

without pain. In fact, a lot of the ways we conserve actually save us money, like shutting the lights off when we are not using them.

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Change your oil less frequently, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. You actually save money as a result of that, colleagues. So conservation and exploration are necessary elements for this country to meet the demands that the people of this country have come to expect. And I think we have an obligation to do that. A lot depends on energy. Our lives are dependent on energy, whether it is energy from hydropower, to drive our vehicles, to air conditioning, refrigeration, et cetera, et cetera.

Energy is an important policy. What this wake-up call has also done, we have had more energy debates and comments on this House floor in the last 6 weeks than we have had in the last 6 years. The Clinton administration had absolutely no energy policy. What President Bush has done, what the Bush administration has done, is said we have to have an energy policy. Let us put everything on the table. When you put some things on the table, people squeal like a stuck pig. We do not have to accept it, but we ought to debate it and think it out and determine what ought to stay on the table and come off the table. That is how you develop policy. It is debate on this House floor that helps form policy.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Bush administration that this country needs an energy policy. We, the American people, colleagues, the people that we represent, deserve to have an energy policy. That means a policy that has thoroughly investigated the resources, including conservation, the resources out there for us.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time that I have been able to share with my colleagues this evening. I look forward to sharing further and having further discussion about public lands and talking more about energy.

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, the House has concluded its activities for the day, and I thank the gentleman from Colorado for taking time to update us on the important issues that he finds not only in his tutelage as a Member of Congress from Colorado, but also as an important Member of this body.

Mr. Speaker, tonight I would like to talk about something that is very important. It is called the Patients' Bill of Rights. It is an important issue that

the House of Representatives and the other body will be taking up. The issue of the Patients' Bill of Rights is one that is of importance not only to consumers, but it is also important to physicians. It is important to health care providers; it is important to insurance providers. It is important to Members of Congress because we recognize that today in health care across this country that there are some unresolved issues and some changes that have not taken place in the Nation. The Nation, unfortunately, is looking to Washington, D.C. to attempt to solve some of these problems.

Tonight I would like to float a new concept or idea which I believe will become part of the health care debate. We are all aware that by and large Republicans and Democrats, Members of this body, have come to an agreement on many things that will be necessary to solve the health care problem. Things like access to emergency rooms and making sure that sick people are taken care of and having doctors make decisions and making general reform under the Patients' Bill of Rights, but the impediment or the stopping point, why we have not been able to resolve this matter rests on the issue of liability. The issue of liability or accountability is one that has not been fully seen through with an answer.

Mr. Speaker, part of the problem goes back to something that is called ERISA, which is an act from 1974, an act that provides companies that have or do business across State lines the ability to give them a chance to have an insurance policy, a savings plan and other types of arrangements for their employees on a nationwide basis rather than looking directly at how they might comply with 50 State insurance commissioner plans or 50 State plans related to savings plans.

Because of ERISA, what is called ERISA preemption, it means that health care providers do not have to comply exactly because of this exemption that they have in the marketplace to liability issues. It gives them an exemption from being sued essentially in the marketplace.

So there are some HMOs that may or may not provide service that would be consistent with State plans, and so there is a call for us to level that playing field and decide how that is going to work.

Mr. Speaker, the answer that is generally accepted is that you just allow HMOs to be sued so that the consumer or a doctor's decision is taken into account and corrected.

We, as Members of this body, deliberated on this effort. Last year I voted for something called the Norwood-Dingell bill, which would allow this to take place, where a body, that is an HMO, could be sued for a decision that they would be making in health care. The inability that we have for this

body to decide today how that lawsuit would take place, whether it would be caps or an unlimited amount of money, whether it would be suing in Federal court or State court, who would be making medical decisions, whether medical decisions would be a part of this or whether it would be for harm, are things that have been widely debated.

The idea that I would like to discuss tonight is how we can go about resolving this. Essentially my plan that will be put forward is one that says that I believe that we should not skew the marketplace. We in fact want to have employers be protected when they do not make medical decisions. We do not want employers to be sued. We do not want lawsuits that would take money from health care and cause an incredible amount of draining off of resources out of health care to take place. So we want to protect employers. We want doctors to make decisions. We want doctors to make the decisions that they have been trained to do that are medically necessary.

We want to make sure as a public policy perspective that we are able to move on and give every single patient those things that they need and not hold up the delivery of those changes so that customers can, consumers can have what they need.

Mr. Speaker, my plan is simple. It separates process from harm. It says that we will not allow lawsuits as part of a difference that might take place between an HMO and a consumer, an HMO and a doctor. We will not allow those to go to a lawsuit where there is a nonharm that has been placed as a difference between these circumstances.

Why is this important? It is important because I do not believe that we should solve our differences in a court of law, but rather we should be dynamic in understanding that a doctor should be the one who is making the decisions about nondamage differences in the marketplace. So my bill will separate what I call process from harm.

The process would be, as has been accomplished in many States around the country, where there is a difference between a consumer, a patient, a doctor, and a health care provider, we would allow an internal and an external review, the internal review meaning that we would allow the HMO the opportunity to understand what their difference is and that they would have to respond back with a physician's answer, but that the final decision in this would be made by an external review, a panel that was made up of three expert physicians in this field. I believe it is important that we allow doctors to make medical decisions and not look to courts to do that.

On the other side of the coin where we deal with harm, I believe it is important that we go to a court of law,

that we allow a harmed party an opportunity not only to go to a court to address these issues, but to be in front of a jury. That is where the other part of my bill will allow a party, a harmed party, to go to State court to resolve their differences.

