

Mr. Speaker, the last point that the gentleman from North Dakota made about if this provision were to pass, then it could reduce the pressure on the States to enter into agreements which would create qualified plans under the trade bill we passed last year is a legitimate point. It is the only legitimate point he or his colleagues on the Democratic side have made today, but that is a legitimate point. We concede that. That is why we listened to the gentleman from North Dakota and his complaints earlier while the committee was considering this and we reduced the window within which unemployed workers could take advantage of this waiver.

Under the provision, as it now stands in this bill, they would only have until the end of calendar year 2004 to waive their rights under the trade bill and take advantage of the tax credit to purchase insurance for themselves and their family. So I concede that that is a legitimate point. We do not want the States to stop their efforts to create plans that would qualify for the credit under the Trade Act. We do not think the States will. In fact, of the speakers that were offered by the other side of the aisle today, Maryland, the first speaker, the State of Maryland, already has a qualified plan in place, so this provision in the bill today will not affect unemployed workers in Maryland at all; North Dakota has a provision in place, so it will not affect unemployed workers in North Dakota. Texas is very close to having a provision ready, we are told. The only State that is behind in this process is the State of Washington.

So we know that basically two-thirds of the States already either have a plan in place or are negotiating to get plans in place. The Treasury Department thinks, after researching this, that only about 20 States or so would not have plans in place by this August. So this provision in this bill would not affect all of those States that have plans in place by this August, probably not until September or October because this bill will not make it through the process before this fall.

But let us think about those States which for whatever reason, their legislatures do not meet this year, their insurance commissioner is not as adept as the gentleman from North Dakota was in getting these things done, for whatever reason, what about the unemployed workers in those States who want to use their credit to get insurance for their families and they do not have access to COBRA? They are left out in the cold.

I would say to my good friends on the other side, do you not care about these people and their families? Do you not want them to use the generous tax credit that we provided to get health insurance for their families? If you do not pass the provision that is in this bill, they cannot get insurance and utilize the credit to get it. Period. You will leave them with nothing. You will

leave them bare. They will not have insurance. That is the fact. That is what we are trying to correct. We are trying to make sure that all those unemployed workers who want to use the credit to cover their families can do so. And so we have said to the States that have not yet complied with the requirements of the Trade Act, we are going to give you one more year to do that.

And in the meantime, any of your unemployed workers who want to use the tax credit can avail themselves of that by waiving the requirements of the Trade Act. It is not compulsory, it is voluntary, we are not going to twist anybody's arm to make them waive the requirements of the Trade Act. We are going to tell them if you want to waive that, you may. And if that enables you to use the tax credit to cover yourselves and your families, by golly, that is a good thing. And CBO estimates that 12,000 workers and their families will take advantage of this provision and will get coverage and who, if this bill does not pass, would not be able to get coverage.

I think, Mr. Speaker, what we have heard today from the other side is a lot of obfuscation. The truth is they never wanted the health tax credit to be used for anything other than COBRA. That is the truth. It was we Republicans who insisted that we think about unemployed workers who did not happen to come from a big company or from a company with employment coverage that would qualify under COBRA. We said, what about the people who work for small businesses? What about the people who did not have any coverage, they had to get individual coverage? Should we not have some compassion for those unemployed workers as well, not just unionized workers? We battled and fought and scraped and finally won, got a compromise so that those workers could get some advantage from the tax credit.

But the Democrats said, okay, we'll agree to the compromise, but we're going to have to have a provision that goes even further than the Republican-passed legislation, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, HIPAA.

That was a Republican bill. Up until that time, there were no guarantees for workers changing jobs. Health insurance was not portable at all. Everybody was going to be subject to those conditions that the gentleman from North Dakota talked about, pre-existing conditions, no guaranteed issue, until Republicans passed the bill in 1996, I believe, called HIPAA, which said that if you had 18 months prior coverage in the health insurance system, then you do not have to worry about getting covered again. Insurance companies offering health insurance must guarantee you issue of that plan. And you are not subject to any pre-existing conditions clauses in those insurance plans.

We did that. We passed that. We are the ones who put those guarantees in

law. And so last year, we agreed for this small set of workers who lost their jobs because of trade actions or were covered under the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation that in that small set of workers, we would reduce that 18-month requirement to 3 months, so that if they only had 3 months prior coverage, they would not have to go through all the underwriting and so forth that workers used to have to go through before HIPAA. And we agreed to that. But now we find that we have large numbers of workers who are not able to avail themselves of the credit because States have not yet put into place plans that comply with that 3-month prior coverage requirement.

So in the meantime, while those States are getting those plans up and running, we say, let those individuals who want to waive that requirement, they may have had 18 months prior coverage and, therefore, they would still have those guarantees that the gentleman from North Dakota spoke about, why not let them voluntarily waive their requirements under the Trade Act, get the insurance for themselves and their families and then when all the States have these policies in place, the 3-month requirement will be there in those plans. I simply do not understand why the other side would object so strenuously to letting 12,000 families get health insurance who otherwise would not be able to get it if this provision does not pass.

I urge the House to have compassion for these workers as well as workers with COBRA coverage and pass this bill today.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). All time for debate on the bill has expired.

Pursuant to the order of the House of today, further proceedings on this bill will be postponed until tomorrow.

□ 1615

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCCRERY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 8.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Louisiana?

There was no objection.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

THE SHAMBLES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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 think it is important to recap what we have done today and what we are doing in this House. There are certain protocols that prohibit us from saying things like wake up, America, listen to the debates of this House, and to the concerns of this Nation. This is the holiday time, the time that schools are getting out, families are coming together for vacations. So this is a good time for the smoke and mirrors legislation of this body, dominated by those who have no simple or at least appreciation for the enormous task that we have in putting this Nation back together again.

