

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Tuesday, March 9, 1999

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BLILEY).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 9, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM BLILEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed without amendment a bill and a concurrent resolution of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 882. An act to nullify any reservation of funds during fiscal year 1999 for guaranteed loans under the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act for qualified farmers or ranchers, and for other purposes.

H. Con. Res. 40. Concurrent resolution honoring Morris Udall, former United States Representative from Arizona, and extending the condolences of the Congress on his death.

The message also announced that the Senate had passed a concurrent resolution of the following title, in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 15. Concurrent resolution honoring Morris King Udall, former United States Representative from Arizona, and extending the condolences of the Congress on his death.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 105-220, the Chair, on behalf of the Majority Leader, announces the appointment of the following individuals to serve as members of the Twenty-first Century Workforce Commission—

Susan Auld, of Vermont;
Katherine K. Clark, of Virginia;
Bobby S. Garvin, of Mississippi; and
Randel K. Johnson, of Maryland.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 105-277, the Chair, on behalf of the Democratic Leader, announces the appointment of the following individuals to serve as members of the Commission on Online Child Protection—

Jerry Berman, of Washington, D.C.—Representative of a business making content available over the Internet;

Srinija Srinivasan, of California—Representative of a business providing Internet portal or search services; and

Donald N. Telage, of Massachusetts—Representative of a business providing domain name registration services.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 194(a) of title 14, United States Code, as amended by Public Law 101-595, the Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, appoints the following Senators to the Board of Visitors of the United States Coast Guard Academy—

the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), ex officio, as Chairman of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; and

the Senator from Missouri (Mr. ASHCROFT), Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 1295(b) of title 46, United States Code, as amended by Public Law 101-595, the Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, appoints the following Senators to the Board of Visitors of the United States Merchant Marine Academy—

the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), ex officio, as Chairman of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; and

the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE), Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) for 5 minutes.

WE MUST NOT PRIVATIZE MEDICARE

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the National Commission on the Future of Medicare is poised to recommend to the President and to Congress that Medicare be privatized. They are soon likely to propose that Medicare, perhaps the Nation's best government program, be delivered to the private insurance market.

There is nothing new here. Conservative newspapers, like the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Times, for

years have been attempting to privatize Medicare. Privatize it, they say, in order to save it.

This is a critical time for Medicare. The program faces significant financial difficulty in part because of the impending retirement of the baby boomers and the fact that people are living longer. The Republican answer has been to privatize Medicare by moving Medicare beneficiaries into managed care and creating Medicare medical savings accounts.

These efforts to undermine the universal risk pool that has long supported Medicare will lead to one private system for the healthy and wealthy and a government-run welfare program for the sick and the less well off.

The managed care industry illustrates this point. HMOs understand that providing health insurance to Medicare beneficiaries who need little health care is far more profitable than providing it to those who need expensive care.

This is not a theoretical example. HMOs act according to the rules. Their primary purpose is the pursuit of profit, as it should be. Anyone who thinks we can ask the private sector to put qualitative values ahead of their shareholders' expectations of profitability did not take the same economics classes that I did.

Medicare is a fundamental part of the fabric of our society. Thirty-three years ago, before Medicare, fewer than 50 percent of America's elderly even had health insurance. Today, almost everyone over 65 is part of Medicare. It has helped people live better, it has helped people live longer. Medicare is such an important part of our lives and our society that it is almost taken for granted.

Two things about HMOs: They like profitable enrollees, and they do not stick around when things do not go their way. Last year, Medicare HMOs took it upon themselves to dispel the myth that privatization works. After enduring 1 whole year of reduced profits, more than one-fourth of the HMOs participating in Medicare, 96 plans total, quit. They left behind some 450,000 Medicare beneficiaries.

In my home city of Lorain, Ohio, United Health Care of Ohio dropped 2,000 Medicare patients from its plan because Lorain County seniors simply were not profitable enough for them. Yet United Health Care's CEO was paid a 1997 compensation of \$8 million and \$61 million in stock options.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.