

H.J. Res. 123. Joint resolution making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2001, and for other purposes.

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

S. Con. Res. 160. Concurrent resolution providing for a conditional adjournment or recess of the Senate and a conditional adjournment of the House of Representatives.

□ 2100

ISSUES OF CONCERN TO THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE NOT AD-
DRESSED BY THE 106TH CON-
GRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PITTS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, earlier this evening I was concerned because I think the impression was being given by the Republican leadership and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that if we stayed here the next few days, that we were going to be able to accomplish something.

I think that was a false impression, because we all know that the other body has already gone home and passed a continuing resolution that brings the other body back I think on November 13 or 14. So as much as my House colleagues and the Republican leadership here in the House may feel that they are accomplishing something by being here for the next few days prior to the election, the bottom line is that they cannot accomplish anything because the other body, the Senate, is simply not here.

So it is hard for me to understand why my colleagues on the Republican side are being critical because some Members of either party do not happen to be here, because we all know that absolutely nothing can be accomplished.

I have listened to the debate back and forth in the last hour or two, and I know that what we are trying to do, what my Republican colleagues were trying to do, certainly, was to suggest that there have been great accomplishments made in this Congress.

I have been very critical of the fact, particularly with regard to health care, that the issues that the American people really care about, the ones that affect their lives, whether it be Medicare prescription drugs, because they do not have access to prescription drugs or because they are not affordable, or the issue of HMO abuse and the need for reform of the HMO system, these types of issues have not been addressed.

Also, there is the issue of trying to deal with the uninsured. We have now 42 million Americans who do not have health insurance. That needs to be addressed. It is not being addressed.

Reference was made to the fact that the Democrats have been trying to pass a labor-health appropriations bill that would provide additional funding for local education, give money back to the school districts around the country so they can hire more teachers and reduce class size, give money back so they can modernize their schools, renovate school buildings that are falling apart, or build new schools where there is overcrowding.

That has been a major issue in one of these appropriation bills that is still outstanding, yet it has not been addressed by the Republican leadership.

There are so many issues like that. The larger issue of what we are going to do about social security and Medicare is important, because we know that in another 20 or 30 years the money is going to start to run out, and the question is whether or not we are going to have some kind of long-term plan to do that, to deal with that.

These are the issues that my constituents talk about when I go home. They are concerned about quality education, they are concerned about health care, they are concerned about retirement security with regard to social security. These issues have not been addressed.

There is absolutely no way those issues are going to be addressed in the next few days prior to the election, so to suggest somehow that they could be I think is just basically a hoax, if you will, on the American people. There is no basis to it whatsoever.

Several times my colleagues, myself and others, have made reference particularly to an editorial that was in the New York Times just this past Wednesday, November 1. I thought that pretty much summed it up. I am not going to read the whole editorial, but it is entitled "An Ineffectual Congress."

It says: "The 106th Congress, with little to show for its 2 years of existence, has all but vanished from public discourse." What they mean by that is that nobody is really paying attention to what we do anymore. It is no wonder that certain numbers of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle have gone home prior to the election, because they know that there is nothing to be done here.

The editorial continues. It says: "Nobody, least of all the presidential candidates, are talking about this particular Congress, and the reason is plain. On almost every matter of importance, gun control, Patients' Bill of Rights, energy deregulation, social security, Congress has done little or nothing, failing to produce a record worthy of either celebration or condemnation."

I suppose it is the ultimate ridicule when the New York Times tells them that they have done neither anything good nor bad, they have done nothing at all.

"Nor has the Congress been able to complete even the most basic business, the appropriation bills that keep the government functioning. Three have been vetoed. Absent a burst of statesmanship in the next few days, it is possible that Congress will have to come back after election day to complete work on the Federal budget."

The bottom line is, once the other body, the Senate, went home, that is a fait accompli. That is going to happen. There is absolutely no way that anything happens here. It is going to happen on November 13, in what we call a lame duck session. There is no way to avoid that anymore because the other body has left.

The editorial goes on to say: "But if Congress has done a lousy job for the public at large, it is doing a fabulous job of feathering its own nest and rewarding commercial interests and favored constituencies with last-minute legislative surprises that neither the public nor most Members of Congress have digested."

What we have been saying, a lot of the Democrats have been saying, the problem with the Republican leadership is not only have they not done the people's business to get the appropriations and budget through, not only have they not addressed the major issues, such as health care, but they are doing nothing. If they do anything, it is something that favors the special interests.

It is very sad. I have seen this happen with almost every major issue. If we talk about prescription drugs, I made the point earlier this evening, when we were having some dialogue during the 1-minute speeches, that this body never passed, the Republicans never passed, the Medicare prescription drug bill.

Mr. Speaker, my point is that what we have seen with the Republican leadership is that whatever they do is essentially favoring special interests.

When I was talking earlier this evening during the 1-minutes, one of my colleagues on the Republican side, I think the gentleman from California who is on the Committee on Ways and Means, he said, well, we passed a Medicare prescription drug bill. Well, it is not true, we did not pass a bill. The Republicans did not bring up a bill that would actually put a prescription benefit under Medicare.

What they did was passed a system which I call a voucher, where they essentially give some money to seniors and say, go out and try to find an HMO or some kind of insurance company that will cover your prescription drugs.

The bottom line is that the seniors cannot do that because it is outside of Medicare. There is not an insurance company that is going to give them that kind of policy for the amount of money that the Republicans are offering. They may end up in an HMO. We know about all the problems we have