Now, unfortunately, I could not win that debate. In January of this year, as I was pushing my bill, I was the only one willing to say that. I pleaded with the White House to add that kind of language in their Patients' Bill of Rights. I pleaded with the White House to add that to the State of the Union. I actually found out that the Democrat leadership was against that. The original Kennedy–Dingell bill didn't have that in it. In fact, one of my good friends in Congress on the other side of the aisle would not cosponsor my bill because it had it in it.

I find it very curious that today, that is the very thing that the Democrats decided to fall on their sword about and keep those in the Senate from putting out a good piece of legislation.

The other part of our bill, the task force bill, and my bill, PARC, that is extremely important, in my opinion, is to allow people to choose their own doctor. This is America, is it not? Why should we not have as much freedom as they do in England?

Now, our bill, for the first time, had what is known as a point of service provision in it that opened the door to allow the American people to choose their own doctor. But maybe even more importantly in this task force bill, that was not in mine, I wish it had been, was improving on medical savings accounts.

That is the greatest freedom there is in health care. I am very proud to be part of a task force that made possible medical savings accounts for those all over the country.

In conclusion, let me just say that what we hear today in the political ads is exactly what has killed health care reform in the 105th Congress. It is people who were more willing and more wishful of having votes than they were of protecting patients. That is exactly what the Democratic Senate did. They wanted to win votes on this issue, rather than opening the door and for the first time having some national public policy regarding health care.

I am going to join with my friend the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. FAWELL), who will not be here, but the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and others, and we are going to start again and keep on, and we are going to keep on and keep on until we give the patients of this country what they deserve, and that is the right to choose their own doctor and ask people who make decisions about your health care and tell people that you have to be responsible.

Mr. TALENT. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

I know I am close to being out of time, Mr. Speaker. I will just repeat again, we had a good bill. It would have provided the people the care they need, when they need it, when their physician recommends it, without big government and a lot of lawyers' fees.

As the gentleman from Georgia said, we will be back with it. I am confident we will have success. It is what the American people want. It is the best thing we could have done in the 30 years since the Congress passed Medicare.

□ 1730

THE OMNIBUS BILL: WHERE IS IT, WHAT DOES IT CONTAIN, WHO IS WRITING IT, AND WHEN WILL MEMBERS GET A CHANCE TO SEE IT?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HANSEN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, do we remember the movie Roger and Me, where producer Roger Moore attempted to find Roger Smith, the President of General Motors? He looked everywhere for him. He looked in Detroit, he looked in Boca Raton. He could not find him, as Roger dutifully avoided the camera lens.

In Congress this month and last, we are producing a sequel to Roger and Me. It is called the Omnibus and Me. Let me ask, where is the omnibus bill? We know it is a large bill. We know we cannot find it. We know it is looking more and more like one of those dreaded congressional Christmas tree bills. No one seems to know in which room it is being written. No one knows exactly who is writing it. In fact, we are told three or four staffers are actually in charge. So who exactly are these unelected people? Where can Members go to read the bill?

Most importantly, Members do not know what is in the bill. We are told one-third of $1 billion is being slipped in to bail out poultry traders, get this, in Russia. That issue never came up during House consideration of the agricultural appropriation bill, which passed here overwhelmingly. It never came up in the Senate, either.

According to Sect. 201(f) of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978; ''The Commodity Credit Corporation may not make export sales financing authorized under this section available in connection with sales of an agricultural commodity to any country that the Secretary determines cannot adequately service the debt associated with such sale.'' Currently, Russia is ineligible for the program.

So why is regular order being violated for certain special interests who can gain access to the corridors of this Congress very late in the year?

In fact, every piece of legislative business not completed during this Congress, now famous as the do-nothing Congress, the 105th Congress, is now being put on the table as bargaining chips among a very few players. Why? Because this Chamber and the other have not completed their business on time. The fiscal year began October 1. Everything happening here in Congress is being played actually in overtime, simply because every single congressional deadline under regular order has been missed by the group in charge.

