

I think we are getting close to the witching hour. I had one more that I wanted to point out, but, Mr. Speaker, we thank you for the opportunity to bring this hour from the majority to explain this program. I thank Dr. BURGESS. I thank Mr. KLINE. And I want to encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. Let's support this program. Let's give our seniors what they really need. They deserve it, and they deserve our support.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 609, COLLEGE ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2005

Mr. BISHOP of Utah (during the Special Order of Mr. GINGREY), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-401) on the resolution (H. Res. 742) providing for further consideration of the bill (H.R. 609) to amend and extend the Higher Education Act of 1965, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my special order today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

BUDGET CUTS HARM WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to highlight how the President's fiscal year 2007 budget will harm millions of women and children around the country. Tonight you are going to hear from some of my colleagues about those specific programs that have proven to be successful for all women but are currently being cut and in some cases eliminated altogether.

The President is proposing to cut programs that disproportionately help women, children, the elderly, and the increasing population of Americans living in poverty.

Earlier this month, I was part of a recent delegation of Members of Congress who traveled to the gulf coast and New Orleans where most communities are still struggling to clean up their homes and get back to some sense of normalcy after Hurricane Katrina. We need to be doing more to help those, those that lost everything to regain their lives. These communities must

have quality health care, emergency care, and safe environmental conditions. But we cannot accomplish these goals and help the millions of women and children around the country who are living in poverty with the reckless and immoral budget that President Bush has proposed.

Key domestic programs that provide food and housing and support to women are vulnerable under this administration. In fact, the Bush administration is determined to protect tax cuts for the very wealthiest of Americans and provide health care for those who already have health care coverage and not include the 50 million uninsured people in our country today. The President wants to eliminate educational support for women, food assistance for seniors living in poverty, and he wants to significantly slash funding from important safety net programs like Medicaid and food stamps. In just 4 years, the cost of making these tax cuts permanent will exceed the amount that the Federal Government spends on education beginning in preschool through college.

Where is the economic recovery that the administration promised? Real wages as we know are down. The number of people living in poverty has increased. Job growth has been stagnant. And tonight I am glad that so many of our colleagues in our Congress, the Women's Democratic Congress, who serve here are coming together to speak out against the President's budget and how it is going in the wrong direction for women and their families.

I would like to begin by talking about education. But first I would like to begin by addressing the President's failure to address rising college costs. With increased funding for student financial aid programs like the PELL Grant program and the Perkins loan program. Before my election to public office, I worked for the California Student Opportunity and Access Program and helped many young people in my community obtain the ideal of going to college and receiving financial aid because there was no other means to go to college.

The President's budget currently continues to shortchange America's students who rely on financial aid to pursue their college education. Just one month after Congressional Republicans cut college aid by \$12 billion, \$12 billion, the President proposed a budget that eliminates, decreases and freezes funding for much needed programs that are vital to helping students of color, people from my own community.

Low interest Perkins loans are crucial resources as we know for college students who have demonstrated need. Two-thirds of the Perkins loan recipients are from families with annual incomes less than \$40,000 a year. Yet, the Perkins loan program took a hit in the President's 2007 budget and would recall \$664 million from the federal Perkins loan fund for nearly 1,800 colleges

in the year 2007. And as a result 463,000 college students would lose a key part of their financial aid.

Despite the record tuition increases that we all know are going through in our States, Bush's budget breaks his promise yet again of making college more affordable and he actually freezes the maximum PELL grant in scholarships. Six years ago President Bush promised to increase the maximum PELL scholarship for all college freshmen at \$5,100.

□ 2100

This budget is now the fourth time that the President has frozen the Pell Grant. Access to financial aid, as we know, is a huge factor for many students, particularly from low-income areas like my own.

Three out of four young Latino adults who do not attend college cite the fact that without having financial aid they cannot continue to have the American dream. About 40 percent of African American students and 30 percent of Hispanic students depend on Pell Grants, compared to 23 percent of all students.

Young women, just trying to improve their earning potential and get a better job also disproportionately rely on the Pell Grant program, and I have to tell you, when I was a student, that was my means of going on to college.

My parents could not afford to send me to college. They could not afford to give me a substantial amount of money to go to a university. So thank God that we had Federal financial aid programs available, work study programs and the National Student Loan Program, where I was able to attend a 4-year institution to have my full tuition paid for, including expenses; and I thank God that our government at that time stepped up to the plate.

I cannot say that now, under this administration, but for the last 4 years now we have seen an increase of 57 percent in costs to attend college, by this President. We need to reject the President's freezes and cuts to financial aid and help those students who want to go to college, but the high cost of tuition is just way out of line.

