BLS to collect these numbers—and they are the most accurate numbers available. The Secretary's use of a figure nearly 10 times what his Department reports hardly seems justified.

I believe that OSHA can be made both more effective and more fair—more effective in redefining OSHA's role, and more fair to the employers of this country who provide the jobs on which the economy depends. I urge my colleagues to study the issues, to resist the rhetoric of those who want to keep OSHA as it is, and to help us pass meaningful OSHA reform in H.R. 1834.

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago this month, Congress enacted what has become one of the two most successful and popular Government programs ever conceived—the Medicare Program. The other, of course, is Social Security.

Given the indisputable success of Medicare, you would think that even its most bitter critics from 30 years ago would have to admit that the program has been instrumental in improving the lives of millions of American senior citizens.

But the Republican leadership in Congress is not interested in learning from their party's past mistakes. Although they haven't seen fit to reveal the details of their plan to the American people, it has become all too clear that the Republicans want to rewrite the history of Medicare by gutting the program and charging seniors more for coverage.

In effect, the Republican leadership wants to take us back to the years before Medicare was enacted in 1965—a period when millions of American senior citizens faced either the poor house or premature death if they contracted a serious illness.

It is a simple fact that before 1965, millions of middle class senior citizens who found themselves seriously ill faced bankruptcy in order to pay for care. Those who were already poor faced even greater indignity and often went without any health care at all.

According to the National Council of Senior Citizens, prior to 1965 and the enactment of Medicare, only 50 percent of Americans over the age of 65 had health insurance.

Yet then, as now, the Republican Party in Congress again and again expresses a sort of gut reaction against Medicare.

Thirty years ago, one Minnesota Congressman absurdly stated that Medicare ''puts the Nation dangerously close to socialized medicine.''

One of his colleagues from Colorado went so far as to say: ''By passage of this bill [Medicare], we shall make a shambles out of Social Security.'' Of course, he didn't mention that he probably would have opposed the creation of Social Security too.

The comments we are hearing from the leadership on the other side today demonstrate clearly that the Republicans in this Congress are indeed the direct ideological descendants of the party that fought tooth and nail to prevent Social Security and Medicare from ever becoming reality.

Just a week ago, one of the Republican leaders stated ''I deeply resent the fact that when I'm 65 I must enroll in Medicare.''

He went on to demean the program—and the millions of seniors who have earned their Medicare benefits—by saying that Medicare ''teaches the lessons of dependence,'' and that it is ''a program that has no place in a free society.''

Mr. Speaker, when the new leadership in Congress claims to have won a mandate in last fall's elections, do they actually believe that their supposed mandate includes the dismantling of the Medicare Program?

A mandate comes from the people, Mr. Speaker. And if the leadership of the Republican Party in Congress were interested in pursuing a true mandate—if they truly had the interests of the people at heart—there would be no discussion of pulling the rug out from under senior citizens by gutting Medicare.

The vast majority of Americans—seniors and nonseniors alike—oppose the Republicans' views on Medicare. Rather than acting on a mandate, what the Republican leadership is doing, in effect, is attempting to rewrite the conclusion of the Medicare debate of 1965.

What is the real agenda here, Mr. Speaker? It sounds suspiciously like this generation of Republicans, under the cloak of concern of Medicare's solvency, is simply trotting out the same tired arguments that failed 30 years ago. And we need to expose this for what it is—an effort to destroy Medicare, which in the Republican view, is somehow un-American.

ADMINISTRATION'S REVIEW OF FEDERAL PREFERENCE PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. CANADY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CANADY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow morning the President will give a major speech announcing the results of the administration's 5-month long review of programs that grant preferences on the basis of race and gender.

Of course, the administration and the media call it a review of affirmative action, but that is not really what the review is about. As originally designed, affirmative action was about nondiscrimination—it required parties to take affirmative action to ensure that no person would be treated with regard to race.

Over the past 25 years, however, this mandate of nondiscrimination has been turned on its head and converted into a requirement to grant preferences on the basis of race and gender. There are now a multitude of Federal programs that grant such preferential treatment. And it is to the future of these preference programs, and not to affirmative action, that the President will be speaking.

With regard to those programs, the issues really are quite simple, and they reduce to this: Should the Government divide its citizens into groups based on race and gender? And should some citizens qualify for special Government benefits based solely upon their membership in a racial or gender group? And if so, how can this regime of preferences be reconciled with the Constitution's fundamental guarantees of individual rights and equal opportunity to all regardless of race or gender?

To put the issue in more concrete terms, is it wise public policy for the Federal Government to award contracts to minority- or women-owned firms when other qualified firms have submitted lower bids? And is it a good idea for Federal agencies and officers to make employment decisions every day with an eye toward meeting numerical hiring and promotion objectives based on race and gender? And is it just to require Federal contractors to grant preferences—to hire by the numbers—in order to keep their Federal contracts?

These are the issues the President should address. I must confess, I can't imagine why it would take 5 months to answer these questions. Either you are in favor or preferences or you are not. Either you think it's acceptable to base hiring and contracting decisions upon race and gender or you do not. These are straightforward questions of principle, and they really do not require extended deliberation.

I am concerned, however, that even after the administration's 5-month review, we will be disappointed tomorrow to learn that the President still has not come to grips with these fundamental issues. Rather than tell us where he really stands, I am concerned—and newspaper reports previewing the speech seem to indicate—that the administration has decided to treat this important issue in a legalistic and bureaucratic manner.

So instead of learning how the President understands the nondiscrimination principle, we are likely to hear how the administration interprets the Supreme Court's recent decision in Adarand versus Pena. And rather than coming to terms with the glaring conflict between racial and gender preferences and the American commitment to individual rights, President Clinton will simply suggest that there are some administrative imperfections in the existing preference programs that need to be fixed.

And we will no doubt here the mandatory disavowal of ''quotas,'' with the confident assertion that because ''quotas are illegal, we don't have to