Let me simply recount, Mr. Speaker, the journey that we are taking. We realize that 21 days this Nation was at war, and that we were able to come under budget for a war that many disagreed with but not with the valiant work of our young people. Unfortunately, as we projected about the needs of this Nation and a war with Iraq, we failed to take into consideration the aftermath, the tragedy of 51 young men and valiant heroes that have lost their lives since the ending of this war, the cost of maintaining 160,000-plus soldiers on the front lines, the \$1 billion a month that we are spending in Afghanistan in the war against terrorism, the large number of dollars that are necessary and not yet expended with respect to homeland security.

As a member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, I realize that many of our local governments are asking and pleading for dollars for their first responders.

In the backdrop of that, we have a growing deficit and an increasing unemployment. College graduates are coming out with wonderful diplomas and great smiles of admiration by their family, and yet they can find no work.

This body of course is now trying to grapple with the issue of a guaranteed Medicare prescription drug benefit for the seniors that we promised them for now 8 years, and what are we giving to them? A mere \$400 billion. It sounds like a big number, but we are going to leave the seniors holding the bag by, in actuality, having a gap. That means rather than getting a guaranteed prescription drug benefit in Medicare, we are going to tell seniors to go out and be fishers of men, fishers of HMOs, fishers of low-cost drugs. This is what we are going to give them. They have to go out and shop for HMOs that will give them a drug benefit, and then if they spend up to \$2,000, forget about it.

They have got to pay for it the rest of it until they hit \$5,000. Some seniors will fall through the cracks, and maybe some will lose their lives because of their inability to get the prescription drugs. We can spend a whole bunch of

money on doing things that are really not necessary, \$1 trillion tax cut to the likes of Warren Buffett, who said that he is paying less taxes than his receptionist, one of the richest men in the world. We gave a big tax cut with a big deficit, and now we cannot give our seniors a protection that we have been pleading for for 8 years.

We now have come to the floor of the House and the eloquent statesmen who were making these points about the taxpayer bill that we just passed, or that we will vote on, and I wish all of us could have voted on it in a bipartisan way, the eloquence of saying we are giving a tax credit, but what they are doing is they are eliminating the opportunity for some laid-off workers to get health care by the State by passing this bill. So they are undermining the very needs of those who are in most need, working men and women.

Right now we have been trying to pass a child tax credit for those making between \$11,000 and \$26,000. Those are our young men and women in the United States military. They make \$1,000 a month. Their families are back home. We are trying to give them a tax credit. What is happening? Republican friends want to give an \$82 billion tax giveaway, stalling the bill so we cannot get the bill to the President's desk. The President said he would sign the Senate bill, the same bill we want to pass. Within hours, that bill could be signed right now at the picnic that they are getting ready to have. That bill could be signed, and we would be providing a tax cut to the young men and women, families that are overseas, military men and women making \$1,000 a month.

Mr. Speaker, I have got to say that we have got to fix the shambles of the legislative agenda, begin to stand up and speak for the American people who are in need, and it is time for the American people to wake up and understand what is occurring on the floor of the House.

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

(Mr. GUTKNECHT 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 Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

PRESIDENTIAL INQUIRY

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

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the House has adjourned its regular busi-

ness for today, and they have gone off to the White House for a picnic; so I do not suppose very many of them will be in their office listening to this, but I think they should at least consider the fact that today's newspapers and the BBC news, the ABC news, the Economist, all come together in saying the war is not over, boys. Three more dead in Baghdad in violence. There was a drive-by shooting at a petrol station. It sounds a little like some of our cities. And we are there bringing them democracy. I guess that is what democracy means to our President. I do not know. It is hard to know. But when I was reading these articles, I thought of one that I read recently. This is dated March 21, not so long ago. "A United Nations survey of civilian damage caused by the allied bombardment of Iraq calls the results near apocalyptic. The survey, which was made public today, recommends an immediate end to the embargo on imports of food and other essential supplies to prevent imminent catastrophe."

This article went on further to say that the U.S. position is that by "making life uncomfortable for the Iraqi people, it," meaning sanctions, "will eventually encourage them to remove President Saddam Hussein from power." This is what the situation was. This is from 1991. We intended to get rid of Saddam Hussein from 1991 on, at least. And for the President and his advisers to come around here saying it just happened since 9/11 and all that kind of stuff is absolutely nonsense.

At the time that one of the Air Force planners said big picture, we want people to know, get rid of this guy and we will be more than happy to assist in the rebuilding. We are not going to tolerate Saddam Hussein and his regime. Fix that and we will fix their electricity. That is what the United States was saying in 1991. This is the country that wants to bring democracy to Iraq. And it goes on.

I mean, it is really wonderful. One planner said, people say you did not recognize that it was going to have an effect on water or sewage? Well, what were we trying to do? Help out the Iraqi people? No. What we were doing with the attacks on infrastructure was to accelerate the effect of sanctions. We bombed the sewer pumping stations. We bombed the water pumping stations. We bombed the television. We bombed the telephone. We bombed the electrical. We bombed everything because we were going to inflict pain on the Iraqi people.

Now if we roll fast forward to today, people in the White House, and I do not know how they could have been thinking about it, Mr. Speaker, that these people were going to be just waiting, so excited to have the Americans come in and bring them democracy.

What kind of fools could plan and state publicly what they were doing and then expect people to be grateful that they were bombed, that their hospitals had no electricity for the refrigeration to save the children and the