When these students get to college, we need to do more to encourage them to pursue fields that will encourage innovation and increase America's competitiveness and increase the number of women that seek access into the technical fields like science and math. While women account for more than half of the number of bachelor's and master's degrees awarded, they make up a small number in the fields that are crucial to spurring innovation and job creation, for example, in areas like engineering, computer science, physical sciences and math. Only 21 percent of master's degrees in engineering were awarded to women. For computer science and physical science, women only earn about 35 percent of the master's degrees in the country.

The statistics are far worse for women of color, like Latinas and African American women and even Asian

Americans. Within the small number of women who earn an engineering master's degree, 11 percent are Asian American, a little over 4 percent are African American and less than 4 percent are Latinas.

We need to encourage women to be part of the technical and skilled workforce from school age all the way up to adulthood.

The President's budget also eliminates the Dropout Prevention Program and, therefore, ignores the big problem that we have currently in many of our communities where we see a number of our students dropping out of high school. For the past 4 years, the Bush administration has cut funding for dropout prevention, denying our most-needed students the opportunity to succeed, and in Los Angeles, by the way, only 29 percent of Latinos and 47 percent of African Americans actually graduate from high school.

This budget also freezes over \$1 billion in current funding for ongoing programs, including the GEAR UP program, the TRIO and Upward Bound program, which are vital programs to many youngsters in our community. Many that attend and currently are enrolled in those programs are the first in their family to have the opportunity to be trained and have the motivation and support and mentoring that is needed to be successful in college. With the President saying that he wants to zero out these programs, he is sending the wrong message to my community and to communities across this country.

We need to be encouraging all of our young people to pursue higher education to keep America competitive and to increase our productivity and economy. With deep cuts to student aid proposed by the President, we are closing the doors to eager students instead of providing a helping hand to those who want to learn, who want to work and want to be a part of the society.

We must defeat this immoral budget to help our students achieve their goals and access all the opportunities that our Nation can provide.

I would like to briefly speak about women in the workforce. Once these young women who complete college graduate, they face challenges in the workforce. The wage gap among women and men continues to this day. Some of you may know that women earn on an average 76 cents to every dollar that a man earns. Instead of eliminating the wage gap and providing more opportunities for women to enter the workforce and earn good wages, the Bush budget continues to undercut and devalue women's contributions to the American labor force.

The Bush budget eliminates the women in apprenticeships and non-traditional occupational programs. This program, which only costs \$1 million per year, provides grants to employers to help them recruit, train and retain women in nontraditional and well-paying jobs. Women who were a

part of Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations projects were 47 percent more likely to enter higher-paying technical jobs than others.

The overwhelming lack of women in technical fields like science and math, as you know, is astounding. Even if women graduate with engineering and science and math degrees, they are still faced with low salaries.

On the average, women hold Ph.D.s in computer science and engineering, but still earn \$9,000 less per year than their male counterparts. Latino engineers, both men and women, earn \$10,000 less than the average salary for all engineers, and African American engineers earn \$8,000 less.

We need to encourage women to be a part of the technical and skilled workforce from school age right up to adulthood.

Programs like Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations Act are a part of that effort, and I will work in Congress, along with my colleagues, to reject the elimination of this or any other programs that help women achieve their dreams and realize their potential to be an important component of the technical workforce.

From the wage gap to discrimination, we need to do more to help women succeed and support this vital and necessary part of the American workforce. I urge all of my colleagues here today and tonight to do everything possible to defeat the President's immoral and irresponsible budget that puts women and children's futures at risk.

I would now like to introduce one of my colleagues who has joined me tonight, who is also part of the Women's Issues Group here in the Congress, the distinguished former ambassador and Congresswoman, DIANE WATSON, who is going to also join me in discussion regarding this important topic with respect to the budget cuts towards women and their families.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from California for allowing me to join in this discussion on women and the budget.

This budget, as you have heard, would hurt working women and their families. It does not alleviate the real health disparities that exist throughout the Nation, and it does not do much to help young girls realize their potential, whether in the classroom or in the community.

I would like to use my 33rd District in Los Angeles, California, as an example to show what women want and the impact of the President's budget on my sisters.

Women want an environment where they and their families can live, work and play. They want to eliminate the community health disparities that leave some people with different standards of care, and they want to redirect youth away from violence and lives of crime and into a life of productive citizenship.

Women are integral to uncovering the solutions to these issues, yet this budget severely undermines women and the roles they play.

