

□ 1215

THE PRESIDENT'S ALLEGIANCE IS TO THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. The insurance industry is exempt from antitrust law. They can and do legally fix prices. They can and do legally discriminate. They can and do legally deny coverage because of a preexisting condition, or for no reason whatsoever. But despite the fact that 60 percent of Americans get their health care through their employers, the President wants Americans to give up that protection of group coverage and throw themselves into the unregulated and cruel world of private insurance under the guise that he cares about the 46.1 million Americans that don't have health insurance, up 6 million on his watch.

And there's one more little cruel joke hidden in here. He doesn't tell them about that tax deduction which would also allow them to take a deduction against their Social Security. For a family or a person earning \$30,000 a year, it would cut their Social Security benefits in half. The President will do anything to help his friends in the insurance industry; he doesn't care much about those who are uninsured or who need help with health care.

THANKS TO THE NEW BOLTON CENTER

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, Barbaro, the winner of the Kentucky Derby, died yesterday. Barbaro was not just any horse. This was a horse who never lost a race. This was a horse who won the Kentucky Derby by 6½ lengths. The last time that was done was in 1946. What a shame it was when he hurt himself and cut short one of the greatest careers in horse racing.

And sad as this is, I come to the floor to congratulate the New Bolton Center in Chester County, Pennsylvania, in my congressional district. Dean Richardson and the staff of the New Bolton Center have shown the world what humane and excellent veterinary care looks like. Barbaro and his owners put their trust in the New Bolton Center and hoped for the best over the last 9 months. Sadly, Barbaro didn't make it. But no one doubts that everything that could have been done was done and done well. Our thanks are due to the staff at the New Bolton Center.

DEMOCRATS BRING FISCAL SANITY BACK TO WASHINGTON

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

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Madam Speaker, a new report from the Budget and Appropriations Committee says that

the new Congress faces a fiscal challenge of historic proportions. The cost of the war in Iraq, coupled with the growing price tag of tax cuts passed over the previous 6 years, have left the Nation deeper in debt than ever before and with one of the largest benefit deficits in the Nation's history.

Last year, Democrats committed to begin the process of restoring fiscal sanity by reinstating a budget rule that helped Congress create a surplus in the 1990s. It is this fiscal discipline that is so important to House Democrats that we restored a pay-as-you-go budget rule on the second day of this new Congress.

Madam Speaker, historic debts are not good for any of us. They lead to rising interest rates, which cost middle-class families as much as \$1,700 a year on credit card and mortgage payments. It also simply is irresponsible of us to continue to pass this debt on to future generations.

Madam Speaker, this week we will pass a final budget for the 2007 fiscal year after Republicans refused to pass these must-pass appropriations bills last year. It's time we get our fiscal house in order.

THE DEATH OF DELIBERATION

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

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, I must admit that I was somewhat encouraged in December when the newly minted Democrat majority announced that they were considering a bill that would simply finish this year's budget work with what is known as a continuing resolution, funding the government at current levels and leaving the debate over the budget for the ordinary process of the constitutional system of the legislature. I was particularly enamored with the idea that they would move this so-named continuing resolution without earmarks, and I am pleased to have supported bipartisan earmark reform.

But what will come to the floor tomorrow, to my disappointment, is not a bill that simply continues the funding of the government. It is a new Federal budget: \$463 billion in spending, 137 pages. Madam Speaker, it will take 300 pages to read the CBO score. What we see is not a continuation of government spending. We see, rather, the death of deliberation. The Congress is witnessing in the first hours of this new session the death of a long-term process whereby our budgets and our legislation are considered. It is the death of deliberation that must be put to an end.

MIDDLE-CLASS TAX INCREASE IS THE WRONG APPROACH

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

Mr. SIRES. Madam Speaker, Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt is about to begin a 100-day public relations effort to build support for the President's health care proposal. Democrats here in Washington in Congress want to work towards reducing the number of uninsured. Unfortunately, the tax deduction proposal will do very little to assist the 47 million Americans who are now living without health insurance.

The President touts his plan as a way to give low-income uninsured Americans more money in their pockets to help them buy their own health insurance. It sounds good, but the President ignores two facts.

First, the President's plan does not provide enough of a benefit for low-income Americans. A tax deduction is of little value to low-income workers, who in many cases will receive little more than \$1,200 a year back from the Federal Government. That might sound like a lot, but health insurance costs the average family almost \$11,000 a year. This small deduction will continue to make health care out of reach.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the President's proposal is not the right approach.

DON'T RAISE THE TOLLS

(Mrs. CAPITO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my great concern with the proposal pending before the Virginia State Corporation Commission to raise the tolls on the Dulles Greenway. Many of my constituents from the eastern panhandle of West Virginia use this roadway to commute into Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia.

The growth of the Washington metropolitan area has extended into the eastern panhandle of West Virginia as many families move into the towns and communities of my district seeking a lower cost of living and the wonderful environment for raising a family we have in West Virginia. Some have chosen to change professions and remain there with their jobs, but many others still commute into Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia every day, and they rely on many forms of transportation, one of which is the Dulles Greenway.

The proposed increase represents a 56 percent increase over the next 5 years. The per-mile rate for the increased toll is drastically higher than other toll roads in the area, costing commuters approximately 34 cents per mile. For many families this will be an undue burden.

