The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. VISCLOSKY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. VISCLOSKY 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 gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CONGRESS SHOULD RALLY AROUND PRESIDENT'S DECISION WITH REGARD TO IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I want to spend the next few minutes talking about Iraq.

In 1991, I voted for President Bush's program, Operation Desert Storm. I was one of a minority of Democrats at that time to do so because I felt then and feel very strongly now that we need to have a bipartisan foreign policy; that once the President, whomever the President is, makes a decision, it is incumbent upon all of us to rally around the President's decision and to support our troops who may be in harm's way.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I have been particularly chagrined to listen to the remarks of some of the critics of the President's policy in Iraq, the Senate Majority Leader and others, who have spoken out and said that this agreement, which the Clinton administration supports and which I support, have said it is not a good one.

I think it is very, very important that we rally around our President and that we support this agreement.

Is this a perfect agreement? Of course not. Are there some ambiguities in this agreement? Of course there are. But as Secretary of State Albright said the other day, let us try to work out these ambiguities. Let us place the onus on Saddam Hussein. Let us test this agreement.

We are testing it by keeping our forces in the region. We are testing it by making sure that American power and American might remains there to force Saddam Hussein to comply.

The main thing now is to get the inspectors into the presidential palaces and the other sites to make sure that we have adequate inspection on the ground.

This new agreement puts the onus on Saddam Hussein. If he violates it, we will have the support of many of the other nations who might have been reluctant to support our undertaking if we had started with a bombing campaign. This puts the onus squarely on Saddam and says to Saddam that the international community, the United Nations, is unified in demanding that he comply with United Nations' resolutions and with this latest agreement.

Rather than tearing down Kofi Annan, I would praise him for having the courage to go to Baghdad and trying to broker an agreement.

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I am not annoyed that Saddam Hussein is claiming victory, as the Senate majority leader seems to be. Saddam Hussein claimed victory after Operation Desert Storm, when we know that his forces were decimated. I could not care less what Saddam Hussein says. The proof will be in the pudding. If indeed this gives the international community unfettered access to Saddam Hussein's presidential palaces and other sites, then this agreement will be successful. If it does not and if Saddam Hussein is devious, as we know he can very well be, and continues to hide things and we need to go in and do a bombing campaign, then President Clinton says that is what we will do.

Rather than this being a lose-lose situation, I think it is a win-win situation. This is not the time for U.N. bashing. Let us encourage the U.N. to pass a resolution in the Security Council adopting this agreement and putting in penalties if Saddam Hussein violates the agreement.

The critics of administration policy, I am sorry to say, would criticize the President for whatever he did. If we had a bombing campaign, they would criticize the President to say there will be civilian casualties, as we know inevitably there would be, or American casualties, as we know inevitably there would be. When the President was talking about a bombing campaign, these same critics were saying that the President had not told the American people what our objectives are, that he had not defined the objectives. If the President said, as he did say, the objectives would be to allow unfettered inspection of these sites and that is why we were bombing, the critics then said, ''That's not enough. The objective should be the removal of Saddam Hussein.'' Well, we know the removal of Saddam Hussein, and I would like to see it as much as anybody else, would involve ground troops and would involve lots of casualties. If the President did that, the critics would say, ''Well, the ground troops will mean American casualties.''

So whatever the President does, and I quite frankly think he has handled the situation very, very well, these same critics would criticize. This is not the time for criticism. There has been an agreement. Let us try this agreement. If this agreement does not work, we can go back to a policy of a bombing campaign to force Saddam Hussein to allow unfettered inspections. Rather than criticize the President, I commend President Clinton. I think he has handled this situation marvelously. I think he has acted like a real statesman and acted like the American people expect him to act. I daresay that is why his approval rating is hovering around 70 percent, because people think that the President has acted boldly, not only in Iraq but all the other things he has done to put this country on the right track.

