

level of care for them leaves much to be desired as well.

It is because of these and many other grave health statistics that we are asking Congress to pass comprehensive health care reform, understanding that none of the diseases causing disparities can be successfully managed without sustained universal access to health care.

This week, the Democrats will introduce three bills to do just that: the Family Care Act, the Medicare Early Access Act, and the Small Business Health Insurance Promotion Act. There are also other bills that have already been introduced, of which I am proud to be a cosponsor, by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT).

This week we will take up H.R. 660, the Association Health Plan proposal, which poses, in my opinion, a serious threat to our existing employer-based health insurance system. It would exempt small employer plans from important State regulatory protections, and there is no reason to believe that eliminating these protections will help small employers expand coverage.

Instead, AHPs will be able to design services to cover industries and sectors with the healthiest employees and leave out small businesses with older or sicker workers, those who most need coverage. This ability to cherry-pick would drive up the cost of coverage for small businesses with less healthy profiles of workers who will then be left in the insurance pool by themselves. AHPs would be able to offer less generous benefit packages in order to bring down the costs of coverage. The CBO has already estimated that 80 percent of workers would be worse off under AHPs.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to put politics aside in addressing the issue of coverage as well as in malpractice reform, and the other health care bills we will be considering this week. Let us not opt for the short-term fix that is really no fix at all. Let us not support proposals that do not provide substantive remedies for these problems which affect the life and death of those we represent. And, above all, let us commit ourselves, this week and always, to do no harm.

DISTURBING EVENTS AND DISTURBING REMARKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I must say that I was not only quite disturbed, but concerned about the President's remarks yesterday at the Pentagon, and it goes as so: "Mr. Secretary, thank you for your hospitality and thank you for your leadership. You

are courageously leading our Nation in a war against terror. You are doing a superb job. You are a strong Secretary of Defense, and our Nation owes you a great debt of gratitude."

I must say that it is good to give commendations and thumbs up when it is time to give a thumbs up. But in the light of what is going on in the Department of Defense right now and in light of congressional hearings that are ongoing in the other body, I think the question mark of our true sincerity, being against the pictures, being against the acts that were carried out on individuals that were being questioned by members of our military in prison in Iraq, that I could say that the statements that are made by the Commander in Chief and also statements that are made by Secretary Rumsfeld and others could and will stimulate additional terrorism.

Now, to say that you are leading our Nation against terror, well, that question is the question of the week and of the month. As the Pentagon admits, Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers, that we have had knowledge of the ungodly acts that took place in mid-January, and that it was reported from Central Command that this was a big deal, this was a big deal, and that Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers both admit that they meet 3 to 4 times, maybe 5, using Secretary Rumsfeld's number, a day, and that they meet with the President at least once a week to talk about what is going on in the Pentagon; that anyone that might have seen or heard about these pictures or the acts that were being carried out, that they did not rise to the level of the Presidency of the United States.

Not only were these pictures and this investigation that the Pentagon had within the Pentagon, but the fact that it was not shared with the American people is even further disturbing.

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Some folks say, well, Members of Congress are upset because they were not told. We are representatives of the people of the United States of America. Serving on the Committee on Armed Services, seeing week after week Pentagon brass coming before us, Secretary Rumsfeld coming before us and never once mention that something fundamentally wrong, we are investigating it, is going on in Saddam Hussein's prison in Iraq, not only the prison that the President spoke of as it relates to the terror and rape and things of that nature that were going on in that particular prison but including the Secretary of State and Secretary Rumsfeld, he mentioned 18,000 cases that are being heard by the Pentagon a year, 18,000. Well, 18,000 in that particular prison, not 18,000 in the theater of war.

One may say, well, if the Secretary steps down, then the terrorists win. I beg to differ. I feel that it will stop terrorists from recruiting young men and women to carry out acts of terror

against Americans abroad and here on the homeland. It will show a true commitment of the fact that we are taking an about-face on what took place.

Some of my colleagues have shared with us that there are six or seven individuals at fault here. I hope that is the case, but I can tell my colleagues that there is a building tide of evidence that proves different. Contractors, we may very well have to bring CEOs of companies before Congress to ask them what role did they have over commanding our American troops. That is disturbing in itself, the fact that a whole branch of our military or the Army unit that was over this particular prison was not trained for doing what they had to do; the fact that we knew and that the Pentagon was called in mid-January to say this was a big deal, not a little deal but a big deal; the fact that we were not informed. I will tell my colleagues the reason why Congress was not informed was because we would not have tolerated the suppression of this information.

At the highest levels of our military, it is very, very important that this information is shared with the American people. At the highest levels of our military, including the Secretary of Defense, it is very important he shares this information.

I will tell my colleagues, let us not stand and say things that will stimulate terrorism. Let us not take one step forward and three steps back.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the House continues to move forth. I, for one, feel that Secretary Rumsfeld stepping down will save American lives and will allow our Pentagon to move forward the courts martial that are before it.

ELIMINATE THE "YES, BUT" MENTALITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PENCE). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I came to the well today because I am starting to hear something that I think the American people do not want to hear, and that is, that these terrible things were done by a few individuals in Iraq, but. All too often I am hearing the word "but" creeping in.

Mr. Speaker, last night I was listening to Michael Savage. Hundreds of stations around the country carry this man, and he was not just saying "yes, but." He was saying, well, these people are Muslim; Islam is a religion of war, and we have to understand they have always been involved in war and they only understand violence and they only understand this. This is why Saddam had these torture chambers because that is the only way to make them understand.

When I heard that said on national radio, I realized that the "yes, but"