It is my hope that this process that we are beginning will allow us an opportunity to move forward in a bipartisan way to address the issues and give patients those things that they need, address them under the Patients' Bill of Rights and also address them under liability.

PRESIDENT BUSH HAS HISTORIC MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PUTIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to provide some information from the standpoint of one Member of Congress following President Bush's recent meeting with European leaders, and in particular with his historic meeting with Russian President Putin.

I wanted to take out this special order for a number of reasons; first of all, to follow up on the discussions that were held by our President and the Russian president, and talk about the substance of those discussions; and also, on the eve of the visit of the first elected delegation to arrive in Washington following that summit, which I will host tomorrow with my colleagues, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) and members of the Duma Congressional Study Group here in Washington. In fact we have the First Deputy Speaker of the Russian Duma, the highest elected official in the Duma, representing President Putin's party. And as the number two person of the Duma, she is the leader of the delegation here in Washington tonight.

Mr. Speaker, the delegation of elected Russian leaders includes representation of political factions in the Duma, and are here to have formal discussions with us as a part of our ongoing dialogue. Over the past 9 years since forming the study group, we have had scores of meetings both in Washington and Moscow and throughout each of our respective countries trying to find common ground on key issues which face America and Russia.

First, Mr. Speaker, let me follow the meeting that was held between our two Presidents. There were many who said American and Russian relations were in fact becoming sour; that because of actions, especially President Bush's speech on missile defense, that perhaps Russia was no longer willing to be a friend of ours.

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There was a lot of speculation that perhaps President Bush did not have a sensitivity relative to our relations with Russia; that perhaps President Putin was taking Russia in a different direction; that in fact America and Russia were doomed to become enemies again; and that Russia in fact was moving to become a closer ally with China and enemies of Russia as opposed to being our friend.

All during the past year in meeting with our new President, I was convinced that he understood what it would take to bring back a normalization of our relations. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that President Putin felt the same way. In fact, last summer I was contacted by the then chairman of President Putin's political party in the Duma, Boris Grislov. He contacted me because he wanted to come over and observe the Republican convention and build relationships between the Republican Party, and in particular our candidate, and the party of President Putin, the "Edinstvo" Faction or Unity Faction. I extended an invitation to Boris Grislov. He came to Philadelphia and spent the week with Members of Congress observing our convention, speaking to the Russian people through a media source that had come with him and understanding how our democracy worked and building ties with Republicans who were in Philadelphia.

He came back again in January of this year, again at my invitation, to visit and to observe the inauguration of our new President. We got him special passes and he observed and witnessed the inauguration of George W. Bush. Then he hosted a delegation that I took along with the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) to Moscow approximately 10 weeks ago. The gentleman from Maryland and the delegation that traveled with us and I did an extensive 1-hour summary of that trip when we returned.

The point is that President Putin and his party wanted to reach out and establish a new relationship. Even though the media was reporting a souring of relations between Russia and the U.S., I was convinced that in the end once President Bush met face to face with President Putin, we would have a new beginning. In fact, when I was on Air Force One with President Bush right before my trip to Moscow 9 weeks ago, I said to President Bush on the plane, Mr. President, if I have a chance to meet with President Putin, which I may, and I certainly will meet with his leaders, what do you want me to tell him?

He said, CURT, you tell President Putin that I am looking forward to meeting him, that we have no quarrel with Russia, we want to be their friend. We have some differences, but we can work those out.

That is exactly what happened in the meeting between President Putin and

President Bush this past weekend. I think they have struck a relationship that is good for both countries and good for the world. Now, there are problems. In fact, there is a great deal of lack of trust on the part of the Russian side. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would call the attention of my colleagues to this collage of photographs that I assembled from news sources of street scenes in downtown Moscow a little over a year ago. The scenes are not very positive. You see Russians throwing rocks at the American embassy in Moscow. You see young Russians holding up anti-USA signs. You see Russians putting a swastika on the American flag. And you see Russians burning the American flag. This was a part of a major demonstration of over 10,000 Russians against America.

Why did they do this? Was this because of President Bush's announcement about missile defense? No, Mr. Speaker. This demonstration occurred during the previous administration. Well, then why were they protesting so aggressively in the streets, because we have been led to believe that the Russian problem is with missile defense which President Bush announced we were moving aggressively into? That is not the problem that has caused a lack of trust in Russia, Mr. Speaker. It is a combination of several factors, the results of which President Bush has inherited.

First of all, the Russians were not properly briefed when we expanded NATO a few short years ago to get the full picture that NATO was not the natural enemy of Russia any longer. Now, President Bush went to great lengths on this recent trip to explain to the Russian people and the Russian leaders that NATO was not meant to be the enemy of Russia any longer and that in fact NATO expansion was meant to provide a more secure Europe. In fact, President Bush left the door open that, one day, if Russia chose and if she met the criteria, she too could become a member of NATO. But when we expanded NATO a few years ago, that was not the case. The Russian people were given the feeling by the way we mishandled it that perhaps it was an attempt to bring in those former Soviet allies and now make them enemies of Russia.

The second reason why the people in Moscow were demonstrating is because of the war in Kosovo. Russians were convinced that that war caused a tremendous loss of innocent lives, of innocent Serbs. Mr. Speaker, as you well know, myself and a group of our colleagues also disagree with the way that we got involved in the Kosovo conflict. It was not that we liked Milosevic. It was not that we thought Milosevic was some kind of a person that we should respect and honor. We felt that he was as much of a thug and a corrupt individual and leader as everyone else did in this body.