



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 105<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 143

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 1997

No. 30

## House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. EHLERS].

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, March 11, 1997.

I hereby designate the Honorable VERNON J. EHLERS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,  
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

### MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] for 5 minutes.

### CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the Washington Times reported that at long last House Republicans have finally developed an agenda for the 105th Congress. The news was also accompanied by a report that in the first 2 months of the 105th Congress the House was in session for a grand total of 58 hours, compared with 296 hours in the first 2 months of the last Congress.

Mr. Speaker, one would think that with all this spare time and with daily pressure from congressional Demo-

crats, the Republicans would have included as a goal in their agenda the implementation of a plan to provide health insurance for the Nation's 10 million uninsured children. As far as the Republican agenda goes, however, health care for children is apparently not meant to be. There is no mention of any kind of children's health insurance plan in the Republican's vision of the future.

Since last spring, Democrats have been working to push the issue of children's only health care to the top of Congress' agenda, and our Families First agenda included a children's only plan. Day after day in this Congress Democrats have taken to the floor to protest the Republicans' failure to basically address anything more substantive than the propriety of hanging the Ten Commandments on the walls of Government buildings and courthouses. This is what we dealt with last week.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats are intent on passing a children's only health bill. Two weeks ago our Minority Leader GEPHARDT and our Senate Minority Leader DASCHLE sent a letter to Republican leaders GINGRICH and LOTT asking them to allow this issue to move forward. Last week we sent another letter, signed by over 175 members of the Democratic Caucus, asking the Speaker to provide a date certain for the consideration of a children's only health bill, and to date the Democrats have literally heard nothing from the Republicans on this issue.

I have to say, though, we have heard plenty from elsewhere around the country. We learned the week before last from New York City's public advocate that despite the existence of a State plan to insure children in New York, the rate of uninsured children in New York City grew by 6 percent in the last 5 years. We also learned that this happened at a time when many of New York's parents were working for companies that had over 1,000 employees.

The public advocate's report, Mr. Speaker, underscored the need for a Federal children's only health plan for parents who make too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford health insurance for their children.

Again I would say that, not having time to wait for this Congress to do something, many States around the country have taken matters into their own hands. Massachusetts, for instance, has implemented a children's only plan, similar to various proposals developed by congressional Democrats, that assists parents who would otherwise be unable to afford health insurance for their children. The Massachusetts plan is an important example to cite, in that it illustrates the value of not only providing health care for a sick child but of providing preventative care that obviates the need for more expensive care further down the line.

I want to stress how important preventative care is. It is wise not only for budgetary reasons but, simply put, it is the humane thing to do. More than half of the uninsured children with asthma, just as an example, never see a doctor during the year. Many of these children end up hospitalized with problems that could have been prevented and could have cost less to treat. Similarly, one-third of uninsured children with recurring ear infections never see the doctor. Many suffer permanent hearing loss.

Democrats believe these problems should be prevented because they can be prevented. Our concern, again, Mr. Speaker, is rooted firmly in the notion that the right thing to do is to make sure every child in this country has access to medical care.

I have to point out that in their agenda released last week the GOP claims it wants to strengthen America's families by fighting child abuse

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper containing 100% post consumer waste

H813