

4, 1999 and the legal framework for the peace process will come to an end. Despite the recent breakdown in negotiations, I applaud President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright for their tireless efforts towards achieving a lasting and just peace.

I agree with the majority of the text of H. Con. Res. 24 and therefore I supported it. The final status of the lands controlled by the Palestinian Authority should be determined under the auspices of Oslo or another framework. While Yasser Arafat may have the right to make unilateral declarations after Oslo, it will not be helpful to reaching peace and could inflame the violence that looms over the region every day.

However, I am disturbed by what H. Con. Res. 24 does not say. It does not condemn the "unilateral actions" taken by Israel in direct violation of Oslo and the Wye River agreements. It ignores the responsibilities and commitments made by the Netanyahu Administration. In short, it is not a balanced resolution.

In the coming months I will continue to support the Administration's efforts in the Middle East and offer my support for all those who truly seek peace in the region. I will also work with my colleagues in the House to craft more balanced resolutions that call on both sides to adhere to the letter and spirit of their commitments.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO EXPAND THE TAX DEDUCTION FOR STUDENT LOAN INTEREST PAYMENTS: ELIMINATING THE 60-PAYMENT RESTRICTION

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation on behalf of myself, and Representatives JOHNSON (of Connecticut), MATSUI, and ENGLISH, to expand the student loan interest payment tax deduction.

As a college education becomes both increasingly expensive and increasingly important in getting a job and being a productive and active participant in our democratic society, we must continue to look for ways to help students pay for tuition and related educational expenses.

As a part of the Tax Payer Relief Act of 1997, the interest paid on student loans became eligible for an "above-the-line" deduction on Federal income taxes. This tax provision is just beginning to provide needed relief to many student borrowers.

However, under current law, only the first 60 loan payments are eligible for the deduction. Because student loan payments are typically made monthly, this means that students can deduct interest payments on their taxes for only 5 years of repayment, not including time periods spent in either forbearance or deferment.

Our legislation would simply lift the 60-payment restriction and allow borrowers to deduct interest payments for the entire period of repayment.

Extending the time limit on the tax deduction is one of the most direct and straightforward changes we can make in current law to relieve the increasing burden of student loan debt. Loans now comprise 60 percent of all postsecondary student aid, compared to just 45 percent 10 years ago.

Our legislation will be particularly helpful to students with high loan debt and those who choose to pay over longer periods. The latter group includes those who choose "income contingent repayment," that is those who make smaller payments over a longer period of time, especially those who maintain a commitment to lower-paying public service occupations.

Eliminating the 60 payment period also will ease difficult, confusing, and costly reporting requirements currently required for both borrowers and lenders. Thus far, these reporting requirements have proved so difficult that the IRS has already relaxed the rules for reporting during the 1998 tax year.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this important legislation.

EXCELLENCE REWARDED AT BURBANK HIGH SCHOOL

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the academic decathlon team members, coaches, and parents at Burbank High School in my hometown, San Antonio, Texas. At the state Academic Decathlon competition for medium-size schools, Burbank placed third among 225 Texas high schools. This great accomplishment reflects the hard work and countless hours of preparation by students and school officials alike.

These students have demonstrated exceptional time management skills, self-discipline, and determination. They stayed focused on their priorities and set high standards for themselves. The City of San Antonio is proud of all nine members who received 14 individual medals in addition to the third-place team medal. Included in the team award was a gold medallion and a \$250 scholarship for each team member.

I would like to thank the coaches and parents of these diligent students for all their efforts in making this accomplishment possible. These students have been successful because of their hard work and support from family and teachers. They are paving the way to a bright and exciting future.

A TRIBUTE TO ST. JOSEPH'S VILLAGE IN SELDEN, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK

HON. MICHAEL P. FORBES

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this historic chamber to share with my col-

leagues the story of St. Joseph's Village in Selden, Long Island, New York. On Saturday, March 20, 1999, this special community, built by the Diocese of Rockville Center, will celebrate the 20th anniversary of its ground breaking. I stand here today in the People's House to talk about St. Joseph's Village because it embodies a unique spirit of community and cooperation; where its residents help each other and work to improve the lives of those in the surrounding community—even the world.

