

I get letters from countless people who have lost their health care coverage and are wondering where they can turn for the needed care or how they will once again be able to get coverage, given a preexisting condition.

I get letters from young mothers who spend sleepless nights worried that the rising health care premiums are fast becoming unaffordable and they might soon join the ranks of America's 45 million uninsured.

I get letters from parents, frustrated that their children's treatment for a mental illness is not covered by their insurance.

I get letters from parents of children with diabetes who cannot believe that their own government's restrictive stem cell policy is standing in the way of a possible cure.

So when asked, "Are we better off now than we were 4 years ago?" the answer is a resounding no. But if these personal stories are not enough proof for my colleagues, let us look at some recent statistics.

Today, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, a record-breaking 45 million Americans do not have health insurance coverage. Millions more are underinsured. This is the highest level of uninsured in our Nation's history, and it grew by 5.2 million people over the past 4 years.

Health care costs have continued to skyrocket during the last 4 years as well. The prices for prescription drugs have seen double-digit increases in the last 4 years.

The average family's share of health insurance premiums has risen by almost \$1,000 in the last 4 years, a shocking 57 percent increase. In fact, just recently, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported that health insurance premiums rose again between 2003 and 2004, the fourth straight year of double-digit increases.

While health care costs have been growing, the percentage of Americans receiving health care coverage through their employers has dropped.

What has been the Republican response to this health care crisis of rising numbers of uninsured and rising costs? Unfortunately, the Republican response has been to put forward the same old proposals as they have in years past: tort reform, association health plans, the health savings accounts, proposals that study after study have shown to be ineffective in holding down health care costs and also ineffective in providing coverage to the uninsured.

Republicans have ignored the pleas of our seniors, calling on us to stop skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs, and have instead created a prescription drug benefit in Medicare that does more to help drug companies than it does to help senior citizens.

The Republicans have failed to stop \$1.1 billion in State child health insurance program funding from being taken from the States, funding that could have been used to provide health insurance to 750,000 children in America.

Given this dismal 4-year track record, it is obvious that we need a new approach to address this health care crisis, one that would truly control costs and expand access.

I join my fellow Democrats in telling America that we are ready to lead in a new direction, one that would make quality health care affordable and available and assure health care security for every American.

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I request to address the House for 5 minutes out of turn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Mexico?

There was no objection.

DEMOCRAT NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT CONTINUES TO DEBATE WITH HIMSELF

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

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, as I contemplate the debate from last week, I realize that again the Democrat nominee for President, Mr. KERRY, continues to debate with himself.

I was very amazed to learn throughout the debate that he was talking about the need for multilateral action, until it came to the one circumstance where we are engaged in multilateral action in which he felt we should go back to bilateral action. Now, that is, of course, in the case of Korea, and we found that the Mainland Chinese have been very, very effective at working with us to back the North Koreans down from the bluster and the rhetoric that they have thrown in front of the world stage for the past couple of years. Amazingly, in that circumstance, Mr. KERRY wants the Chinese to be quiet, and he wants the U.S. to go back to bilateral negotiations with the North Koreans.

What that accomplishes is to give the North Koreans standing which they have not had in the past 2 years under the Bush doctrine. We give a terrorist state, a state that is starving its own people, a state that is incapable of making the changes in the government that are required to bring the nation into this century, and he would give them standing while moving the Mainland Chinese and our other allies off to the side.

He did not explain that, and it was in complete contradiction with every-

thing else he brought up during the debate. So, again, we find that the gentleman from Massachusetts continues to debate himself.

I contemplated also his need for a global test. From my own perspective, when the President says that we will not ask permission to defend America, that is the clarity and plainness that most Americans want, and so this global test for me is fraught with questions. Which test would we apply? Which of our allies? Would it be France? We want France's approval before we go and do some action that would prevent attacks on U.S. citizens here on American soil? Again, I have very deep questions about the gentleman from Massachusetts' plan.

One of the most stunning things that I watched in the debate, Mr. Speaker, was the assumption that Mr. KERRY has to sell, and that is, that the war in Iraq is a mistake. He says, on the one hand, it is a mistake, and on the other hand, he is going to win it. But I will tell my colleagues, if you convince enough people in this country to vote for the gentleman who says it is a mistake, those people have to believe the war is a mistake because much of his campaign is based on that presumption and that willingness to change the course in this country; but if he convinces the Americans that it is a mistake, how then is he going to turn on his heels against the will of the American public who has sided with him and then win the war?

Mr. Speaker, I would say that he has no intention of winning the war, that instead he is going to go to those allies who say that the war is a mistake, whether it be Syria, whether it be France, whether it be Russia, whether it be any of the nations who were involved in the Oil-For-Food scandal that took \$10 billion out of money that should have bought food for hungry Iraqis, and he would go to them and ask them their opinion for this global test that he has suggested.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that within weeks the gentleman from Massachusetts would unilaterally pull out of Iraq, leaving all of our allies in that region in very deep distress.

If the United States pulls out of the Middle East, I think that we stand to lose our friends, the Saudi Arabians; our friends, the Kuwaitis; the Jordanians. I think Pakistan would be at risk. I think Syria would be at risk.

I think that the gentleman from Massachusetts has not clearly contemplated the effects of declaring that this war is a mistake and being willing to ridicule our friends, being willing to ridicule the prime minister from that war-torn region who is putting his neck on the line every single day, and the gentleman from Massachusetts declares him to be a puppet.

We have seen in Pakistan the President, Musharraf, has twice just barely escaped assassination attempts. That region is very unstable, and we have one of the candidates for President of