

cost-effective fashion. The OAA helps seniors help themselves and provides a host of necessary services.

Let us use Meals on Wheels for example. The last numbers we have are from 1995. They show that this program fed 2.4 million people 127 million meals, with about \$470 million. What that works out to is less than \$4 a meal. That is delivered to their home, and that is about half of that senior's daily food supply.

Mr. Speaker, 41 percent of Meals on Wheels programs have waiting lists, meaning a lot of seniors are not having their needs met with the current level of funding.

Without Meals on Wheels and the volunteers who help run it so cheaply and efficiently, millions of seniors would be forced to leave their own homes for nursing homes. That is not good for them and it is not good for us. Or worse, they would go hungry. But we do not need this as an example. We know this is a successful program.

I have worked with and talked to hundreds and hundreds of these volunteers who are out there volunteering every day helping other seniors. It is a program that works. It is a program that is so efficient, I cannot believe we have not increased the funding for this or reauthorized it.

We have thousands and thousands and thousands of volunteers across this country. Just in one senior center in one tiny part of my district, there are over 800 volunteers that work in programs that are authorized under the Older Americans Act. Multiply those in my district many times over, and then in the State, and across the Nation, and we have thousands.

But a successful program is one that is continually updated in order to work efficiently. We would not buy a car and never put gasoline in it. We would not buy a computer and not buy software for it. So why would we as a government allow a program like the Older Americans Act to go on and on without revising and improving its functions?

We knew in the last Congress there were some problems with the current act. We knew there were some programs that would work more effectively if streamlined and coordinated on the local level. We knew there was an increasing demand on this act to deal with the concerns of the expanding senior population. We knew it was in our best interest to continue to support the programs that successfully allow seniors to live independently, healthy and productive lives. We still know all of those things. Now it is time to act on that knowledge.

The longer we put off action on this matter, the more endangered those precious services become. An increase in the Older Americans Act funding is also essential in order to accommodate the additional individuals and responsibility that come under its care.

If we do not increase the funding now, we cripple OAA's ability to respond to our senior needs just as we

enter these baby boom years. OAA funding has not even dealt with inflation nor the number of seniors coming or its expanding duties. Without an increase in funding, we cannot expect to continue to provide the services that we value in our communities in the years ahead.

We must look toward reauthorization as a chance to make needed changes in the Older Americans Act. It is a chance to streamline programs and make what is already government's most cost-effective programs even more efficient.

We can also direct the resources toward current and new programs that they desire most. These adjustments are critical. We cannot afford to wait any longer. We have a responsibility to the seniors of this Nation and to the communities that benefit from the programs like Meals on Wheels, long-term care advocates, and elder abuse prevention that the OAA provides.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to reauthorize the Older Americans Act and turn our knowledge into action.

#### INCREASING MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

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

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to address my colleagues to encourage them to be involved in what I consider one the most important issues we face in the 105th Congress, and that is of higher education and education savings accounts, the expansion of that for our students, many of whom are graduates from high school and others who may be adults who, in fact, may need to move into a new field and, therefore, higher education will be in their future.

Mr. Speaker, last year in the historic Balanced Budget Act of 1997, the Congress wisely established education savings accounts to be used for higher education purposes. We all know that it is becoming increasingly necessary for the next generation of students to have a college education in order to make a liveable wage. With the cost of higher education continuing to spiral, the Congress needs to find effective ways of helping parents and students afford a college education.

Mr. Speaker, education savings accounts do just that. But under the Balanced Budget Act, the maximum contribution per year is only \$500. Even over many years, it is hardly enough to make a dent in the cost for a college degree.

Mr. Speaker, I will introduce legislation tomorrow that will increase the maximum contribution to \$5,000 per year. This will ensure that an adequate amount of funds will be available to defray the cost of higher education. We must give parents and students the access for college.

While local school districts, superintendents, principals, teachers, school boards, and parents are doing their best to help students be all they can be by encouraging achievements academically, athletically, and community service, the least we can do here in Congress is to make sure that education beyond college or technical school, junior college, community college, or university degree is possible. We can help that next generation unlock opportunities for a full education that leads to financial security, a rewarding career, and the opportunity give back to society.

So I hope that my colleagues in the House will join me tomorrow in sponsoring the increase to \$5,000 maximum contribution for the education savings accounts to help our students of tomorrow make sure they have the future they want for their children and their grandchildren.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the topic of my special order tonight.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

#### ON MEDICARE CUTS TO HOME HEALTH SERVICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, tonight I join my House colleagues to discuss the home health care cuts contained in last year's Balanced Budget Act. While I have pushed this issue in Congress, and with the Clinton administration since November, time is running out.

□ 2045

If Congress is going to find the will to fix this problem, all sides are going to need to act quickly and move this issue forward and move it forward now.

Mr. Speaker, a hastily conceived and ill-considered provision in last year's Balanced Budget Act mandated deep cuts in the Federal Government's commitment to home health care. My colleagues and I take to the floor tonight to shed some light on this national crisis.

When the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 was passed into law, it cut Medicare by \$115 billion over five years. Between \$16 and \$17 billion of the Medicare cuts came out of home health care through the institution of a per-beneficiary cap under an interim payment system. The new formula for home health care in the act will cap Medicare payments to home health care