

I cannot support this inappropriate use of increased Medicare dollars. I support meaningful assistance to health care providers and targeted managed care payment increases to low-reimbursement counties, like many in Wisconsin, in exchange for their commitment to remain in the communities they serve for at least three years and not abandon seniors like so many have.

This Congress has failed to pass any meaningful health reform, such as the Patients' Bill of Rights or a Medicare prescription drug benefit, and instead has chosen to provide tax breaks for special interests and millions of dollars in Medicare spending to HMOs. I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER
AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT
ON H.R. 2614, CERTIFIED DEVELOPMENT
COMPANY PROGRAM
IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2000

SPEECH OF

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 26, 2000

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2614. While I believe that there are many good provisions in this bill, I must object to it because it does not restore Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) benefits to legal immigrant women and children. In 1995, Congress imposed a 5-year ban on providing Medicaid and CHIP coverage to recently qualified immigrants. In 1996, Congress passed an immigration bill that split families; threw out due process; and took away discretion. But, worst of all, Congress took away compassion.

So, I'm not here just as a Member of Congress or as the Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Health Task Force. I'm here as an American upset with the laws that discriminate against my fellow human beings. Today we stand before you to defend the women and children who fled tyranny and poverty only to be denied the health care afforded other Americans. We are talking about people that came here legally, play by the rules, and pay taxes. I firmly believe that we should include a provision that give states the option to provide SCHIP and Medicaid benefits to lawfully present immigrant low-income pregnant women and children. Children and pregnant women who are denied coverage through the SCHIP and Medicaid 5-year ban usually can't get other vital health care coverage. As a matter of decency, as a matter of economics, as a matter of public health, legal immigrant children and pregnant women deserve the same access to essential health care coverage offered to citizens. For pregnant women and their children, regular prenatal care and early intervention saves lives and dollars.

Children who have routine office visits and immunizations grow to be healthy adults with less medical complications. Children monitored by pediatricians are less likely to be victimized by chronic and communicable diseases. Preventive care minimizes emergency

room visits, a costly and inefficient way of providing health care. Remember, diseases do not ask to see a passport. The 5-year ban on providing Medicaid and CHIP coverage has been the greatest barrier to health care for legal immigrants. It's time to make the system fair for everyone.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ONGOING
U.S. CONGRESSIONAL FORUM ON
LAOS WITH THE APPROACHING
25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
COMMUNIST REGIME

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 27, 2000

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the deteriorating political, economic and security situation in Laos which remains under the brutal control of one of the world's last remaining Stalinist regimes. More is needed to promote democracy, basic human liberties and human rights—and to stop the serious, ongoing intervention by Vietnam's military and security forces in the internal affairs of Laos. This is needed to serve the interests of the American people and the freedom-loving people of Laos, Vietnam and Thailand.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the Center for Public Policy Analysis and its Executive Director, Mr. Philip Smith, as well as Colonel Wangyee Vang of the Lao Veterans of America for their leadership in helping to convene the U.S. Congressional Forum on Laos. Many of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle have participated in this important forum series on Capitol Hill over the course of the 106th Congress. It has helped to develop enhanced awareness and understanding of the serious developments in Laos by policymakers. I am proud to have participated in a number of these events, along with my staff assistant, Paul Berkowitz. In December of 1999, at one of the Congressional Forum sessions, I was pleased to participate along with Major General Vang Pao and other distinguished guests, and presented a joint report about our Congressional Staff Delegation research mission to Southeast Asia in the summer of 1999. In our report, issued jointly by the International Relations Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, we discussed the serious ongoing plight of the Hmong and Lao people still suffering in Laos. Other speakers and participants at the forum series on Laos included distinguished Members and staff from many offices including: Representatives DANA ROHRBACHER, GEORGE RADANOVICH and WILLIAM DELAHUNT, of the House International Relations Committee, on which I serve as Chairman, as well as Chairman JESSE HELMS, Senators BOB SMITH, RUSSELL FEINGOLD, PAUL WELLSTONE, Representatives MARK GREEN, PATRICK KENNEDY, CALVIN DOOLEY and the late Bruce Vento, who passed away earlier this month. Congressman Vento's leadership on human rights and with the forum series on Laos will, indeed, be sadly missed by so many in this Chamber and in the Laotian community.

Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Congressional Forum series on Laos is making a significant impact in helping to provide vital information and to formulating policy toward Laos. It has helped generate numerous breaking stories in news services around the world, including the Washington Post, Washington Times, Agence France, Associated Press, the South China Morning Post and others. Radio Free Asia, Lao Service, as well as the Voice of America have also provided coverage. Historic legislation on Laos has also been enacted with the important information that has come from these Forums in Congress including H. Con. Res. 169, condemning, for the first time, the Communist regime in Laos for its human rights violations and other matters. I was proud to have worked with Representatives GEORGE RADANOVICH, MARK GREEN and former Congressman Bruce Vento to help pass this important legislation in the International Relations Committee.

Mr. Speaker, thus far, distinguished panelists and participants in the Congressional Forum on Laos have also included important Laotian and Hmong leaders as well as Lao experts from around the world, including: T. Kumar, Asia Director for Amnesty International; Markram Ouass, The National Democratic Institute's (NDI) Senior Program Officer for Asia; Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt, Noble Prize nominee and distinguished Lao and Hmong scholar; Dr. Chou Norinh, of the United League for Democracy in Laos, and distinguished professor at Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand; Dr. Bounchaloune Phouthakany, of the University of Quebec, and Secretary General, United Lao Association of Canada; Dr. Khamphay Abbai of Australia; Dr. Bounthone Chanthavixay, with the World Wide Coordinating Committee on Laos, Hagen, Germany, and former Lao student protest leader in Eastern Europe; His Royal Highness Prince Sayavong, of the Lao Royal Family, in France; Major General Vang Pao, Hmong leader; Colonel Wangyee Vang, President of the Lao Veterans of America; Thongsavanh Phongsavanh, of the Lao Representatives Abroad Council; General Thonglit Chokhbenbun of France; Thongkhoun Phathana, President, The Laos Institute For Democracy; Ms. Sothida Bounthapanya Lao Progressive Party; The Lan Xang Foundation, of Atlanta, Georgia; Col. Ngeunsamith Sasorith, France, President, of the Paris-based,

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to thank all of the Members of Congress, staff and participants from around the United States and the world who have made the U.S. Congressional Forum on Laos such an important success in the 106th Congress. The winds of intense turmoil and change are now blowing in Laos. The United States, with the help of the U.S. Congress, needs to do more to support democracy and free and fair elections in Laos during the upcoming vote in 2002.

Mr. Speaker, toward this end, on December 1st, while the Communist Regime in Laos celebrates its dark anniversary of totalitarian dictatorship, it is important to note that a major installment of the Congressional Forum on Laos will be held in the U.S. House of Representatives with witnesses and participants from around the world, including the slated