MORE ON THE MOTION TO INSTRUCT

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. Madam Speaker, I just wanted to take this opportunity to talk a little bit more about the motion to instruct the conferees on the budget reconciliation bill which we voted on just a few moments ago, actually.

I felt very strongly, I had a chance to talk a little bit about it, but I just wanted to elaborate a little more. I felt very strongly during the debate today on this motion that the motion really got to the heart of the issue on Medicare, the cuts in Medicare, the cuts in Medicaid, and the cuts essentially to our health care system in general and how this Republican budget has essentially targeted, if you will, Medicare and Medicaid in order to primarily pay for tax cuts for wealthy Americans.

The motion to instruct the conferees pays attention to that and essentially says that the conferees should try to do whatever they can to minimize both tax cuts for the wealthy and tax increases on low- and middle-income working families in order to preserve and protect the health and income security of senior citizens and to avoid increasing the number of Americans lacking access to health care.

From the very beginning of this debate on the budget, on the one side concern about Medicare and Medicaid, on the other side the issue of where tax cuts are going to go and how those two are going to interplay, from the very beginning I thought it was possible and the point needed to be made that there was a relationship, a direct relationship between the cuts in Medicare and Medicaid and the tax cuts that were going to be implemented for wealthy Americans. In fact, if you eliminate a lot of the tax cuts for the wealthy Americans or for those of us who happen to have higher incomes, if you eliminate those tax cuts or you cut back on those tax cuts, you could add more money into Medicare and Medicaid and not have the situation where both of those health care programs for seniors as well as for low-income people are seriously threatened by this Congress and by this budget bill.

The other thing that is in this motion to instruct that I thought was so important is that it pointed out that there are a lot of people who simply will not have any health care coverage if these cuts in Medicare and Medicaid go through. Let me explain why I feel very strongly about that.

First of all, right now Medicaid, which is the health care program for low-income people in this country, is basically an entitlement. In other words, if your income falls below a certain amount, you are entitled to Medicaid, to health care coverage. Well, no longer under this Republican budget bill is Medicaid an entitlement. In fact, it is left up to the States with money that they get in a block grant from the Federal Government to decide who they are going to cover in various categories for low-income people. So it is very possible that a lot of low-income people, seniors, children, disabled people, will simply not have health care coverage at all if the States decide not to provide it.

Now, on the Senate side, on the Senate side they decided to continue the entitlement for pregnant women, children, and for disabled persons. So one of the points that the motion to instruct makes is that we should agree with the Senate version to at least guarantee health care coverage for low-income people who fall into those three categories.

There are also a lot of people on Medicare. There are also a lot of senior citizens on Medicare who may not get health care coverage under this bill because you have to remember that part B of Medicare, which pays for your doctor bills, is not a guarantee. Right now if you are a low-income senior, part B of your Medicare is paid for by the Federal Government. But this bill has eliminated that guarantee. So if you are a low-income senior who is eligible for Medicaid, you no longer have the guarantee of part B, and you have to pay for it out of your pocket possibly unless the States decide to pay it for you.

Again, a large group, in this case low-income seniors, may not have health care in terms of having physician care.

These are the problems that we face unless in this conference an effort is made to try to cut back on this tax cut for wealthy Americans and put more money back into the Medicare Program and back into the Medicaid Program.

The other issue that came up, and I think it is a very important issue again, is on the pensions. In the Senate bill there is no change with regard to pension funds. But in the House-passed bill we have this provision that basically allows corporations to raid pension funds of their employees and use it for almost any purpose that they want, perhaps for a hostile takeover. Again, the Senate has seen that that language is not the way to go. Our motion to instruct, which did not pass today, urges that the conferees go along with the Senate bill to guarantee some protection for workers and for their pensions.

I think that is safe to say that some of these provisions where there has been disagreement between the House and the Senate, particularly when it comes to providing Medicaid-guaranteed coverage for a lot of low-income people, providing the protection for workers and their pensions and also with regard to nursing homes, right now the House-passed bill does not provide any guarantees that nursing homes are going to be up to standard, because the standards are essentially eliminated.

We hope that we will see the conferees adopt the better Senate language.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Georgia [Ms. MCKINNEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. MCKINNEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

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

[Mr. KIM addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

POSSIBLE VIOLATION OF HOUSE RULES

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

Mr. RIGGS. Madam Speaker, I actually rise to inform my colleagues that lost in all the discussion in recent weeks back here in Washington over some very important and pressing issues has been the revelation that the House Inspector General, Mr. John Lainhart, who was appointed as House Inspector General by the former Democratic majority, in fact by the former Speaker of the House, Tom Foley, has indicated that he will soon be reporting to the House Committee on Oversight and the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct the names of those Members of Congress past and present as well as House officers who may have violated either House rules or the laws of the United States of America in conjunction with the ongoing audit into congressional finances.

I just want to refresh the memory of my colleagues that back on January 4, the opening day of this session, in one of our first acts as the new majority party in the House of Representatives, we Republicans, joined by almost all of our colleagues on the minority side of the aisle, commissioned an independent audit of House finances. The international accounting firm Price