For example, the President's budget hurts working women and their families by freezing funding for child care in the Child Care and Development Block Grant, early childhood education in the Head Start programs, and necessary social services in the Social Services Block Grant.

The legislation we passed tells low-income women they have to work if they wish to qualify for aid from the government, but how can women work if they cannot afford a decent place to leave their children during the day? They have to have confidence that their children are getting the proper care. The President's budget does not provide an answer to that question.

Women need more assistance with their health care needs, not the same as last year, and certainly not less.

The budget reduces funding for title X family planning programs, the Maternal and Child Health Block Grants, and the Public Health Service's Office of Women's Health. The goals of these programs are to improve the health and the well-being of women and girls, and by reducing their funding, we show women and girls that their health care is less important.

This budget has failed economic policies and has contributed to the 1.2 million more Americans slipping into poverty. Communities of color are disproportionately living at risk. Approximately 25 percent of African Americans and 22 percent of Latinos are living in poverty. We should be doing more, not less, to help all Americans trying to make ends meet.

The President's budget cuts spending on food stamps by more than \$650 million over the next 5 years by making it more difficult for low-income families receiving welfare to qualify for food stamps. Approximately 225,000 people will lose eligibility for food stamps. 40,000 of those are children who will also lose access to free school lunches, and subsequently, spending on child nutrition will be cut by \$50 million over the next 5 years.

These cuts will hurt the low-income women who rely on the food stamps; and what is so tragic about this is that it is the women who shop for children's foods, and when we think of it, children will be going to school with empty stomachs, hungry. How can they concentrate on their classwork when they are hungry? Of the 21 million people who receive food stamps, nearly 70 percent are women.

The President's cuts will also affect Latinos across the country who are struggling to put food on their tables. We must end the irresponsible cuts to the food stamp program that pays for tax cuts for the wealthy, and we must oppose this President's budget.

The President's budget also eliminates the Commodity Supplemental Food Program which provides nutritious food packages, primarily to low-

income seniors. Over 420,000 seniors are served by the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, as well as 50,000 mothers and children. Our seniors deserve better treatment than to cut these programs.

Over two-thirds of low-income elderly are women who also receive disproportionately less in other government benefits, and the programs are Social Security and others.

□ 2115

And these are people who have paid in to the Social Security System who deserve to have a dignified retirement. In February, 59,000 of these recipients were eliminated from this program and are no longer able to obtain their monthly supply of groceries. Shame on us.

Simply transferring these individuals to the Women, Infant, and Children Food Assistance program, known as WIC, or food stamps is not a workable solution for many elderly individuals. Cuts in the budget to food stamps will make it more difficult for seniors who will be transferred from this commodity supplemental food program if the President's budget is implemented. In addition, many elderly shifted to food stamps will not qualify for the same amount of groceries they currently receive from the commodity supplemental food program. Again, shame, shame on us.

The commodity supplemental food program is also a very unique program that helps seniors because the food is delivered where they live and eat, and it is important that we preserve this program for our distinguished seniors, all of whom are distinguished because they have lived long and worked most of their lives.

The President's budget also calls for cuts to WIC in the coming years. While the budget includes \$5.2 billion for 2007 for the WIC program, funding declines to \$5.0 billion in 2011. That is a 13.3 percent cut from the amount that would be necessary to maintain purchasing power at the current level. The President's cap on administrative costs in the budget will likely lead to reduced WIC clinic hours and other service cuts, making it more difficult for families to receive services such as nutrition education.

So the President's assault on the safety net services for the poor in favor of tax breaks for the wealthy has to come to a stop, and it is up to us here in Congress to say no to his ridiculous requests that put thousands of women, children and the elderly at risk. We must honor our old, and we must do for our children what America stands for.

Women need more assistance with their health care needs. Seniors need better assistance with their health care needs, and the budget reduces funding for many of these programs. Shame, shame on us if we allow such a detrimental budget to go forward.

So I would say, my colleague, my distinguished colleague, that our speaking

tonight, I hope, will convince our colleagues that this is a detrimental budget that doesn't help. It only harms America's women and elderly and America's children.

Ms. SOLIS. Thank you, Honorable Congresswoman DIANE WATSON for your eloquent words. I know that there are thousands, millions of people out watching us tonight, and I know in my great State of California there is a lot of preoccupation in terms of what is occurring here in the House. It is very disappointing to go back home and tell folks that the policies this administration has leveled are outrageous and severely harmful to our most vulnerable populations, our children, our seniors, our working families.

