

awful lot of things. But it just continues.

How sad is it that we have AL GORE saying that his mother-in-law takes dog pills that actually cost less for the dog and more for him; and then when he is pushed on it, his staff says yes, it is not true, it is not true. It is just unbelievable, and it continues over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, we hear that there is not a prescription drug plan on the table. There is. We actually passed one. But because it does not socialize the dispensing of drugs in the Department of HHS, somehow, it is a mean-spirited plan.

Madam Speaker, I just hope that the Vice President, and I hope that my friends on the left, can actually refrain from the type of scare tactics that they have been engaging in for over 6 years, because it does not work. We have got grandmoms too. We have parents who depend on Medicare, who depend on Social Security, who depend on the type of things like, for instance, a bill that I was just able to see enacted into law this past week where we passed long-term health care. But we did it in a way that did not socialize long-term health care in a bureaucracy in Washington, D.C.

We did it in a way where the decisions are made locally. The decisions are made by doctors, by patients, by health care providers, and that is where we need to go. I certainly hope again that especially the Vice President, who seeks to be the next President of these United States, can refrain from these types of exaggerations that are clearly intended to distort the truth, clearly intended to scare senior citizens into believing that one group of people are for seniors and one group are against them. It may make him feel morally superior, but it is a lie; and also it is very insulting to those of us who believe that one can care for senior citizens without centralizing and socializing every single function in the Department of HHS.

We believe, we believe that people in our communities, people in the free market, that doctors, physicians, and senior citizens, can make intelligent choices also, with the benefit of the type of plan that we passed here several months ago. So hopefully, the fear mongering can be left behind, not only on the campaign trail, but also in this House. It is too important for our seniors, and it is too important for us.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must remind all Members that although remarks in debate may level criticism against the policies of the President and the Vice President or against the nominated candidates for those offices, still, remarks in debate must avoid personality and, therefore, may not include personal accusations or characterizations.

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

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

THE HUNGER RELIEF ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Madam Speaker, as somebody who is on the left, on the other side of the aisle, I want to speak about an issue I think both sides can agree on.

Madam Speaker, in August, many of us in Congress were delighted by the catered cuisine served at various events during our party conventions. Yet, while we dined, 31 million Americans were either hungry or living under the specter of hunger. The economy is strong, unemployment is at a 30-year low, welfare rolls have been slashed. Still, every day in America, despite welfare reform or, perhaps, as some would say, because of it, there are families who need and use food stamps to eat. Every day in America, despite welfare reform or, perhaps, again, because of it, many go hungry, more have poor health, great numbers of our children, far too many, are unable to learn because they do not have enough to eat.

As we near the end of this Congress, we have a chance to change that shocking and scandalous situation.

I am so proud to have joined 181 of our colleagues in the House and 38 Senators, Democrats and Republicans, in support of legislation that focuses on food and takes notice of this Nation's nutritional needs. The Hunger Relief Act, H.R. 3192 in the House and S. 1805 in the Senate will help one in 10 families in our Nation who are affected by hunger.

There is evidence of hunger in 3.6 percent of all households in America. According to the report from Bread for the World, entitled "Domestic Hunger and Poverty Facts," 31 million people live in households that experience hunger or the risk of hunger. That number represents 1 in every 10 households in the United States. Close to 4 million children are hungry. Madam Speaker, 14 million children, 20 percent of the population of children, live in food-insecure homes. In food-insecure homes, meals are skipped, the size of meals are reduced; and again, according to the Bread of the World, sometimes the occupants of these homes go without food for a whole day.

More than 10 percent of all households in America are food insecure. Because there is such hunger and food insecurity, there is also infant mortality, growth stunting, iron deficiency, anemia, poor learning, and increased chances of disease. Because of such hunger and food insecurity, the poor are more likely to remain poor, the

hungry more likely to remaining hungry, and the sick are less likely to get well soon. It seems strange that we must fight for food for those who cannot fight for themselves.

Madam Speaker, hunger is a condition of poverty. It is really time for us to stop picking on the poor. Less than 3 percent of the budget goes to feed the hungry, and it is well documented that when we use our resources for food and nutrition, the health needs of this Nation's poor, it does make a difference.

For more than 3 decades now, the Food Stamp program has been a corner stone of America's fight against hunger, and the first line of defense. Over the years, the program has been steadily improving, with the elimination of the requirement that food stamps be purchased, being one of the most significant breakthroughs. While many, too many continue to confront food insecurity, the situation today is far better than it was in 1960 when the Federal Government first began to focus on food. Similarly, the health consequences of this Nation's programs have experienced marked improvement. The data on birth rate, physical growth, and anemia is striking.

For example, the data shows that over a 20-year period, the incidence of physical stunting among preschool children decreased by 6.5 percent; and the improvement in the Nation's nutritional status indicates that while we need to continue our work, we can change the course of malnutrition among the poor and the needy. Over a 10-year period, according to the data, the percent of low-income households that meet 100 percent of the recommended dietary allowance grew twice as much as the improvement in the general population.

We are making progress, but we still have a long ways to go. That is why, Madam Speaker, Congress should and Congress must pass the Hunger Relief legislation before we go home this year. It is the least we can do, indeed, while we have such great prosperity.

TRIBUTE TO CHRISTOPHER GALE

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

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding individual from my community. His name is Christopher Gale, he is 18 years old, and I have had the opportunity to spend some time with him over the last few days. Christopher was in Washington as part of the Boys and Girls Club National Youth of the Year competition. Christopher was the winner of the Midwest region. He is an outstanding young person from my hometown.

Mr. Speaker, he has been a member of the Boys and Girls Club of Holland, Michigan, for the last 9 years. Today,