By expanding choice and utilizing reforms that have worked in the private sector, we cannot only save the Medicare program and strengthen it for our current and future beneficiaries, but we can also provide a brighter future for our children and grandchildren. We do have a program that will work and that is what we are going to do, hopefully with the bipartisan support and hopefully with constructive cooperation from the White House. Meanwhile, all the scare ads on TV, the class warfare stirred up by the liberals, and the generational debate hyped by the cynics does not solve the problem and does not make America a better place to live.

Mr. Speaker, the Republicans are trying to offer a positive solution to a real problem. Even if we do not get all the details exactly right the first time, we will get the details right and we will have made an important change for every American's quality of life and pocketbook.

SAVING THE NATIONAL PARKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my disappointment at heavy-handed actions by the leadership of the Committee on Resources by placing H.R. 260 on the Suspension Calendar today, and I hope that everybody out there that is aware of this terrible transgression realizes what H.R. 260 would do. It would simply be a vehicle to close down national parks.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would create a park closure commission to recommend specific parks to Congress foreclosure, privatization, or sale to the highest bidder. But what is most heavy handed is the fact that this bill is on the Suspension Calendar despite the fact that many of us in the Committee on Resources were able to offer amendments to change this bill. This way we have on the Suspension Calendar no opportunity to offer amendments that are alternatives.

Mr. Speaker, I had asked for one amendment that would allow a new form of financing the parks, through fees, through concessions, and through other alternatives that recognize that we do have to improve the management of the parks. But there are some very heavy-handed tactics of preventing honest debate on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, the Clinton administration opposes this bill. The environmental community opposes this bill. The National Parks and Conservation Association opposes this bill, and I would simply ask my colleagues to vote no on this bill so that it can go back to a rule and allow logical and fair amendments. In fact, just one amendment.

So by voting no, you are not killing the bill; you are killing a process that is wrong and heavy handed. What we have here is a park closure commission that would close national parks.

Now, the bill does exempt 54 national park units from closure, but it leaves less visited, smaller budgeted parks, and important national monuments like Independence Hall, the Statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore, the Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson Monuments, and the Martin Luther King historical site on the chopping block.

The Chair of the Subcommittee on National Parks, the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN], has said that he wants to close 150 parks. This is an agenda that I believe is wrong. Let us improve the management of these parks. Let us find ways to raise money to keep the parks as important components of this country.

Mr. Speaker, the national parks are not the playgrounds of the rich. They are the vacation destinations of millions of ordinary hard working Americans who want to see and enjoy the natural wonders they support with their tax dollars. They deserve to continue to have that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the national parks today are more popular than ever. This year 270 million visitors will visit our national parks, an increase of 5 million over last year. By the year 2000, 360 million visitors will visit the parks every year. That is if we still have some of them to visit in the year 2000. Recent nationwide polls show that this boom in parks visitation is matched by concern for the future of the parks.

A recent poll by Colorado State University found that 98 percent of those surveyed believed protection of the parks for future generations was important, editorial boards around the country, Salt Lake City Tribune, St. Louis Dispatch, the New York Times.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 260 strikes at the very heart of our national heritage, the 369 natural and cultural treasures which make up the National Park System, and by authorizing, which is what we would do by passing this bill, the creation of a park closure commission, like a military base closure commission, without any alternatives, H.R. 260 takes the decisions out of the hands of the Congress and turns it over to politics, to political appointees. Surely business as usual is not the message the voters sent the Congress in the 1994 elections.

Mr. Speaker, let me explain what my alternative does, and all I want is the ability to offer this alternative under a closed rule, under a modified rule. One amendment, that instead of creating a park closure commission, that we find other ways to raise funds for parks through increased, perhaps fees, through a trust fund, through the changes in concessions so the McDonald's and other concessionaires, the Marriotts, pay a fairer share of what it costs to maintain the parks.

This is something that is on a bipartisan basis. Mrs. MEYERS of Kansas has a very constructive proposal to change the concession system of the parks.

So I am not here asking for a rejection of this bill. I am saying, let us respect the process. By voting no on H.R. 260, which we should do, 143 votes are needed so that the two-thirds is not achieved, we would send the bill back to the Committee on Rules.

Mr. Speaker, watch this bill. H.R. 260, vote ''no,'' send it back to the Committee on Rules. Let it come back under a fair rule.

I insert the following information for the RECORD:

[From the Salt Lake Tribune, May 6, 1995]

DON'T CLOSE THE PARKS

Generally, people want to enter a national park; they want to leave a military base. Indeed, there is little that the two have in common, other than that they are both federally owned. Yet there is inexplicable sentiment in Congress for providing a common element to both-a closure commission.

A bill known as H.R. 260, which has already passed Utah Rep. Jim Hansen's subcommittee and is due up before the full House Resources Committee this month, proposes the formation of a Park System Review Commission. It would do for national park units what the Base Realignment and Closure Commission has done for military bases: It would close them.

Closure is appropriate for some unneeded military bases, but not so for national park units, which presumably have an unchanging value. After all, national parks were created for purposes of preservation and posterity, not for the ever-shifting requirements of national defense. Existing park units simply should not be exposed to the whims of an independent commission.

The issue has surfaced because the National Park Service has been having problems adequately funding all 368 units in its system. One complaint is that the system is overloaded with units that don't belong, units that were designated at the behest of some congressman trying to bring home the pork for his district.