This Saturday evening, I have the privilege of helping the community pay tribute to a community within a community; St. Joseph's Village. Since its inception, 20 years ago, its 200 residents have made noteworthy contributions to an array of causes, from national charities to local food and clothing drives, and have improved the lives of individuals from around the world and at home on Long Island.

St. Joseph's Village began as an experiment. It was the first subsidized senior and disabled housing development built by the Diocese of Rockville Center on Long Island and, initially at least, a controversial plan. Many residents in this middle class area resisted the notion of a subsidized apartment complex in their community. But St. Joseph's Village proved to be an outstanding neighbor and a model for the developments that followed it. Villagers often visit the nearby Hawkins Elementary School and read to students. This unique program, called "Reading Buddies," pairs up seniors with young children for mutual literary enjoyment. Other seniors devote their time preparing and serving to their fellow senior citizens at the local Senior Nutrition Center. Sixty other residents organized a project to donate money each month to improve the lives of three underprivileged children living abroad in Third World nations.

Mr. Speaker, words can hardly express the deep debt of gratitude we on Long Island owe to the residents of St. Joseph's Village for all they have done to serve our community and improve the lives of our neighbors. I ask my Congressional colleagues to join me, the community and all who have benefited from their generosity in thanking the residents for all their good work. And on this day of their 20th anniversary, we wish them many more years of success and good fortune.

FAIRNESS FOR FOSTER CARE FAMILIES ACT

HON. RON LEWIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a bill that ensures that all foster care families are treated fairly under the Tax Code.

The Fairness for Foster Care Families Act simplifies the current rules for foster care payments and recognizes the increasing role that charitable tax exempt agencies and private for-profit agencies play in the placement of foster care children and adults.

In 1983, Congress amended the Internal Revenue Code to permit certain foster care

families to exclude from taxable income payments they receive to cover the additional expenses incurred for caring for the individual. Unfortunately, the exclusion depended on a complicated analysis of three factors: the age of the foster care individual, the type of foster care placement agency and the source of the foster care payment.

Congress revisited the tax treatment of foster care payments in 1986. Although the process was simplified to an extent, some families were still left out. Those families could only receive a tax deduction if they maintained detailed expense records to support such deductions.

Under the Fairness for Foster Care Families Act, foster care providers would avoid this burdensome record keeping process. This bill guarantees that the payment is tax-free regardless of the age of the foster care individual or the type of agency that places the individual provided that the agency is licensed and certified by the State.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this legislation.

HAPPY 300TH ANNIVERSARY TO
THE SIKH NATION

HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, has brought it to my attention that on April 13, the Sikhs will be celebrating their 300th anniversary. Sikhs have been significant contributors to America in several sectors of life, but their anniversary is significant for another reason. The Sikh Nation is currently one of several nations struggling to reclaim its freedom from Hindu India.

It is an interesting coincidence that April 13, the Sikhs' anniversary, is also the birthday of Thomas Jefferson, the author of our Declaration of Independence. This symmetry of events highlights the Sikh Nation's desire to be free. It is time that the Sikhs enjoy the freedom that we enjoy here in America.

In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson wrote that all people "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it." In India, the government allows 70,000 Sikh political prisoners to rot in jail without charge or trial, some since 1984. They should be released on or before April 13 as a goodwill gesture. Instead, I fear that even more Sikhs will be endangered as "democratic, secular" India tries to maintain what it calls its "territorial integrity."

In the spirit of Jefferson, let the 300th anniversary of the Sikh Nation be an occasion to do whatever we can to support the Sikhs and the other nations of South Asia in their struggle to live in the glow of freedom. By stopping U.S. aid to India (which is one of the top five recipient countries) until human rights are universally respected, by declaring our support

for self-determination through a free and fair plebiscite, and by imposing the same sanctions on India that we would impose on any other religious oppressor, we can share the blessings of liberty with the people of South Asia. This is the best thing that we can do to celebrate this important occasion with the Sikh Nation.