Thankfully, there is a hearing today in Northern Virginia so local citizens can express their concern with this proposal. I hope that the Virginia State Corporation Commission will see the shortsightedness of this proposal

and call for a reasonable toll level for the commuters utilizing the Dulles Greenway.

A HISTORIC MOMENT

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

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, moments before we opened this session, I had the privilege of witnessing a historic moment. Our distinguished Speaker, a lady who has just returned from a bipartisan visit to Kuwait, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan, met the distinguished Speaker, another lady, another statesman, another political leader of outstanding qualities, the Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament.

When these two women met, NANCY PELOSI and Katalin Szili, history was made. We saw two great democratic republics, with parliaments headed by outstanding women, exchange views and plan the future of stronger and even better relations between the Republic of Hungary and the United States of America.

I salute Speaker PELOSI and Speaker of Parliament Katalin Szili and wish both of them the very best.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Madam Speaker, I think that there is a good part to the Democrat takeover of the House and the Senate, and that is that now the Democrats are at the table when we talk about Iraq. And there are many in this town who say failure is not an option. I think failure is an option. I think there would be disastrous consequences to that. The third largest oil-producing nation in the world would belong to terrorists. What would happen to the existing and fledgling Iraqi Government if you suddenly pulled our troops out of there? What kind of genocide would that bring? Those are things that have to be dealt with.

But I think that it is good that now we can have a bipartisan approach that the critics of the administration and the policy are now inside the room actually making policy. With that spirit, I think that it is time to tone down the rhetoric and work on a solution that will be best for Iraq, for America, and for the international community. And I say this with sincerity now because I think there is a good opportunity, and we only will have it, I think, for a few short months because the Presidential elections are kicking in, lots of rhetoric is floating around, but I think we can work together and come up with some good policy.

PRESIDENT'S HEALTH CARE PROPOSAL IS A BAD PLAN

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

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, in the President's State of the Union address last week, he made proposals for what is essentially a tax increase on more than 30 million Americans. That's right, if Congress were to pass the President's health care plan, more than 30 million Americans, many of whom are middle-class workers who have fought hard to negotiate comprehensive health care plans with their employers, would be taxed by the Federal Government. Good health insurance, for those lucky enough to have it, would be jeopardized as many Americans would be pushed into the individual insurance market where insurers can refuse coverage to workers based on their health.

That brings me to the least of these, those without insurance, a number which will grow under the President's plan. The Regional Medical Center at Memphis, the Med, a hospital that provides a disproportionate amount of service to the poor, could lose as much as \$30 million a year. Tennessee could see Federal revenue to support hospitals, nursing homes and other health providers by as much as \$300 million, and that would be an increase of taxes at the local level.

The Med plays a critical role in delivering health care to the poor. Losing the specialty services of the Med would leave serious gaps in our health care system that serves the entire region around Memphis, including Mississippi and Arkansas.

PRESIDENT'S TROOP ESCALATION PLAN IS NOT A PLAN FOR SUCCESS IN IRAQ

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

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Madam Speaker, just how many people need to tell the President that his troop escalation plan is a terrible idea before he actually begins to listen? The American people sent the President a strong message last November that they no longer want our troops involved in what has become a civil war in Iraq.

The President's own generals have told him that they didn't need more troops in Iraq; but rather than listening to his generals, as he has always suggested that he has done, he has now turned around and replaced them with generals who are more friendly to the idea of sending more troops.

The bipartisan Iraq Study Group told the President that more troops were not needed. Instead, they concluded that a strategic redeployment should be initiated in the coming months and that the administration should reach out to the neighbors in the region, ideas the administration has rejected.

If this were not enough, an overwhelming number of Democrats, and Republicans I might say, here on Capitol Hill have expressed opposition to the plan.

Madam Speaker, how many people have to tell him "no" before he listens?

□ 1230

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS BUT OPPOSE THE WAR IN IRAQ

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, today I rise in support of our troops, and I want to underscore that. But I also want to make clear that I am opposed to the war in Iraq. Our service men and women are proudly serving our country. More than 3,063 of our sons and daughters, including 13 from the 32nd Congressional District that I represent, have given their lives.

This war, as you know, has cost taxpayers \$387 billion so far, and an additional \$100 billion to \$130 billion is going to be requested by this President. There is no plan to secure the peace. There is no accountability for companies like Halliburton that have been found to make more than \$1.4 billion in unreasonable and unsupported billing charges, and our veterans lack the support needed and deserved.

We need a plan that ensures that there are no permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq, and not a plan to increase the buildup. We need a plan which investigates and punishes companies engaged in war profiteering and fraud and a plan to redeploy our servicemen and women. We need to find a political solution.

AMERICANS OPPOSE TROOP ESCALATION IN IRAQ

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

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, President Bush's dangerous plan to escalate the war in Iraq will not make Americans more secure. In fact, it will only lead to more bloodshed and violence. The plan faces significant bipartisan opposition in both Chambers of Congress and is opposed by a vast majority of people in this country.

Some Republicans are belatedly calling for benchmarks to measure progress in Iraq, even as they stand by the President's plan to escalate the war. Democrats were calling for benchmarks for success in Iraq years ago, but our pleas fell on deaf ears.

As an early and staunch opponent to this war, I have watched as every single prediction this administration has made has been proven wrong, from the duration of the war, the reception we would receive, the costs, the number of casualties and the existence of weapons of mass destruction, all wrong.

The loss of more young men and women is too high a price to pay for