to override the President's veto of this bill on October 18th, the same day I was sworn into office. Tens of thousands of people from my district and millions more across the country, both Republicans and Democrats, have made their support for this program abundantly clear. However, the Bush administration refuses to hear their message.

This program is especially important to my State of Massachusetts, where the program was first developed, and remains critical to sustaining the universal Massachusetts Health Care Program.

I stand with a strong bipartisan majority ready to give our children a chance at a healthy future, and I urge my colleagues to again override the President's veto.

HELPING THE ECONOMY BY BRINGING DOWN THE COST OF ENERGY

(Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, while Congress and the President are talking about an economic stimulus package, remember that the high costs of energy are costing us our economy.

Oil and gas prices continue to climb. Our President asked Saudi leaders to produce more oil to bring prices down. Well, something is wrong here. OPEC controls the price, OPEC funds the process, and we end up funding both sides of the war on terror.

The trade imbalance grew in November to record levels, primarily from the high cost of imported oil. But Congress votes to block drilling for U.S. oil on the Atlantic Coast, the Gulf Coast, the Pacific Coast, the Western States and Alaska. Something is wrong here. We have hundreds of years of American coal to make electricity. We should fund research to clean up the coal, not ignore it.

In the meantime, energy costs go up, food costs go up, manufacturing jobs go down, the economy goes down. Something is wrong here. If we are serious about helping the economy, let's bring down the cost of energy. The best economic stimulus package is a job.

URGING SUPPORT IN OVERRIDING PRESIDENT'S SCHIP VETO

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

Mr. SESTAK. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Children's Health Insurance Program, and hope that we would override the President's veto today. This will cover 3.4 million uninsured children. The number is almost too large to comprehend.

I had the opportunity to live in an oncology ward several years ago with my young daughter. There was a young boy, 2½ years old, with acute leukemia, who had to listen, or, rather, his parents were listening, as social workers came and went to see if he could potentially be covered, because they did not have health insurance, covered to receive the care my daughter was receiving.

As we enter what is possibly a recession, I see that number growing. This is something not morally right for these children. It is also a necessity for our economic betterment, to have healthy, productive individuals. I urge my colleagues all to vote to override the President's veto, for this Nation and for our children.

A PANACEA TO THE ECONOMIC GROWTH CHALLENGE: THE FAIR AND SIMPLE TAX ACT

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

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, as virtually everyone is talking about the need for us to have an economic stimulus package, I am very proud today to be introducing what I think is the closest thing to a panacea to the economic growth challenge that we are facing.

This plan that I have introduced is the brainchild of my friends Bill Simon, Jennifer Pollom and Mike Boskin. It is a plan that is designed to allow people at the lower end of the spectrum on their first $40,000 in income to pay 10 percent, on income between $40,000 and $150,000, 15 percent, and on income above $150,000, 30 percent.

It also, Madam Speaker, goes to the notion of encouraging economic growth by cutting the capital gains rate from 15 percent to 10 percent and cutting the top corporate rate from 35 percent to 25 percent. Remember, we have the second highest rate in the entire world when it comes to corporate tax. We need to focus on the issue of economic growth. It will actually apply the death penalty to the death tax, and it will take the alternative minimum tax and index it and ultimately eliminate it.

Madam Speaker, this is what we need to do to stimulate our economy. This is what we need to do to empower the people who will move and propel our economy forward. I urge my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans alike, to join as cosponsors of this very important legislation.

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SUPPORT CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT

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

Mr. CUELLAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today in full support of H.R. 3963, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act. The SCHIP program in the State of Texas has been extremely successful in providing crucial access to health care for children. SCHIP coverage provides children with coverage for a full range of health services.

Uninsured children are five times more likely than insured children to use the emergency room in hospitals as their main source for medical care. The cost of an emergency room visit is more than $144 compared to only $36 for a primary doctor's visit. A number of these emergency visits should be made to primary doctors with SCHIP coverage.

The current SCHIP enrollment for the children in the State of Texas is about 353,000, and there are over 1.4 million uninsured children in the State of Texas, which is the highest rate of uninsured children in the Nation.

Madam Speaker, I am glad to support the SCHIP reauthorization act and ask my colleagues to support this bill.

IRAQ

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, over the break I had the opportunity to travel to Iraq to meet with our troops and military commanders on the ground there.

Two observations: the morale of our troops is high, and the surge is working. General Petraeus has crafted a highly sophisticated counterinsurgency strategy that has put the terrorists on