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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ADERHOLT).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 7, 2003.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ROBERT B. ADERHOLT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill and a concurrent resolution of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 2152. An act to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to extend for an additional 5 years the special immigrant religious worker program.

H. Con. Res. 282. Concurrent resolution honoring the life of Johnny Cash.

The message was announced that the Senate has passed a bill and a concurrent resolution of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1642. An act to extend the duration of the immigrant investor regional center pilot program for 5 additional years, and for other purposes.

S. Con. Res. 66. Concurrent resolution commending the National Endowment for Democracy for its contributions to democratic development around the world on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the National Endowment for Democracy.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 103-296, the Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, and in consultation with the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member of the Finance Committee, appoints Sylvester J. Schieber, of Mary-

land, as a member of the Social Security Advisory Board for a six-year term.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 99-498, the Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, appoints Rene Drouin, of New Hampshire, vice Charles Terrell, of Massachusetts, to the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance for a three-year term.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) for 5 minutes.

THE HARM OF MEANS TESTING THE MEDICARE PROGRAM

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise on the House floor to express my concern regarding an agreement that is being sought by the Medicare conference committee on means testing the Medicare program. Accepting a provision that will allow means testing of Medicare beneficiaries will in time only lead to the destruction of the Medicare program that seniors rely on and that we as Democrats have worked on preserving since its days of inception nearly 40 years ago.

The House Republican bill means tests the protection against high drug costs. Seniors who earn more than \$60,000, or \$120,000 for couples, will not have the \$4,900 catastrophic protection, and instead they will have to pay more out of pocket before they get cata-

strophic protection because of their income. Means testing the catastrophic protection will force many seniors to pay more for their drug coverage.

This provision in the House Republican Medicare legislation for the first time in the history of Medicare taxes middle class, or I should say the middle class seniors, twice for their benefits. Today Medicare is available to all who are eligible. Everyone pays the same percentage in payroll taxes and gets the same benefits out. Universality is the central theme of the Medicare program, and all Americans who contribute taxes during their working years are eligible for the full package of Medicare benefits when they retire.

The House Republicans, however, are taking the first steps to turning Medicare into what is essentially or what could become a welfare program, making higher-income seniors pay more for their Medicare benefits. What this amounts to is an additional Medicare tax on higher-income seniors who have already paid more money in Medicare taxes because of their higher earnings. Now they are getting hit again through this drug benefit and are being asked to pay another tax to pay more money for their drugs than other seniors. They basically are paying twice for their benefits. Keep in mind that in many localities a \$60,000 income does not make you wealthy, and that once the precedent is set, there will likely be a domino effect with the cutoff reaching lower and lower, affecting more and more middle class seniors. Right now the Republicans are talking \$60,000, but that could change to \$50,000 or \$40,000; and as it goes down, more middle income seniors will be impacted.

It is unclear how the provision in the House Republican bill is going to work, or whether it will even work. The Medicare administrator will send the names of seniors to the IRS, and the IRS will send back the senior's income for the previous year. Medicare will

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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