The problem can be addressed without the creation of a park closure commission. For starters, Congress can support the portion of H.R. 260 that calls for the Interior secretary to devise tighter criteria for additions to the NPS, thereby safeguarding the system from selfish lawmakers.

Then, if Congress still feels that undeserving units have crept into the system, it can simply deauthorize them itself, as it did last year with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. It does not need some new level of bureaucracy to do this.

The rationale behind a park closure commission is that it would save money for the NPS. Well, as the BRAC members can testify, it would cost a lot of up front money to close these units. And once closed, who would operate them—the states, or some other division of the federal government? How do the taxpayers save on that?

If the goal is to improve NPS finances, then start with passage of park concessions reform or entrance fee reform. Start funneling such fees back into the parks, instead of the national treasury. It makes little sense to set up a mechanism to close parks when proposed methods of increase park revenues have not been implemented first.

National parks are not at all like military bases. They were created to establish a natural or historical legacy for future generations. They don't need a closure commission; they need more creative ways to stay open.

H.R. 260 would:

Create a park closure commission to recommend specific parks to Congress for closure, privatization or sale to the highest bidder;

Weaken Congress' statutory authority to make decisions on park management by granting broad powers to a politically appointed commission;

Send a strong signal to the American people that Congress does not have the political will to carry out its responsibilities of oversight over the National Park Service.

Exempt the 54 National Park units from closure, leaving less visited, smaller budgeted parks and important national monuments like Independence Hall, the Statue of Liberty, Mt. Rushmore, the Washington, Lincoln and Jefferson Monuments and the Martin Luther King. Jr. Historic Site on the chopping block.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. There being no further requests for morning business, pursuant to clause 12, rule I, the House will stand in recess until 12 noon.

Accordingly, at 10 o'clock and 42 minutes a.m., the House stood in recess until 12 noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. CLINGER] at 12 noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

When the light of day illumines our days, O God, we are grateful beyond any measure for we are warmed by that light and it helps us see the way. And when that light seems dim we can falter and fail, or when we turn our heads from that light and go our own way, we can so easily miss the mark. O gracious God, giver of all good things, may we eagerly seek the light of Your presence and walk in Your way so faith will be our strength, hope will be our daily support, and love our ever present reality. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON] will come forward and lead the membership in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. SOLOMON 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.

SUNDRY MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sundry messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Mr. Edwin Thomas, one of his secretaries.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PREFILING REQUIREMENT FOR AMENDMENTS TO H.R. 927, CUBAN LIBERTY AND DEMOCRATIC SOLIDARITY ACT OF 1995

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, the Rules Committee hearing scheduled on H.R. 927, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act has been postponed until 2 p.m. tomorrow.

Due to time constraints this week, the Rules Committee may report a structured rulemaking in order only amendments prefiled with our committee. Members who wish to offer amendments to the bill should submit 55 copies of their amendments, together with a brief explanation, to the Rules Committee office at H–312 of the Capitol, no later than 1 p.m. tomorrow, Tuesday, September 19.

Amendments should be drafted to the amendment in the nature of a substitute that will be made in order as base text that is available at the Office of Legislative Counsel. Members should therefore have their amendments drafted by the Legislative Counsel's office to ensure that they are properly drafted.

If Members or their staff have any questions regarding this procedure, they should contact Eric Pelletier in the Rules Committee Office at extension 5–9191.

We appreciate the cooperation of all Members in submitting their amendments by 1 p.m. tomorrow to ensure their proper consideration by the committee.

104TH CONGRESS OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, today we are going to take up H.R. 260, a bill that will close many of our national parks.

Millions of Americans spent their summer vacations visiting Mount Rushmore, Bandolier, Independence Hall and the Statue of Liberty. In fact, 270 million visitors came to our parks this year.

As is often the case, the 104th Congress is out of touch with the American people. On the suspension calendar today will be H.R. 260. The vote will take place tomorrow. There is no reason for this bill to be on suspension.

All we had asked for, those of us who are concerned with this bill, is an amendment that would have permitted an alternative. An alternative through concessions, through increased fees, through a trust fund, we can finance these parks.

Mr. Speaker, let us make sure we have a process here. Let us have H.R. 260 sent back to the Committee on Rules.

The environmental community is against this. The Clinton administration is against this bill.

Let us have proper debate on it. Let us not get rushed on our national parks. We do not need a park closure commission. We need better management and new ways to finance our national parks.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule I, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 4 of rule XV.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken on Tuesday, September 19, 1995.

EXTENSION OF DISTRICT COURT DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Mr. MOORHEAD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 464) to make the reporting deadlines for studies conducted in Federal court demonstration districts consistent with the deadlines for pilot districts, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 464

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF CIVIL JUSTICE EXPENSE AND DELAY REDUCTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS.

Section 104 of the Civil Reform Act of 1990 (28 U.S.C. 471 note) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1) by striking ''4-year period'' and inserting ''5-year period''; and

(2) in subsection (d) by striking ''December 31, 1995,'' and inserting ''December 31, 1996,''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California [Mr. MOORHEAD] will be recognized for 20 minutes, and the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. SCOTT] will be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California [Mr. MOORHEAD].

Mr. MOORHEAD. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 464 which is a technical corrections bill that was introduced by Senator HATCH and passed the Senate on March 30,