And we don't have to look too far to be reminded what the President attempted to do just last year when he talked about privatizing Social Security. A failed policy. He tried to sell it. I think he had several town hall meetings. I know I did. And when we went out and spoke to our seniors in an open, unbiased setting, where no one was given pretickets and everyone was allowed to come in, where we had lay people, we had doctors, and we had folks in the health care industry but we had also the seniors there, they asked the very important questions: How is making this program, Social Security, which is the bedrock, our insurance plan for all Americans when they retire, how is it going to help to privatize it? Who is going to make the money off of that? And if I don't pay into it and put money aside, who is going to support me in my old age?

I heard this from widows and disabled people, and I heard an outpouring of negative support for the privatization of Social Security. In just about every forum that I held in my district, in east Los Angeles, in the San Gabriel Valley, we heard by an overwhelming margin that the people did not support that plan. Do not touch Social Security was the clear message that I got. And I know that many colleagues in the House on our side, in the Democratic Caucus, held several, if not thousands, close to a thousand, I believe, town hall meetings last year, and overwhelmingly there is a consensus that we can't afford to shortchange our seniors and people who have paid into the system. And to also neglect the disabled, because there are some very vulnerable populations that rely on that Social Security check.

Many people wrote me personally and said, Congresswoman SOLIS, please do not allow for further cuts in Social Security. We need to have an indexing system so that we can keep up with the cost of living. My rent is \$400, but my check for that month is maybe \$800. I have to pay for utilities. I have to pay for medicine, and it isn't enough to cover my medicine. So I have to cut my medicine in half and spread it out for the week or the month.

And still no one there to listen, to help. This administration has turned

their backs on our most vulnerable population. Thank goodness that that proposal went nowhere. But I understand that there are current attempts to try to revive it again, and I know that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have also heard very strongly that their constituents are not in agreement with privatizing Social Security.

That leads me to something else, because one of the things I think is most important for us tonight is to talk about Medicaid and its effect on women and the proposed cuts that this President would like to make. We can't allow it.

Here on this chart I would like to explain to the public and to my colleagues that this is the Republican budget, which fails to provide health care for women and families. And if you note, women account for over 56 percent of Medicare beneficiaries. The Republican budget slashes Medicare by \$36 billion over 5 years. The majority of Medicaid beneficiaries are women and girls. The Republican budget cuts Medicaid by \$42 billion over 5 years, and more than 20 million women do not have any form of health insurance.

The Republicans health savings account, which is much like the privatization of Social Security, would lead to higher out-of-pocket costs for most Americans. And once people hear about this, they will turn down the notion of health savings accounts.

In my district, you have to have money to be able to put away just to set up that account. We are talking about needy people, working class people, working families that are struggling. They can't afford to put \$200 and \$300 away per month just to provide for a premium to pay for that health care account. And then we are probably sure to hear that some of these providers that are going to get into these accounts are going to be very selective and cherry pick who their patients will be. They are not going to take the very ill, the very sick.

That is why it is important that the government step in and continue to fully fund Medicaid and not go in the wrong direction that this administration would like to go into.

I would like to go back to my comments here where the President's budget proposes new rounds of Medicaid cuts that would take another \$14 billion out of Medicaid, as I said over the next 5 years. These cuts come just months after Republicans in Congress forced through an ill-conceived budget reconciliation bill which slashed \$6.9 billion over the next 5 years in the Medicaid program.

Over 20 million women in our country lack any form of health care. Again, cuts to Medicaid, an already underfunded program, would have a devastating impact on women and their families. And more than 53 million people, including 14 percent of low-income Americans, currently have no access to health care. And it is even more important because more than one in every

four children in the United States is covered by Medicaid. That is more than 25 million children in our country. More than 30 percent of children with disabilities rely on Medicaid for health coverage and services.

Medicaid provides essential care, such as family planning, breast and cervical cancer treatment, and care for disabled women to more than 16 million women, including approximately 10 million women of childbearing age. Nearly one in ten women in the U.S. receives health care coverage through Medicaid, and one-third of all poor women are covered by Medicaid, including 40 percent of single moms.

Medicaid is so important to Latinas, who have the highest rate of uninsurance, 37 percent, of any racial and ethnic minority group. Approximately 12 percent of low-income Latinas rely on Medicaid for their health care coverage. Even Latinas who are legal immigrants, who are here legally, find barriers to health care access.

Since 1996, legal immigrants have been barred from receiving Medicaid coverage for the first 5 years of their residency unless the State they reside in specifically covers them through State funds. In our State of California, we have been able to do that. This is a 5-year period in which these women and men who legally emigrated to the United States are denied regular health care and screenings for diseases that plague communities of color, like cancer, diabetes, HIV and AIDS.