What about the budget? There is no approved budget resolution for 1999, the fiscal year. We are already into that year. Some Committee on the Budget Members in leadership positions here in the House want to run for president, but they have not even completed the responsibilities of their committee work here in the House.

Look at the appropriation bills. A majority of them, eight of 13, have not been completed on time. Now they are being picked apart by a very few folks around here, without the sunlight of regular order and regular committee oversight.

Why is Congress here in October, at the end of a fiscal year? There is no budget. A majority of appropriation bills for fiscal year 1999, which has already begun, are not completed, a majority. Congress is operating in a stop-start knee-jerk operation actually not worthy of those that we represent.

For the record, let me point out again, there is no completed budget for the fiscal year we are already in because Congress did not finish its legislative business by passing its 13 appropriation bills by September 30.

On September 25 the first continuing resolution was offered that extended the congressional session 14 days overtime, as a handful of Members began drafting the omnibus bill that I have been looking for for several days. They are doing so in secret. Members, find the room and tell me where all this is being done.

Then, when they still did not finish after 2 more weeks, a second continuing resolution passed the House on October 9. They said they needed 4 more days to add more to the Christmas tree bill. That did not work, so then a third continuing resolution was offered on October 12, Columbus Day, somewhat historic, I suppose, for 2 more days, until October 14. Now today, a fourth overtime resolution was offered for 3 more days until Friday, the end of this week, October 16.

I sure would not put those manipulating this hit and miss scheduling in charge of anything after this Congress is over.

So I ask, where is the omnibus Christmas tree appropriation bill? Where can Members read it? Where, more importantly, can the public read it? Is it going to be put on the Internet, so the American people can read it before we have to vote on it, whenever that is?

I would say to Members, and I have been here a few years, I can tell Members with absolute certainty, if Members are not able to read this bill before it comes to the floor, Members have only one choice: Vote no.

TRIBUTE AND A THANK YOU TO KEITH PUTNAM, A HERO FROM HANAHAN, SOUTH CAROLINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MYRICK). Under a previous order of the

House, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SANFORD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANFORD. Madam Speaker, I rise today because in many ways we are a country in search of heroes. We look back through the history pages for heroes. We look at George Washington. We look at Patton. We look at William Wallace. We look at Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and his group of bedraggled soldiers in the battle of Gettysburg. We look at movies, where there are all kinds of different heroes that may or may not have existed, but we look at them in movies.

We look around the world for heroes. In Tiananmen Square, the young student stands up in front of a tank, because he has ideas that he believes in. A young student in Moscow back in 1991 stands up in front of a tank, again because of ideas he believes in. Yet, when we look at movies and we look at history and we look at events around the world, what we oftentimes forget is that in fact, heroes live at home. Heroes live in our midst.

What I want to say for just a few minutes today is that I stand here in praise of one such hero. That hero is a young 15-year-old boy by the name of Keith Putnam, who lived in Hanahan, South Carolina. This boy was the quintessential low country boy. I grew up in the woods and waters of the low country. When you get it in your veins, it stays in your veins.

It was certainly in his, because this boy loved hunting, he loved fishing, he loved sailing, he loved the water; he loved all elements of the low country. This boy was athletic. He had played on the soccer team for the last 2 years. This boy was an achiever. He was in Who's Who in American High School Students for the last 2 years.

He was a hardworking, good person. He had wanted to buy a car. He was not given money to buy a car, he went out and earned money to buy a car. By cutting grass for a whole summer in different yards across North Charleston and Hanahan, he managed to end up with enough money to buy himself a 1965 Volkswagen Beetle; and he did not do it just on Sunday mornings, because he was an usher at Peace Lutheran church.

The boy was known for the way he helped other people. In short, I would say that he was everything that is special and unique about being American. In fact, he was as well a dreamer, because he dreamed of going to the Citadel, and then going on to the Air Force Academy, and then ultimately becoming a commercial airline pilot.

Yet, those dreams came to an end about 2 months ago, because Keith Putnam was killed in Hanahan, South Carolina, about 2 months ago. He was killed trying to save the life of another. He and a friend were driving down the road one evening, and they looked and saw a car lodged on the railroad tracks there in Hanahan.

