

Early Access bill. The new version provides tax credits to help more individuals 55 to 64 to buy into Medicare or to purchase COBRA continuation coverage.

The mechanisms for providing more individuals age 55 to 64 coverage has not changed. Our bill would enable people 62 to 64 and displaced workers 55 to 64 to pay premiums to buy into Medicare. It would require employers who drop previously promised retiree coverage to allow early retirees with limited alternatives to have access to COBRA continuation coverage until they reach age 65 and, thereby, qualify for Medicare.

To make these initiatives more affordable, this legislation would establish tax credits equal to 25 percent of the premium for participants in the Medicare buy-in and individuals eligible for COBRA coverage. Our legislation provides uninsured individuals between 55 and 64 an opportunity to buy into Medicare since the private market surely has failed them. And it restores some measure of fairness to individuals who have paid for employer-sponsored retiree coverage paycheck after paycheck only to have it terminated when they actually need it.

Some individuals perceive of Medicare expansion as a backdoor means of establishing universal coverage. Expanding Medicare is not a backdoor means of moving towards universal coverage. I would say we are using the front door. Medicare works. We need universal coverage, and if expanding Medicare will help us put an end to the inefficient, gap-ridden patchwork of private and public health plans we are living in now, then I am all for it.

The United States needs universal health coverage. Nothing short of that can assure security, fairness, or economic efficiency. We need a system that does not discriminate against the very individuals that it is supposed to protect. Until we get there, it makes sense to take this step.

CINCINNATI'S SAINT XAVIER BRINGS HOME ANOTHER STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 3 minutes.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, Cincinnati's Saint Xavier High School went to Columbus over the weekend and returned home with the Ohio State Division 1 basketball championship.

Our hardest congratulations go out to Coach Scott Martin and all the players whose hard work and dedication made it possible. Their families, their fans, and their community are very proud of them.

Saint X's victory marked the school's second State title this year. Just last month, the Bomber swim team also notched the State champion-

ship. It has been quite a year for one of Cincinnati's top schools and a stalwart in the GCL.

Madam Speaker, as a graduate of rival LaSalle High School, I must admit I am slightly envious. Hopefully, next year my Lancers will be back on top. But in the meantime, I tip my hat to the scholar athletes from Saint X.

On a sad note, players and students learned Sunday that assistant principal and teacher of some 30 years, Tom Meyer, who was known as Saint Xavier's number one basketball fan, had succumbed to cancer just a few hours after his favorite team won the title. Knowing he was near death, the players had specially made warm-up suits designed to honor their friend, Mr. Meyer, as they made their final run at the State championship. The back of the shirts had the following message, each of them: "May his pain be comforting knowing that he has touched the lives of so many. Thank you, Mr. Meyer, for carrying your cross for us." A very touching message for a man loved by many.

To all the Bomber players and coaches and families and friends, our hardy congratulations. And to the family of Saint X's number one fan, Tom Meyer, our most sincere condolences.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 4 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, to You we commend ourselves as Your servants and fit instruments to accomplish Your holy will on this day You have given us. Without You, we can do nothing. With Your guidance and grace, we can accomplish great things, because You alone are holy and good. In You, we find wisdom and power. To You alone belongs the glory.

Bless this assembly today. On this new day, bless Your servant whom You have called to minister to the Members of this House. Fill all of us with Your Spirit of love, forgiveness and peace.

May our prayers be broad and deep. May our words spring forth from hearts purified by Your spirit and our actions manifest Your power taking root in us. In all we say and do, may we grow in awareness that You alone live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

THE EDUCATION SAVINGS AND SCHOOL EXCELLENCE ACT OF 2000

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, this week the House is considering H.R. 7, the Education Savings and School Excellence Act of 2000.

For years, we have watched as our education quality has gone way below the standards set by other nations. For example, the U.S. 12th graders currently test among the lowest among the industrialized nations in math and science.

If our Nation is to continue setting the standard for the rest of the world in science, research, and technology, then we must take steps now to help ensure that each child learns to their maximum ability.

Mr. Speaker, this education savings account will allow a Roth-type IRA for investment to help assure the best possible education for academic tutoring, for books, for fees, computers, special education services and other education need.

I understand Vice President GORE has now supported tax credits, tax deductions for contributions that will go into political campaigns, but he has denied support for this bill that allows families to have some kind of tax incentive for savings to help assure the best possible education.

CENSUS BUREAU OUT OF CONTROL

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, the Census Bureau is literally out of control. Check this out: Reports now say that the Census Bureau is, quote/unquote, willing to sacrifice a true head count of American citizens for more personal detailed information. Unbelievable. Forms with questions about your bank account, your cars, how many bathrooms you have, your job. What is next, Congress, your sex life?