Without health insurance, many Latinas are forced to delay or forego their health care coverage all together. For example, approximately 25 percent of Latinas have not even visited a physician in the last year. Incredible. Almost one-third of Latinas do not have any health care provider at all. And Latinas do not access prenatal care or cervical and breast cancer screenings at the same rate as the regular population.

We need to do more to expand access to Medicaid for all women, all women of color. Women are twice as likely as men to qualify for Medicaid because they are poorer, in lower-paying jobs, and are less likely to be offered health care insurance. Women of reproductive age are especially vulnerable because they are more likely to lack health insurance.

Medicaid accounts for two-thirds, two-thirds of all Federal and State family planning funding nationwide. This is the largest source of public funding for family planning services and products. Low-income pregnant women can receive critical prenatal care when they need it without being turned away. Medicaid ensures that women receive a full spectrum of maternity coverage, including prenatal, labor, delivery and postpartum care.

Medicaid is also important for elderly women, as we spoke about earlier. It is the largest source of funding for women over the age of 80 living in

nursing homes. The program covers high-cost nursing homes and long-term care services.

Medicaid also covers important health screenings for cervical and breast cancer as well as for sexually transmitted infections. Medicaid in California provides vital health services to low-income women of all ages who comprise 75 percent of the beneficiaries ages 19 and older.

In California, in our great State, 42 percent of all births in the State are paid for by Medicaid. There is no question or doubt in my mind that Medicaid is a significant health safety net program for women. The cuts in Medicaid that are being proposed would shut the neediest individuals out of the public health system and put the health care of millions of women and young women and girls at risk.

□ 2130

Proposing reductions without ensuring the preservation of coverage for those in need simply transfers the burden to States that are already over stretched, and Medicaid cuts would shift costs to the States and impose higher costs to beneficiaries and health care providers who are already strapped. States would be forced to reduce Medicaid coverage and benefits, increasing the number of low-income Americans who are uninsured or underinsured.

The proposed Bush budget that we are discussing tonight would cut billions from Medicaid while doing nothing to make health care more affordable. Democrats believe in strengthening and not undermining Medicaid. The Federal Government should fulfill its promise of being a reliable partner in Medicaid, and we must protect Medicaid and maintain the current Federal commitment to this fundamental public health insurance program.

I stand in strong opposition to the President's budget because I know it does not go far enough in protecting the health and wellbeing of our families and our children.

In his State of the Union address, the President touted the government's responsibility to provide health care for the poor and the elderly and he set forth a goal of confronting the rising costs for all Americans. Unfortunately, the President's budget fails to live up to that goal. Instead, his budget undercuts health care for women, children and the elderly. America cannot afford to go in that direction. In recent years, health care costs have risen by almost 60 percent, and the number of uninsured continues to grow and grow, including more than 13.7 million Latinos. Today, 22 million women, one in 5 adult women, rely on Medicare for basic health insurance protection. In fact, women comprise 56 percent of the Medicare population. By the time women are age 85 and older, they account for nearly three-quarters of all beneficiaries, and President Bush's fiscal year 2007 budget that is being de-

bated tonight in the Committee on Rules goes way off the mark by cutting back good proposals that help many, many of our Americans in the Medicare and Medicaid programs by increasing the fees paid by our veterans, and by increasing Medicare premiums paid by our poor seniors. That includes \$39.4 billion in cuts to Medicare over 5 years and \$105 billion in cuts over 10 years.

With the shoddy implementation of the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit program and the growing population of seniors who are living longer than ever, now is definitely not the time to cut back on Medicare. And women who are eligible for Medicare are going to be at greater risk if these cuts are implemented.

I have to tell you in my own district we had a series of these forums where we also talked with our seniors at various senior citizen sites about this very complicated program. Many said they refused to sign up. They refused to sign up because they could not go through the quagmire of 40 different programs that they were being told to select from. Many did not have access to appropriate linguistic information in Spanish and in Chinese. Some were not able to access a computer because there may be only one computer in their entire neighborhood. Our seniors cannot even afford a computer in their home, and are even less likely to be able to pay for an increased premium in the Medicare prescription drug program. It is a failure in my opinion.

