

spirit of exploration continues to provide to all Americans.

After sharing a meal of beans and cornbread with the crew, which is a traditional post-launch fare at NASA, we boarded a plane to Washington. As I drifted off to sleep, Mr. Speaker, the words of our national anthem rang in my ears, and I became more convinced than ever that the rockets' red glare still gives proof in the air that this is the land of the free and the home of the brave.

DIVERSE COMMUNITY GROUPS OPPOSE H.R. 7, COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS ACT OF 2001

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, today the House was scheduled to vote on H.R. 7, the so-called Charitable Choice Act. However, the House Republican leadership had to delay the vote because of objections from both Republicans and Democrats alike that this bill would allow discrimination in job hiring based on a person's religious faith when using Federal funds.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that we all support the good work of thousands of faith-based charities across this country. But the truth is also that, as more Members of Congress and more American citizens learn about what is actually in H.R. 7, the support for this bill is faltering badly.

Over 1,000 religious leaders, pastors, priests and rabbis have signed a petition urging this Congress tomorrow to oppose the President's faith-based charity bill.

Why? Because it would harm religion, not help religion.

Why? Because it would not only allow discrimination in job hiring using Federal dollars, it would actually subsidize such discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, let me mention some of the diverse religious and education and civic groups and civil rights groups that stand firmly opposed to the passage of H.R. 7: The American Association of School Administrators; the American Association of University Women; the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees; the American Federation of Teachers; the American Jewish Committee. The Anti-Defamation League opposes this bill, along with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the National Education Association, and the National PTA.

Mr. Speaker, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. opposes this bill, along with the Episcopal Church U.S.A., the Interfaith Alliance and the United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society, along with many other religious and civic groups strong-

ly oppose the passage of this bill on the floor of the House tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk about what is wrong with this bill. Let me emphasize three points: First, the bill is unnecessary. It is unnecessary. Under long-standing law in this country, the Federal Government has been able to support faith-based groups under several conditions and several proper conditions. First, that they not be directly churches or houses of worship. That if churches want to do faith-based work with Federal dollars, they should set up a separate 501(c)(3) secular organization. Then those groups cannot proselytize with tax dollars, and they cannot discriminate in job hiring with those tax dollars.

Under those limited but important conditions, for decades faith-based groups such as Catholic Charities and Lutheran Social Services have received Federal dollars to help social work causes without obliterating the wall of separation between church and State. So the bill is simply a solution in search of a problem.

Secondly, as I mentioned, this bill not only allows discrimination against American citizens based on their religion, it subsidizes it. Let me be specific. If this bill were to become law and a church associated with Bob Jones University were to receive a Federal grant under the program, that church could use our tax dollars to put out a sign that says no Catholic need apply here for a federally funded job. Mr. Speaker, that is wrong.

In the year 2001, over 200 years after the passage of the Bill of Rights, no American citizen should have to pass someone else's religious test to qualify for a federally funded job. No American citizen, not one, should be fired from a federally funded job simply and solely because of that person's religious faith.

Next, I would point out that this bill basically is built on a foundation of a false premise, the false premise that somehow if the Federal tax dollars of this government are not going directly to our houses of worship and our synagogues and mosques, that is somehow discrimination against religion. I think Mr. Madison and Mr. Jefferson would be shocked by that suggestion of discrimination against religion. I think they would have argued that the Bill of Rights for 200 years has not discriminated against religion. The Bill of Rights has put religion on a pedestal above the long arm and reach of the Federal Government, both Federal funding and the Federal regulations that follow.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 7 is a bad bill for our churches, our religion, our faith and our country. I urge a "no" vote tomorrow.

PASS PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS FOR MEANINGFUL HMO REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this evening I want to spend the time with my colleague from North Carolina talking about the Patients' Bill of Rights. I have been to the well many times to talk about this legislation.

I know that we do have a commitment from the House Republican leadership to bring up HMO reform, hopefully at some point over the next 2 weeks. But what I wanted to stress tonight is if we are going to deal with the issue of HMO reform, we have to pass real HMO reform, and that is the Patients' Bill of Rights. It is a bipartisan bill sponsored by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), who is a Democrat; the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), who are Republicans.

This bill or a similar bill passed in the last session of Congress overwhelmingly, almost two-thirds of the Members, most Democrats, and 60-some-odd Republicans. However, once again the House Republican leadership does not support it and does not want to bring it up and is trying, even after a similar bill passed the other body, is trying to kill it effectively by coming up with what I consider a sham HMO bill and trying to get support for that sham Republican HMO bill.

I would like to speak tonight to explain not only why the real Patients' Bill of Rights should be brought to the floor immediately and passed but also why it is such an improvement, as opposed to the sham bill that I fear the Republican leadership may try to slip by.

But at this time I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON), who has worked long and hard, I think too many years that we have worked on this bill, and we hope it will come to the floor in the next few weeks.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his leadership on this issue. He has not only been working hard, but he has been persistent and insistent that we stay on course.

Mr. Speaker, what we want to bring to our colleagues' attention and therefore their awareness and appreciation, not only do we think that the American people want this but we also think that the scare tactics that we hear that are being promoted that this bill will somehow cause employers to have greater liability, therefore, increase the costs, reducing the opportunity for having insurance coverage for their employees, I think it is a scare tactic.