

women's health, but there is much more to be done. When the President spoke at the State of the Union, he mentioned an increase in funding for NIH. I was pleased to hear that, because I felt that we can have an increase in funding for cervical cancer, breast cancer, lung cancer, heart disease and diabetes. So Mr. Speaker, I will be introducing a bill suggesting the increased funding for those areas.

I would also call on the President to provide the health insurance for those over 10 million children who are without health insurance and the women who are without health insurance.

So, as we celebrate Women's History Month, let us be mindful of the need for increased funding for women's health.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, as the Republican co-chair of the Congressional Women's Caucus, I am very excited about what the 107th Congress promises for women, particularly in the area of health care. There have been great strides made in recent years in the area of women's health care, and I think that since the month of March is Women's History Month, I would like to thank my colleagues from the Congressional Women's Caucus who are taking the time to come down here this afternoon out of their busy schedules to discuss women's health issues.

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I think that a number of women will be discussing issues from eating disorders, breast cancer, and long-term care; and these are issues that affect all women, no matter their age, race, nationality or sexual orientation. I commend my colleagues for continually taking the lead on these important issues and look forward to continuing our work in the 107th Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to, I think, look at one issue, but I cannot begin really without talking about that, for the first time in history, that the House Subcommittee on Health will be chaired by a woman, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON), our friend and colleague. That is very fitting when the issues that affect women have become so dramatic.

One of the issues that I would like to address in the area of women's health care that I care deeply about is long-term care. I think long-term care has long been called the sleeping giant of all U.S. social problems. This issue affects all Americans but particularly women for three reasons: Number 1 is we live longer; number 2, we are the ones who take care of our aging relatives; and, number 3, we are much

more likely to retire with little or no pension savings. That makes us especially vulnerable to the high costs of long-term care.

The Census Bureau estimates that there are currently 34 million Americans aged 65 and older living in the United States. By 2030, that number is expected to more than double to 70 million, some 20 percent of the population. The fact that Americans are living longer and living more healthy lifestyles than at any time before should be celebrated. However, it does present a challenging public policy problem.

These numbers demonstrate the demand for long-term home or institutional care is going to grow exponentially. Neither the public nor the private sectors have adequately planned to meet the overwhelming future demand for long-term care services.

We must increase the public's awareness of the importance of preparing for long-term needs, as well as encourage individuals to save for their future, to invest in IRAs and mutual funds and to purchase long-term care insurance policies.

In addition, we must encourage employers to provide long-term care coverage as part of their employee benefit plans.

This is why I plan to reintroduce legislation that I introduced in the 106th Congress, the Live Long and Prosper Act, Long-term Care and Retirement Enhancement to address this issue.

There are several ways my bill addresses the problem facing long-term care.

First, my bill provides an above-the-line deduction, starting with 60 percent in 2002 and rising to 100 percent in 2006, for the cost of long-term care insurance premiums paid during a given year for the taxpayer, his or her spouse and dependents.

These provisions will make long-term care insurance more financially accessible, particularly for the young and those with lower incomes.

Second, my bill gives employers the option of providing long-term care insurance coverage as part of a cafeteria plan, in which employees are able to choose from a variety of medical care or other benefits, or flexible spending account, in which employees set aside pretax dollars for copayments or deductibles on insurance plans.

Third, my bill provides an additional personal exemption to the estimated 7 million Americans who provide custodial care to an elderly relative living in their home. The exemption was valued at \$2,750 in 1999 and should help to alleviate some of the financial burdens involved with caring for a loved one at home.

These are just a few of the provisions of the bill, and they represent a market-based solution to an ever-growing demand for long-term care services and financing. But the financial incentives

alone will not be enough to address the potential long-term care delivery and financial crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to take a look at that bill and to look at the women's health issues that are involved therein.

MANAGED CARE REFORM— MEDICAL NECESSITY

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleagues, the congressional women, for making this effort today for special orders for women's health care. I would like to associate myself with their remarks, because everything they have said on a bipartisan basis is so important.

The reason I am here today, Mr. Speaker, is that the third time I have talked about the importance of managed care reform, real managed care reform, 3, 4 weeks ago I talked about the independent review process, and the accountability 2 weeks ago, and today I want to talk about medical necessity.

Every patient in America deserves to have important medical decisions made by his or her doctor, not by an HMO bureaucrat. Unfortunately, managed care personnel, who often have no substantial medical training, are determining what is medically necessary.

This practice endangers patients, threatens the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship and undermines the foundation of our health care system.

Most managed care companies base treatment decisions on professional standards of medical necessity. But we often hear cases where HMO plans write their own standards into their contracts, and these standards often conflict with the patients' needs.

The case of Jones v. Kodak clearly demonstrates how a clever insurance health plan can keep patients from getting the needed medical care.

Mrs. Jones' employer provided health insurance coverage for in-patient substance abuse treatment. Unfortunately, the health plan determined that she did not qualify for this treatment. Even after an independent reviewer stated that the plan's criteria was too rigid and did not allow for tailoring of case management, Mrs. Jones was still denied treatment.

To add insult to injury, the courts stated that the health plan did not have to disclose its protocols or its rationale for making that decision.