Mr. Speaker, I say it is time to go back to the traditional bipartisan policy of rallying around the President, rallying around our troops and, once the President has made a decision, to support that decision for the good of the American people.

MEDICARE CLINICAL TRIAL LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIBBONS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation, the Medicare Clinical Trial Coverage Act of 1998, that would provide Medicare coverage for patient costs related to participation in clinical trials. Clinical trials are research studies that test new medications and therapies in clinical settings and are often the only treatment available for people with life-threatening diseases such as cancer, AIDS, heart disease, and Alzheimer's.

As the Representative for the Texas Medical Center, where many of these life-saving trials are being conducted, I believe there is a real need for this legislation to guarantee that patients can receive the cutting-edge treatment they need. I believe we must ensure that Medicare beneficiaries can obtain the best available treatment for their illnesses. Without this guarantee, patients must work aggressively to make sure that they receive the care they need. We must end this uncertainty and guarantee the best available care.

I have been contacted by many researchers at the Texas Medical Center, including the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, University of Texas Health Science Center, Baylor College of Medicine, and the Children's Nutrition Research Center, about the need for this legislation. These research institutes are conducting clinical trials to test new medical therapies and devices such as gene therapy, bone marrow transplantations, and targeted antibody therapy that will lead to better medical care and save lives.

Although there may be costs associated with more access to clinical trials, I believe that we should ensure access to these trials as a means to ensure quality health care. I also believe that this Medicare reimbursement policy would encourage other health care plans to cover these otherwise routine costs.

It is also important to note that providing Medicare coverage for clinical trials will increase participation in such trials and lead to faster development of therapies for those in need. It

often takes 3 to 5 years to enroll enough participants in a cancer clinical trial to make the results legitimate and statistically meaningful. In addition, less than 3 percent of cancer patients, half of whom are over 65, currently participate in clinical trials. This legislation will likely increase enrollment and help researchers obtain meaningful results much more quickly.

This legislation would apply to all federally-approved clinical trials, including those approved by the Departments of Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Energy; the National Institutes of Health; and the Food and Drug Administration.

There are currently 3 types of costs associated with clinical trials, the cost of treatment or therapy itself, the cost of monitoring such treatments, and the cost of health care services needed by the patient. Clinical trials usually cover the cost of providing and monitoring the therapies and medications that are being tested. However, such programs do not cover routine patient care costs, those medical items and services that patients would need even if they were not participating in a clinical trial. Under current law, Medicare does not provide coverage for these costs until these treatments are established as standard therapies. Medicare does not consider these patient costs to be reasonable and necessary to medical care. My legislation would explicitly guarantee Medicare coverage for patient costs associated with clinical trials. Such costs serve as a significant obstacle to the ability of older Americans to participate in clinical trials.

As I stated earlier, Medicare claims for the health care services associated with clinical trials are not currently reimbursable. A recent GAO report concluded that Medicare is currently reimbursing for certain costs associated with clinical trials, even though the Health Care Financing Administration, the Federal agency responsible for Medicare, has stated that Medicare policy should not reimburse for these services. In fact, the GAO report estimates that HCFA reimburses as much as 50 percent of claims made under Part B of Medicare and 15 percent of claims made under Part A of Medicare.

While some physicians and hospitals have been able to convince Medicare to cover some of these patient care costs in certain clinical trials, such coverage has been uneven and there is no firm rule governing them. I believe we must end this inconsistency.

My legislation would also ensure that all phases of clinical trials are explicitly covered under this new benefit. Under the new drug application process, there are 3 types of clinical trials, phase I, phase II, and phase III trials. Phase I trials test the safety of a potential treatment. Phase II and III trials examine both the efficacy and the safety of a treatment. Phase II trials are generally smaller and involve fewer patients. Phase III trials include a larger number of patients to ensure that the proposed treatments help patients. My legislation requires that Medicare pay for all types of clinical trials.