Just this last week on Monday we had a forum, a press forum in front of a pharmacy in east Los Angeles, Mr. Ramirez's pharmacy, and we heard from some of our pharmacists as well as some of our seniors that those individuals who are dual eligible on Medicare and Medicaid had a very difficult time now going into the pharmacy to get their medicine. They did not know that all of a sudden Medicaid was just going to pay for the hospital service that they did not need at that time, but if they went in to get their medicine, they were going to be charged anywhere from \$1 to \$5 more for every prescription that needed to be filled. So if you needed to repeatedly get medicine to treat your diabetes, to treat your high blood pressure or heart disease, you would be paying anywhere from \$100 to \$200 more out of pocket. And these are the folks on a fixed income, so \$5 and \$10 is a hardship. It means no food, no electricity, no phone and could lead to death if they are not given the appropriate treatment. This continues to go on.

As Democrats, we are fighting to try to extend the deadline so people can go beyond the May 15 deadline that this administration said they would like to impose. If seniors do not sign up for this program by that time, they will be penalized, just further demonstrating how insensitive this administration is.

We have a bill as Democrats to extend that deadline to December 31, 2006. Why can't we get bipartisan support when the outcry has been so

strong. I ask my colleagues to consider how we as Members of Congress can take care of ourselves, have the best health care programs for ourselves and our families and yet forget about our constituents in our districts. That is shameful and we need to address that immediately.

I know in our communities, especially senior women of color, they are more likely to be low income. That is the case in east Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley. Fifty-six percent of African American women and 58 percent of Latinas live on Medicare and their annual incomes are less than \$10,000 a year compared to 24 percent for white women beneficiaries. Who in their right mind could survive on \$10,000 a year, maybe a widow who has outlived her spouse who maybe live in an apartment, does not even own a car and has very little wealth, and yet we are expecting them to pick themselves up by their bootstraps after they have given so much to our country and paid in to the tax base and the economy of this great country. Shame on the Bush administration for doing that, for cutting health care funding for the elderly when we cannot even agree to negotiate with, for example, the pharmaceutical companies to lower the cost of prescription drugs. We do it for our veterans, why can't we do it for all seniors. Why can't we allow for low cost and generic drugs to come into our country and import from those countries that we work with already. It is beyond comprehension for me to understand why this administration continues to have this roadblock where they do not want to support and preserve the rights of our seniors and our elderly.

The President seeks Medicare savings through arbitrary reductions in provider payments, and we heard this at my press conference on Monday from our local pharmacy who said, "Congresswoman, I cannot even afford to give some of these medicines out because I am not getting an appropriate refund or rebate on the medicine that I am giving. It is costing me more to give out the medicine than what I am getting in in payments from the Federal Government."

There is something wrong with that scheme, and I know perhaps the President has not thoroughly spent enough time in communities like mine to understand the hardships that are going on throughout our country right now. Those are challenges that we have to face. We have to face those here in Congress and we must do everything we can to see that this administration minimizes any costs and hardships to our seniors.

Medicare costs in my opinion definitely need to go back. We do not need to move forward with this prescription drug program that was implemented, that was given to us in the dawn of night, 2,000 pages that Members could not even read, and three or four more hours where the clock was running and

people could not decide on how to vote. It just blew my mind to see that there was such a callous understanding of what the implications of this bill would be.

Now we know the truth. The seniors know the truth, and they know that these programs are not working for them. That in fact this program, this facade of a program that was supposed to help seniors, actually helped the pharmaceutical companies. They are the ones that made millions. They are the ones that stand to make millions from the implementation of this program. That is wrong. That is not why we were sent here to this House. We were sent here to work on behalf of our constituents, and I refuse to vote for programs that will keep harming not only our seniors, our children, our women and also our veterans, which is happening here tonight in back of me in the Committee on Rules.

We must talk freely about what is happening here and ask for transparency on the part of our elected leaders, especially those that control the domain of this House. We need to stand up. I know my colleagues in the Women's Caucus, in the Women's Democratic Caucus, will do everything we can to go out in the next few months, to hold forums and to continue to educate the public about the atrocities that are occurring. They need to be aware that we are here to speak to them clearly as Democrats, that we will stand for them and that we will fight with every fierce bone in our bodies to make sure that these cuts against our families and our children no longer occur. I pray for that moment to come soon.

I thank my colleague, Ms. WATSON, for joining me tonight, and I thank the Honorable NANCY PELOSI and our leadership and all of the 46 members of our caucus, the Democratic Women's Caucus, who stand tall every single day, coming here to work and working in their districts to make sure that the public is aware of the transparency that our party would want it to be like here for all of us.

I want to thank also my staff and the staff of Leader PELOSI for helping us prepare for this one of many occasions we will come on the floor and speak the truth about these cuts that are being alleged and the harmful effects they will have to our communities, the senior community, the women's community, children's community and veterans' community.

