

but the reality is there are places in the country that are still adversely affected.

I went through Nome, Alaska, last summer coming back from ANWR. One of the OB doctors there said, boy, I hope you get that done because we need an anesthesiologist here and we cannot afford the liability premiums. I said, How do you do obstetrics without an anesthesiologist? He said, If someone needs a C-section, we put them on a plane to Anchorage. Anchorage is an hour and a half away, and I am given to understand there is bad weather from time to time in Nome, Alaska. I fail to see how we are furthering the cause of patients' safety by allowing this situation to continue.

Mr. Speaker, fortunately we have a President right now who will sign medical liability if we will get that bill passed. I am not supposed to mention the name of his opponent, but I do not believe his opponent will do that because he has either been absent or voted "no" when that has come up in the Senate.

#### HOW PHYSICIANS WILL BENEFIT FROM NEW PRESCRIPTION DRUG LEGISLATION

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the Medicare prescription drug bill and one of the other great benefits that has come to our Nation, and that has been in the physician payment arena.

First, this law will block the impending physician payment cuts that were scheduled for 2004 and 2005, as well as give physicians increases of 1.5 percent for the next 2 years. In Illinois where we are losing physicians because of medical malpractice issues, having a provision that keeps doctors in Illinois is very, very critical. As a result of overturning the cuts and increasing the payments, Illinois stands to keep 400 million for Illinois physicians and the patients they serve. The geographic payment adjuster has been set at 1.0 in 2004 through 2006, which affects how physicians are paid in different regions of the country. The agreement also provides for physician scarcity bonus payments from 2005 to 2007. These grants go to those who practice in areas where there is a shortage of physicians.

Mr. Speaker, there is a shortage of physicians in Illinois because of medical malpractice, and physicians are leaving the State. At least in the Medicare prescription drug bill, there is care for keeping some of those.

#### TAX RELIEF FOR FAMILIES AND SMALL BUSINESSES

(Mr. REHBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. REHBERG. Mr. Speaker, this spring as we complete another tax season, families and small businesses have reason to celebrate. Thanks to our \$350 billion tax relief bill which the President signed into law last year, working taxpayers are getting back more of their hard-earned money. Families now have more money to put food on the table, pay their mortgages, and pick up school supplies for their kids. These families know the truth about taxes, that it is their money, not Washington's money. Letting them keep their money has helped put the economy back on track. This relief has given families and working taxpayers a smaller tax bite, an increase in the child credit to \$1,000, and yet another reduction in the marriage penalty. No wonder families this year have reason to celebrate.

I am happy to report for the first time in a long while unemployment is down in my home State of Montana. Montana's jobless rate is now just 4.6 percent. Why? Because government does not create an economy, businesses do, one job at a time.

#### BUDGET RESOLUTION

(Mr. PORTMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say I am looking forward to voting on the budget later today. This budget is a good document because it does what we know works to get the deficit under control. First, it restrains spending, extremely important. Second, it allows the economy to continue to grow, as my friend from Montana just talked about, by not raising taxes on the American people. Significantly, the budget also provides for the prescription drug benefit this Congress passed late last year. After spending 5 years talking about it, a lot of rhetoric, a real political football, we finally on a bipartisan basis provided prescription drug benefits in a meaningful way.

What numbers will we be relying on in the budget? We will rely on the Congressional Budget Office, as under the rules of the House we are required to do. There has been a lot of discussion about what numbers we should use. Of course we are going to use the Congressional Budget Office as we must. There are other estimates out there. Some may be right, some may be wrong; but this Congress is doing the right thing by providing a prescription drug benefit and providing under the rules of the House for the right estimate of those costs.

#### HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

(Mr. CHOCOLA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CHOCOLA. Mr. Speaker, one of the most important issues that we face as a Nation today domestically is the rising cost of health care. The most ef-

fective way to address that issue is to return more ownership and control of health care coverage. That is exactly what the health savings accounts created under the bipartisan Medicare bill do. HSAs are portable accounts that allow individuals to save and withdraw tax-free dollars for their health care needs and medical expenses not covered by their insurance. Individuals own the accounts and the savings can be carried over year after year and from job to job, and people can build wealth into their retirement.

By offering individuals ownership and control of their health care coverage, we return control to the patients; and that is exactly where it should be. Mr. Speaker, I applaud my colleagues who have voted to support the bipartisan Medicare bill which will help reduce medical expenses and improve the health care system in America.

#### BUDGET RESOLUTION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

(Ms. PRYCE of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, as we consider the budget today, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will talk about their budget for America, which includes repealing tax cuts we fought so hard for. But their quote-unquote repeal is nothing more than job-killing tax increases on American workers. Period. Their alleged "plan" would blow America's economic engine. It would be like hitching a heavy trailer to the back of a motor scooter. I cannot think of a better way to turn it into a dead weight, a useless vehicle that would take us nowhere. Job-destroying tax increases are like a trailer full of bricks that will stop this economy dead in its tracks.

Mr. Speaker, let us pass a budget that strengthens our national defense, a budget that grows our economy, a budget that creates jobs, a budget that will get rid of Washington waste and excessive spending. We have that opportunity today, Mr. Speaker. Let us take advantage of it.

#### PROVIDING FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 393, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 574 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 574

*Resolved*, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for