They jumped out of the car. He jumped out of the car. He pulls a woman with her 3-year-old baby out of the car, gets her to safety. He goes back to the car. He pulls another woman out of the car, gets her to safety. He goes back a third time to make sure that there is nobody else still in the car, and tragically, the train hits the car and drives it into Keith, killing Keith.

So I just wanted to say here today how sorry I am for what the Putnams have been through, and most of all, to thank Keith for the life that he lived. Because though I did not know Keith, his life stands out as one of those special lives. William Wallace, 600 years ago, stood on a battlefield totally out numbered. He said, Remember, men, they can take from us our lives, but they can never take our freedom. He went on to say to his men, Men, every man has to die, but not every man gets to live.

I think what is special about Keith's life is that he actually lived it. He shows us about being engaged and being involved in life. Most of all, what he shows us is that, in fact, heroes do live in our midst. For that, I thank him.

REPUBLICANS SUPPORT MORE DOLLARS FOR THE CLASSROOM, AND EDUCATION DIRECTED FROM THE LOCAL LEVEL

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, I am absolutely amazed that the same people who opposed the Dollars to the Classroom Act, a Republican bill to send $2.74 billion to our children's public schools, are today telling the Nation that Republicans are opposed to hiring new teachers for public school classrooms.

This is a falsehood. Republicans have been working to send dollars to local schools so new teachers can be hired, classrooms can be connected to the Internet, computers can be bought to enhance learning, microscopes can be purchased so biology students can view various parts of nature, reading specialists can be hired to ensure that every child learns to read, and the list goes on and on.

The point is that Republicans do not believe that the Federal Government should dictate and mandate to principals, teachers, and parents what is needed for our Nation's classrooms.

Do Members of Congress actually have the audacity to believe that they in their Capitol Hill offices and those in the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue or bureaucrats at the Department of Education in Washington know what is needed in every single classroom in our Nation? They cannot possibly know.

A child in a classroom in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, might have different needs than one in New York City or Anchorage, Alaska. As a teacher, I know that the only way to truly know what a child needs to learn is to see that child, to listen to that child every day. That is why Republicans are working for local control of education. While the President wants to control local schools from the Washington beltway, Republicans are working to send dollars to our Nation's classrooms.

Do many of our Nation's public schools need more teachers? Many do. However, 100,000 new teachers is not a cure-all solution for the schoolchildren of our Nation. Are these 100,000 good teachers? The President evidently does not care about that, since he vetoed our bill for teacher training and merit pay.

There are many wonderful teachers serving our Nation's classrooms. Even they will tell us that just hiring another person is not going to improve learning. Is that not what we are about, improving classroom learning for our children? Then why is the other side afraid of sending dollars to the classroom, to be used to meet the educational needs of local schoolchildren, whether the need is for a new teacher, new instructional materials, or a new computer?

Why has the President threatened to veto the Dollars to the Classroom Act, that would send an additional $800 million to the classroom to meet these critical needs without new taxes, just increased efficiency by bypassing the bureaucracy?

In the omnibus bill Republicans are supporting education funding, but with the requirement that the dollars are sent to the classroom. We simply believe that local school districts should decide if they need more teachers, more books, more computers, or building repairs.

We support the hiring of new high-quality teachers, the reducing of class size, providing professional development to teachers to teach children, providing for teacher competency exams. But we do not want this directed by Washington bureaucrats. We want more dollars to local schools, more local control, and more local flexibility.

Teachers are not calling for more government programs, they are calling for more local control and flexibility, dollars to the classroom. A program similar to the Dollars to the Classroom Act and one which the President has opposed is Title VI, the block grant. Educators nationwide have expressed how much they like this program, for it is extremely flexible, allowing them to focus on priorities of children in their schools.

On Monday I believe our House Republicans offered the President a $1.1 billion educational proposal that would expand Title VI, emphasizing the hiring of new high-quality teachers to reduce class size.

I would like to tell the Members about a few of the locally-driven initiatives that have resulted from Title VI in Pennsylvania.