I would ask individuals to please take note that this is the Democratic Women's Working Group fighting for America's women and our families. Visit our Website at <http://democraticleader.house.gov/dwwg/> or e-mail us at [democratic.womensworkinggroup@mail.house.gov](mailto:democratic.womensworkinggroup@mail.house.gov).

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, the President's Fiscal Year 2007 proposed budget sells women in this country short. Whether we are talking education, housing, financial security or health—this budget fails women.

The President's budget will hurt elderly women by slashing Medicare once again. Congress just passed legislation cutting Medicare payments to health care providers to the tune of \$22 billion over 10 years. Now, the President's FY07 budget will slash Medicare by yet another \$105 billion over 10 years. These drastic cuts will disproportionately impact women throughout this country, as women account for over 56 percent of Medicare beneficiaries.

But the President's budget doesn't stop with Medicare. It also cuts Medicaid to the bone. I'm sure it is no surprise to anyone in this body that the majority of Medicaid beneficiaries are women and girls. With over 2 million women and girls having lost health insurance coverage since 2000, many have turned to Medicaid for needed health care. The President's budget cuts Medicaid by more than \$42 billion over 10 years. These cuts will shift costs to the states, who are already drastically reducing health benefits due to current budget shortfalls.

This budget leaves behind women seeking reproductive health services. Title X clinics provide high-quality, low-cost family planning services. For more than 30 years, these clinics have enabled millions, and millions of women to plan their pregnancies, prevent unintended births, and receive desperately needed reproductive health care. Yet the President has proposed cutting funding for this program by millions and millions of dollars.

Women cannot afford for this valuable program to be short changed, especially if this administration is not willing to adequately fund maternal child health programs. Which apparently, it is not. The Healthy Start infant mortality initiative and the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant—both are placed on the chopping block in the President's budget.

How can we tell women—we won't help you access contraception, and we'll do our best to see that you can't get an abortion, and then you're on your own if you have a child?

Whether a senior needing Medicare, a young woman seeking reproductive health care or a mother in need of care for their child, this budget sells all women short.

The President's budget puts special interests first—and America's women last. It turns back the clock on programs that we have fought for so many years to adequately fund, and the consequences are disproportionately placed on the backs of those who can least withstand the impact.

I urge my colleagues to stand up for women and oppose the President's budget cuts.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed to hear that once again the Women's Educational Equity Act is proposed for zero funding under the Fiscal Year 2007 budget. Since its inception in 1974, WEEA has proven an extremely effective in providing opportunities and support for young women.

The WEEA program is an essential part of eradicating sex discrimination in our schools. Through WEEA girls are exposed to career opportunities from which they have traditionally been excluded. In addition, WEEA funds programs that develop teaching strategies, educational materials and curriculum designed to reflect the experiences and achievement of women. WEEA also funds programs that combat sexual harassment.

We hear rhetoric that programs such as WEEA are no longer necessary because

women have equal status. While women have made many strides, gender disparities still exist in many fields. Even though college enrollment of women continues to increase, there continues to be a gender disparity in the fields of science in technology. Women not only earn fewer degrees, but are under represented in advanced secondary math, science and computer science classes. Investment in collegiate athletic programs and athletic scholarship opportunities also continue to favor men.

Perhaps the most distressing aspect of this gender gap is the persistence of sexual harassment on college campuses. Recent studies show that nearly two-thirds of female college students experience sexual harassment at some point during college—causing immeasurable harm to these women's studies and future goals. WEEA programs provide vital resources in order to fight this type activity.

WEEA continues to be an essential component in ensuring that young women are not inhibited by their gender and can choose a career path based on their interests, aspirations, and abilities. I strongly urge my colleagues to support access, equality and opportunity for young women through continued funding of this program.

#### OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure it is to come back to the floor tonight to discuss some issues of vital concern to Members of the House and all Americans.

I could not help but pick up on what the gentlewoman from California was saying just a moment ago about a number of issues. One of them was about Medicare Part D. We are going to talk about a lot of things tonight, but I want to start by talking about Medicare Part D.

I am a physician. I practiced orthopedic surgery for over 20 years in the Atlanta area. She mentioned there was a plan to delay or postpone the deadline for Medicare Part D which is the prescription drug formula for seniors. Nearly 28 million out of 42 million have already signed up. Many of them are finally getting medications for the first time.

