

consumer choices and increased competition, and thereby, lower costs, for health care services.

H.R. 2925 overcomes this barrier by requiring that the conduct of an organization meeting the criteria of a health care provider network be judged under the rule of reason. The result will be to permit a case-by-case determination as to whether the conduct of that HCPN would be procompetitive, and thus permissible under the antitrust laws. It is important to understand, however, that this is not an exemption from the antitrust laws. In no event would providers be allowed to set prices or control markets if, in doing so, they have an anticompetitive effect on the market. The normal principles of antitrust law will continue to apply.

Only an organization meeting specified criteria would qualify for the more liberal, rule of reason consideration. The network must have in place written programs for quality assurance, utilization review, coordination of care and resolution of patient grievances and complaints. It must contract as a group, and mandate that all providers forming part of the group be accountable for provision of the services for which the organization has contracted. If these criteria are not met, the entity could still be considered per se illegal.

Rule of reason consideration would be extended not only to the actual performance of a contract to provide health care services, but also to the exchange of information necessary to establish a HCPN. An important limitation on the exchange of information is that it must be reasonably required in order to create a HCPN. Further, information obtained in that context may not be used for any other purpose.

H.R. 2925 delegates to the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission authority to specify how rule of reason consideration would be implemented under these circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, the Antitrust Health Care Advancement Act of 1996 means greater choice for consumers regarding health care services and the delivery of quality health care at lower price. Later this month, on February 27 and 28, the full Judiciary Committee will be holding hearings on health care reform initiatives, both in the antitrust area and in the liability area. H.R. 2925 will be one of the proposals considered in those hearings.

GUAM COMMONWEALTH PROCESS MOVING TOWARD CLOSURE

HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 1, 1996

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of participating in a meeting in San Francisco earlier this week with the Governor of Guam, the Honorable Carl T.C. Gutierrez, the Guam Commission on Self-Determination, and the Deputy Secretary of the Interior, the Honorable John Garamendi. Mr. Garamendi will be soon named as the President's Special Representative for the Guam Commonwealth discussions. The members of the Guam Commission on Self-Determination who participated in this meeting with the Governor included Presiding Judge Alberto Lamorena,

Senator Hope Cristobal, Senator Francis Santos, Mayor Francisco Lizama, former Senator Jose R. Duenas, and Youth Congress Speaker Rory Respicio.

The Guam Commonwealth process that we are engaged in sorely needed a jump start, and the meeting in San Francisco renewed the commitment of the President and the leadership of Guam to an improved political status for our island. I am pleased that the administration has refocused on the Guam Commonwealth, and that bringing some form of closure to this process is the common goal of the participants.

The people of Guam are growing increasingly frustrated by the lack of progress on the Guam Commonwealth. There is a growing sense that the Commonwealth discussions will continue to drag on with no end in sight. This is not acceptable to the people of Guam. Our patience has limits, but our resolve is not diminished. That is why I am particularly encouraged by the consensus to complete the current discussions in a timely manner, and to wrap up these discussions by early this summer.

It is important to note that Mr. Garamendi reaffirmed in San Francisco that progress already made, and agreements already reached with Guam, will be honored.

Once the Clinton administration has completed its discussions with the Guam Commission on Self-Determination, the focus of our efforts will shift to the U.S. Congress, which has plenary authority over the territories.

I commend Governor Gutierrez, the Guam Commission on Self-Determination, and Mr. Garamendi for this very good beginning. I look forward to continuing the progress for the Guam Commonwealth, and to advancing the cause of self-government for the people of Guam in this legislative body.

PLAYING WITH FIRE

HON. RONALD D. COLEMAN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 1, 1996

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, the past 2 months have brought into sharp focus the lengths our new House Majority will go to get their way. The Republicans have virtually abandoned any pretense of true debate and discussion of differing views as they have literally stalled the functions of government in an attempt to force their extreme priorities on the President and the American people.

Twice, the Republicans shut down the Federal Government because the President and Congressional Democrats wanted to balance the budget without large tax breaks for the wealthy, and without the deep cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment needed to pay for them. House Republicans seriously miscalculated the President's resolve and thought closing our Nation's Social Security offices, Medicare offices and national parks, would force him to sign their budget, a right wing vision of how America should be run. To his credit, the President did not succumb to this pressure.

Now, once again, the Republicans want to take this country down the road of irresponsibility; this time with very dangerous consequences. Republicans want to throw our

country into default by refusing to extend America's borrowing authority. This would jeopardize our Nation's credit rating—currently the highest in the world. Not only would this throw the world's financial markets into a tailspin, and would cause the value of the dollar to plummet worldwide, it would have a devastating impact on hard-working American families who are struggling to pay their own bills and obligations.

The reason we must raise our debt limit is because America must issue bonds and borrow money to meet its current obligations, even as we gradually eliminate all borrowing to balance the Federal budget. Those obligations include \$30 billion in Social Security checks, which would not be issued if the Government goes into default next month. It would also mean that no tax refunds would be paid to Americans who are owed these funds. And it would prevent America from making payments on its other financial obligations, which would mean that America's financial credibility—unquestioned throughout our history—would be destroyed.

The result? Interest rates would go up on credit cards, home mortgages, and loans. Average Americans would pay a heavy price for the Republicans' childlike behavior for decades. Moody's Investors Service announced recently that for the first time in history it was considering lowering the credit rating for certain U.S. Treasury bonds.

The reason? Because NEWT GINGRICH and his extremist allies would rather promulgate their right-wing agenda than compromise. The Republicans understand the need to raise the debt limit. In their Seven Year Balanced Budget Reconciliation Act, even after cutting Medicare and Medicaid, they, themselves, call for the raising of the debt limit by \$5.5 trillion.

America paid its bills during the Reagan-Bush years. When a Republican President controlled the White House and Democrats controlled one or both Houses of Congress, and we borrowed to pay for annual deficits, the debt limit was raised 27 times. Our predecessors understood the importance of keeping our financial obligations. Now, the Republican-run Congress is willing to throw that away and risk financial catastrophe in order to score political points.

The Republicans have said they will use any means at their disposal to force the President to accept their program.

America must not default on its debt. We are the preeminent financial power in the world because we keep our word. If we allow that faith to be damaged, our economy will be hurt in ways that will hit every family in the pocketbook.

Congress should not go into recess, as the Republicans propose to do, until we vote to raise the debt limit. The situation will become critical by the end of February unless we do so.

On January 22, the Treasury Secretary notified the Congressional leadership by letter, that unless the debt ceiling is increased, he would have to take additional steps to prevent default in mid-February, and that even those steps would provide funds only until March 1. Congress should take action this week to enact a clean debt limit increase.

It is time to raise the debt limit with no gimmicks, conditions, threats or delays. The American people deserve congressional action, not watching a parade of politicians go to recess.