Mr. Speaker, I was recently contacted by a constituent about the need for this legislation. Mr. Keith Gunning contacted our office regarding his mother-in-law, Mrs. Maria Guerra. Mrs. Guerra is suffering from AML, a type of leukemia that is common among senior citizens. Mrs. Guerra was enrolled in a Medicare HMO that would not permit her to join a clinical trial at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center for the treatment she needed. After much effort, Mrs. Guerra dropped her Medicare HMO coverage and returned to traditional fee-for-service Medicare. With her new Medicare coverage, Mrs. Guerra petitioned MD Anderson to join a clinical trial. After much effort on the part of her son-in-law, Mr. Gunning, Mrs. Guerra joined a clinical trial. It is still unclear whether the traditional patient costs associated with her clinical trials will be covered by Medicare. My legislation would guarantee that Mrs. Guerra would get the services she needs and would require all types of Medicare plans to provide coverage for clinical trials, including Medicare managed care plans.

Mr. Speaker, this is necessary to ensure that American patients, particularly older Americans, receive the best service, the best cutting-edge service, the best medical treatment that is available. Mr. Speaker, as a result, I believe this legislation will result in better health care for all Americans.

IN SUPPORT OF U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL IN REGARD TO CURRENT SITUATION IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed to hear some of the debate and discussion around the recent return of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan in respect to the resolution that has now to be presented to the National Security Council of the United Nations. Interestingly enough, we have been around this block before. Having spent the week in my district, in the 18th Congressional District of Houston, I was able to glean not only from those who have strong interests and concern on this issue but school children, senior citizens, who have a great concern of this Nation's future. Many of these people are veterans or potentially young people going into the United States military. Interestingly enough, they were alive in 1991, when all of us huddled around our respective television sets and news access to determine what was going on in Kuwait with the Gulf War, frightened that we would enter into a Third World War. The conclusion of that particular effort was not all that this country wanted it to be. In fact, the discussion today surrounds the same leader, the same set of circumstances, the same tragedy, the same inequities, the same losses of life, the same inability to serve women and children who need good health care, food and other services. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan left for Iraq a few days ago. I am gratified that through his leadership and the world commitment to the United Nations, we were able to carve out the understanding that we might be able at this time to get a solution without war. Why not give peaceful negotiations an attempt? Why should we accuse someone of laying down with the enemy rather than standing up for peace? I am gratified that there are reasons that as we proceed with the discussions in the United Nations, this country could support the final resolution that has been offered by Kofi Annan. He never represented anything other than let us design an agreement that I will take back to the United Nations. Let us design an agreement that I will present to the existing members of the Security Council, the 5 permanent members and others. Let us attempt to convince them that this is the right way to go, peaceful negotiations, before exercising the violence of war. Did the buildup in the Persian Gulf contribute to the negotiations? Absolutely. Was it the right thing to do? Certainly we have national interests that we must protect. But can we find better ways? We certainly should try. If, for example, this leader has acquiesced to the allowing of U.N. inspectors to continue their work, unfettered work, where they are able to see the palaces and other sites, then I say let us offer to the United Nations and those who will vote on this along with the United States this plan so that we can move forward in a peaceful manner.

May we have to go back to the drawing board? That is a possibility. Should we not give this negotiated, peaceful agreement a chance? Should we not review it with an open mind? Should we not applaud Kofi Annan who went into harm's way, if you will, and negotiated an agreement of which he did not say it is final but that I will bring it back to those members of the United Nations. Many times Americans will disagree and critique and criticize the United Nations. I would simply say that many of those who criticize are uninformed. I am gratified that there is an organization, albeit that it has those who agree and disagree that would be willing to act as the world's body where we could come and disagree and not be disagreeable, where we could come and find common solutions for peace, where it is not perfect but it is the best that we have.

And so I would simply argue that U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan should be applauded. The process should be applauded. We can always show our might. We are the United States of America. But we lead well