A health plan's decision does not have to be based on sound medical science, standard practices or even basic logic. In fact, a health plan can

make medical necessity decisions using this child's toy called the Magic 8 Ball and not have to disclose the rationale, and when you turn this around and it says what do they suggest you are going to do, this is no way to practice medicine in our country.

Mr. Speaker, unless Congress enacts meaningful patient protection legislation, the outlook will not be good for our patients.

H.R. 526, the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act will ensure that treatment decisions are based on good medical practice and take individual patient circumstances into account.

This legislation will protect patients from arbitrary and capricious decisions and will put health care decision-making back in the hands of the doctors and the patients. The patients should not have to be behind this eight ball when it comes to their health care, and we should not have to depend on the system that is patterned after this Magic 8 Ball when it says do not count on it for adequate health care treatment.

Congress must act now to protect them.

WOMEN'S HEALTH ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPs) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPPs. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleagues, the cochairs of the Women's Caucus in Congress, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), for organizing this time to speak on women's health issues.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that many members of the Women's Caucus are participating today on this important topic.

As a nurse, I have made access to health care one of my highest priorities in Congress, and I think it is particularly important to focus attention on women's health.

Last year, we had a number of victories for women's health. The House was able to pass the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act. This legislation will allow us to provide the necessary resources for low-income women to fight these deadly diseases. We were also successful in reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act.

These are two major accomplishments, but we still have such a long way to go. Until recently, women's health resources were often concentrated on women during their reproductive years. However, with the average life expectancy of women now in the United States approaching 80 years, it is increasingly clear that we need the resources to protect a woman's health at every stage of development.

Each new life stage poses its own unique developmental demands upon a women's body. This is why further research on women's health is so critical. Certain diseases and conditions are more prevalent among women than in men or affect women differently. Studies show that women are suffering from heart disease, breast cancer and depression at alarming rates. And as women live longer they are more likely to suffer from chronic conditions such as arthritis, diabetes and osteoporosis.

There are countless initiatives here in Congress that seek to improve the health of women. I want to touch on just a few.

For example, President Bush's recent reinstatement of the Mexico City policy is, I believe, a huge step backwards for millions of women around the world.

The Mexico City language imposes a gag rule on other countries who wish to use their own reproductive resources for abortion and instead use the needed assistance from the United States to assist with family planning.

Family planning saves lives by helping women plan their pregnancies for the healthiest and safest time. Of course, in so doing, it reduces the need for abortions.

As my colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN), was just speaking about, we need to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights. This legislation would guarantee that patients and doctors control critical health care decisions, not HMOs. This will improve health care options for millions of American women.

We also need to provide prescription drug coverage for Medicare recipients. The majority of seniors are women, and many of them cannot afford the skyrocketing costs of multiple prescriptions.

Proper treatment of depression and mental illness is another important issue for women. Depression afflicts twice as many women as men.

As many as 400,000 women each year suffer from postpartum depression alone. We need to raise awareness about postpartum depression in order to lower the chances that women and their families will suffer from this condition.

Parity for mental health is another important topic and an issue that affects women. It is time that health insurance plans recognize mental illness as just that, an illness.

I am so pleased that courageous women like Tipper Gore and the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. RIVERS), our own colleague here in Congress, have worked hard to increase public awareness about mental illness and to work on destigmatizing depression.

Another major concern for health concern for women is hypertension. It is a major risk factor in cardiovascular disease, and it is two to three times more common in women than in men.

Mr. Speaker, I am now the cochair of the Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition, and I am working closely with American Heart Association to raise awareness of and response to cardiovascular disease and stroke.

This spring here in the House of Representatives we will be conducting some hearings on the effect of women and heart disease together. Increased research on these and other women's health issues can and will improve the quality and length of our lives.

Mr. Speaker, I, along with my colleagues in the Women's Caucus, are committed to raising awareness about women's health issues and to increase funding for women's health research; and today is an opportunity for us to speak on different topics but with a united voice. We, colleagues in the Women's Caucus and men as well and Members of Congress, are talking about and raising the awareness of issues pertaining to women's health.

HEALTH INITIATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the state of public health in America. Although we know more about health hazards and the importance of a healthy life-style today than we did 25 years ago, our health is actually getting worse in many respects.

Chronic diseases account for three out of four deaths in the United States annually; and 100 million Americans, more than a third of the population, suffer from some sort of chronic disease.

Chronic conditions are on the rise. The rate of learning disabilities rose 50 percent in this last decade. Endocrine and metabolic diseases such as diabetes and neurologic diseases such as migraine headaches and multiple sclerosis increased 20 percent between 1986 and 1995.

The rising incidence of disease can be attributed partly to the environment. This means not only air pollution and the rising CO₂ levels, which affect the quality of the air we breath, but factors such as industrial chemicals and plasticizers, increased exposure to low-dose radiation from sources that range from toasters to aircrafts, certain medications which affect the hormone production, and especially a person's life-style, including the diet, tobacco and alcohol use.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud recently to introduce the Women's Health Environmental Research Centers Act, a bill that enhances scientific research in women's health.

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There has been a lack of initiatives to especially look at women's health in