

Postal Route #26 collecting donated, non-perishable food items. Although I was only along the route for a little less than two hours, I was absolutely amazed by the amount of generosity that was shown by the dozens of individuals who donated food. Not only did many people donate food, but some selflessly donated more than one item. The impact of this event was obvious to me when I found out that the residents of Nashua had succeeded in donating more than 36,000 pounds of food. That is 18 tons of donated food collected in one city, in one day!

Needless to say, I was extremely impressed with the effort, organization, and effectiveness of the National Association of Letter Carriers food drive in Nashua and its success throughout the country. I would like to commend the National Association of Letter Carriers and the United States Postal Service for their commitment to collecting food for the hungry and lending a helping hand to those who need it most. The food that was collected will help feed nearly 30 million needy people throughout the country. It is initiatives like this food drive that encourage people to participate in their community and assist those in need. I would encourage all of my colleagues, if they have not already done so, to participate in the national Stamp Out Hunger food drive next year. I know that I am already looking forward to participating again and I am greatly encouraged by the generosity and goodwill that I witnessed this past weekend.

REPUBLIC OF CHINA'S PRESIDENT
LEE TENG-HUI'S THIRD ANNI-
VERSARY IN OFFICE

HON. DANA ROHRBACHER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 14, 1999

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, three years ago, voters in Taiwan rejected communist China's attempts at military intimidation and handed a landslide victory to Mr. Lee Teng-hui in an election that completed Taiwan's transition to a full-fledged democracy. Now, in 1999, President Lee has continued to make strides toward full democracy and is seeking to reduce tensions in the Taiwan Strait. He has repeatedly urged leaders on the communist mainland to discuss reunification issues under the premises of the need for democracy for all Chinese people. He has also shown leadership in helping neighboring Asian countries find solutions for the regional financial crisis.

On the eve of President Lee Teng-hui's third anniversary in office, I wish President Lee continued success. His election three years ago was the first time a Chinese society had democratically elected its leader. The election represents a victory for the people of Taiwan in their commendable development of full democracy.

Congratulations to the Republic of China on Taiwan.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JACK QUINN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 14, 1999

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Speaker, I was honored by the American Red Cross in Buffalo, New York, and therefore was unable to cast my vote on the motion to instruct conferees (rollcall No. 130) regarding H.R. 1141, a bill making emergency supplementary appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" in support of this motion.

INTRODUCTION OF THE WORKING
UNINSURED TAX EQUITY ACT

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 14, 1999

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to share with you some ideas that both Representative ROGAN and I have about how to begin addressing the issue of the uninsured.

Many of us are stymied by the health care paradox of a booming economy. Our economy is booming. Unfortunately, parallel to this economic growth is the growing number of uninsured. There are now almost 44 million uninsured people in this country—an increase of more than 5 million since 1993.

Today, we are introducing legislation to help stop the increase by targeting a 30% health insurance tax credit to the working uninsured. To qualify for our partially refundable credit, taxpayers must not currently be offered health insurance through their employer and they must have an individual income below \$30,000/yr or a joint income of less than \$50,000/yr. To ease administration, these income limits have been designed to match those of traditional IRAs.

When the General Accounting Office evaluated a similar proposal last June, it found that almost 36 million individuals without employer-based coverage—roughly 75% of the uninsured—would be eligible for the full credit on the basis of their adjusted gross income. Additionally, under our proposal, the self-employed would have the opportunity to choose between our proposed credit or the 60% deduction allowed by current law.

The benefits of this proposal are not only that it provides a tax benefit for those who need it most, it also would encourage health care consumers to be cost-conscious when choosing their health insurance loans so that they could maximize the value of the credit.

As you consider our proposal, keep in mind three questions: (1) who the uninsured are, (2) how has the tax code impacted health insurance in this country, and (3) most importantly, what can the 106th Congress realistically do to address this important social policy issue.

First, who are the uninsured? Contrary to what many people might think, roughly 75% of the uninsured work full or part-time. The remaining 25% are split evenly between those who are unemployed and those who are not in the labor force.

There isn't enough time today to talk at length about the demographics of the working uninsured. If we did, we'd find that most of them are age 18-34, that a disproportionate number of them are minority, that working poor parents are twice as likely to be uninsured as poor parents who are unemployed, and that the highest rate of uninsurance impacts pre-seniors between the age of 62-64.

Second, how has the tax code impacted health insurance in this country? Since WW II, America has relied on employers to provide health insurance and has rewarded them accordingly through the tax code. But, a growing number of workers lack employer-based insurance which policy-makers once took for granted.

Let me give a practical example of how the working uninsured fall through the cracks of our current employer based system. If you make \$6.50 an hour your after tax income is \$11,500. If you tried to purchase an average health insurance plan it would cost you about \$3000. It is obvious that if the working poor are going to get health insurance we are going to have to come up with a way to help them.

I think we should all find it unacceptable for a person who works full time in this country not to be able to afford health insurance.

Third question, how do we in the 106th Congress address the issue of the working uninsured?

As you all know, I am a strong believer in universal health insurance and that the most efficient way of providing it is through a single payer financing system. A system that would lift the prohibitive burden of health insurance administration from employers and replace it with a public premium that shares responsibility throughout society.

But, if there is a way for us to guarantee universal coverage without single payer—through a plan based on tax credits, Clinton-care, or Medicare for all—I am willing to look at the proposal, as long as the plan guarantees access to quality care that's affordable. My bottom line is quality care at an affordable price.

Unfortunately, just because something is efficient—such as a single payer system—doesn't always mean that it will pass anytime soon. The reality is that the political climate to have an honest debate about universal coverage was destroyed by partisan bickering in 1994.

As a policymaker, the next question for me then becomes, what can we do in the near term to help folks who need health insurance today.

The tax code is a good place to look. After all it is the foundation of our employer-based health insurance system.

For a number of years now, this issue for me has been about simple tax fairness. As many may know, Congress recently made matters worse by passing legislation to allow the self-employed to deduct 100 percent of the cost of health insurance from their taxes. Since 1995, I have attempted to equalize the tax treatment of health insurance benefits by offering amendments on the House floor and in the Ways and Means Committee, and by introducing H.R. 539 in the last Congress.

My rallying cry—which I am glad to see is starting to take hold—has been the rhetorical