She mentioned there was a plan to delay it and they could not get bipartisan support. I guess that is one of the things that brings me to this well almost night after night because what you hear down here just is not so. It is not the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I am one of those who also believes that there ought to be an extension of that deadline. In fact, we have had a bill on that for over a year and we could not get a soul, not a soul on the other side of the aisle to support that bill. The reason for that is what brought about the Official Truth Squad.

The Official Truth Squad began with a group of freshmen Republicans who

came here after the 2004 election to be Members of Congress and came here with wonderful vision and enthusiasm and positive spirit. And what we were met with oftentimes from the other side was really vitriol, was personal attacks, was a distortion of the truth, misinformation, disinformation.

We had been meeting on a weekly basis as a group and so we got together and we said how can we counter that. Because when I go home, I know that is what concerns many of my constituents. I suspect that is what you hear, Mr. Speaker, back at home. People ask why the level of rancor and why the level of partisanship.

What we thought to do in an effort to try to raise the level of discourse and decrease the kind of partisanship that goes on is to talk about truth, talk about issues in an open and honest manner and in a way that sheds light on issues.

Tonight you have heard an awful lot already about various issues, Mr. Speaker, that frankly have not been treated with the light of the day, if you will.

□ 2145

And so we have adopted, the Official Truth Squad has adopted a saying or a quote from a wonderful former United States Senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan from New York, and he kind of crystallized what our frustration was, and that is, everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts. And so often around here, what happens is that people's opinion gets mistaken for facts. In fact, it has been said that if somebody says something three times in Washington, they think it is the truth, regardless of whether or not it has any bearing on the truth. And so I want to touch on a couple of things before we get into our other issue tonight, and I want to talk a little about student loans, student aid. We are now dealing this week on the Higher Education Reauthorization bill in the United States House of Representatives. It is a bill that has to be adopted in order to continue the programs that are so vitally important to millions, millions of young people across this country in order to go to college and university and to better themselves and make a better life for both them and their family. And what you always hear from the other side, what you always hear is, oh, they are going to cut this, and they are going to cut that, and they are going to slash this, and they are going to slash that. And that is what we have heard tonight, Mr. Speaker.

But the Official Truth Squad has as a mission to shed the light of day on it and to talk about the truth. And I am fond of charts and posters, because I think that they really describe much more than I am able to do in word. And this chart here, this poster here demonstrates the increases, Mr. Speaker, I said, increases, not cuts, not slashes, I said increases in Federal student aid

over the last 10 years. And anybody can plainly see that the amount of Federal loans, the amount of Federal grants, the amount of education tax benefits, the amount of Federal work study, all of them, all of them, Mr. Speaker, over the last 10 years rising year after year after year, and appropriately so, so young people can have an opportunity to realize the American dream. That is the positive issue. That is the real message. That is the truth. These numbers, these numbers don't lie. And so when you hear people talk about cuts or slashes, Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to say that it just is really a fabrication. It is not the truth. It is not what is real. And you will hear them talk about Pell Grants. Pell Grants are the grants that the Federal Government provides for young people in order to go to colleges and universities, those young people who don't necessarily have the means to be able to afford it. It is a wonderful program, works extremely well, allows people to elevate themselves and really raise themselves up by their own boot straps. This is a telling graph, Mr. Speaker. This is a telling chart because it begins way back in 1986. And the yellow portion of this is when the Democrats were in control of the United States House of Representatives. And you will hear all about what they would do if they were able to control again. And I think it is important and instructive for the House of Representatives and for the American people to appreciate, well, don't tell me what you would do. Let us look at what you did. Let us look at the truth. And the truth, in fact, Mr. Speaker, is that Pell Grants provided for by the Federal Government for young individuals who are the most needy in our society in order to go to colleges and universities in fact were flat or decreased in the 10 years prior to 1996. And what has happened since then is an appropriate increase to be able to fund a program that allows young people, without means, to be able to go to colleges and universities. The red portion is what has happened under the Republican control of the United States House of Representatives. Mr. Speaker, those are not cuts. Those are not slashes. They are appropriate increases in a program that helps young people who are most in need.

This is another chart that demonstrates what would happen in the next fiscal year, what would happen with the overall Pell Grant funding. This is 2000, 2006. And with increased budgeting, the next graph, 2000 again, and Fiscal Year 2007 would increase from \$4,050 per individual to \$5,050, a significant remarkable increase. And on the end, the number of Pell Grants recipients, the number of students being helped, 3.9 million in 2000, fiscal year 2007, 5.3 million individuals. This is not a decrease. These are not cuts. These are not slashes. And for anybody to say otherwise is just, it is not true. It is not honest. It doesn't do a credit to the debate. It does a disservice to all