THE AMERICAN HEALTH SECURITY
ACT OF 1999

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to once again introduce the American Health Security Act. The single payer plan I propose is the only plan before Congress that will guarantee health care universality, affordability, security and choice.

While this Congress lacks the political will to enact comprehensive health reform, the underlying needs for reform remain prevalent: health care costs are more unaffordable to more people and the number of people without health insurance continues to rise. These problems are compounded by increasing loss of health care choice and autonomy for those people who have insurance leading to disruptions in care and in relationships with providers.

The American Health Security Act I am introducing today embodies the characteristics of a truly American bill. It will give to all Americans the peace of mind—the security—to which all citizens should be entitled. It creates a system of health care delivered by physicians chosen by the patient. No one will have to leave their existing relationships with their doctors or hospitals or other providers. It is federally financed but administered at the state level, so the system is highly decentralized. And it provides new mechanisms to improve the quality of care every American receives.

The American Health Security Act (the Bill) provides universal health insurance coverage for all Americans as of January 1, 2000. It severs the link between employment and insurance. The federal government defines the standard benefit package, collects the premium, and distributes the premium funds to the states. The states, through negotiating panels comprised of representatives from business, labor, consumers and the state government, negotiate fees with the providers and the government controls the rate of price increases. The result is health care coverage that never changes when your personal situation does, never requires you to change the way you seek health care, and never causes disruption in your relationships with your providers.

The bill provides the coverage under a mechanism of global budgets to achieve controllable and measurable cost containment that will yield scorable savings over the next five years. Unlike other single-payer proposals of the past, it provides for almost exclusive state administration provided the states meet federal budget, benefit package, guarantee of

free choice of provider, and quality assurance standards. This bill explicitly preserves free choice of provider by providing a mechanism for fee-for-service delivery to compete effectively with HMOs. It will not force Americans into HMO models.

The insurance mechanism of the American Health security Act is easy to use and understand. Quite simply, a patient visits the doctor or other provider. The provider then bills the state for the services provided under the standard benefit package and the state pays the bill on the patient's behalf, just as insurance companies pay medical bills on the patient's behalf now. The difference is that complicated and expensive formulas for patient co-payments, coinsurance, and deductibles in addition to premium costs are eliminated.

The standard benefit package is in fact extremely generous. It covers all inpatient and outpatient medical services without limits on duration or intensity except as delineated by outcomes research and practice guidelines based on quality standards. It provides for coverage of comprehensive long-term care, dental services, mental health services and prescription drugs. Cosmetic procedures and other "frill" benefits such as private rooms and comfort items are not covered.

The extent of state discretion is substantial. The federal budget is divided into quality assurance, administrative, operating, and medical education components. The system is financed 86% by the federal government and 14% by the states. That federal pie is then apportioned among the states. For example, states with large elderly populations can be expected to require a larger volume of higher intensity services and will receive a larger federal contribution. However, the states are free to determine how that money is allocated among types of providers and to negotiate those allocations according to the state's individual needs, provided federal standards are met. The ability of HMOs to operate and compete on a capitated basis is preserved.

The states must demonstrate the efficacy of their methodologies or federal models will be imposed. However, states are not required to seek waivers in advance. While the federal government will not make separate allocations to states for capital and operating budgets, the states are free to allocate capital separately to assure adequate distribution of resources throughout the state and to develop their own mechanisms for doing so.

The financing package reflects the CBO scoring of this bill's predecessor, H.R. 1200, in the 103d Congress. The numbers were provided by the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT) on the basis of the CBO scoring. Accordingly, the bill is fully financed. In fact, JCT estimates that the American Health Security Act will lead to deficit reduction approximating \$100 billion per year by the year 2004.

Everyone will contribute to the health insurance system, except the very poor. Employers will pay 8.7% of payroll and individuals will pay 2.2% of their taxable income. A tobacco tax equal to \$0.45 per cigarette pack is also imposed. These payroll deductions are lower than current insurance costs for most businesses and individuals, even while providing universal coverage and a more generous benefit package than exists in the private market