

they cannot because they cannot give up their coverage. They are there because they have to have coverage for some chronic illness. But we are on the brink of things getting exponentially worse and they can. If we have any kind of downturn in the economy we will have a worse situation.

Now, I started in 1972 as a physician advocating for a health care system that was universally available, never could be taken away, and every American would be in it no matter what their circumstances in the society. I introduced bills in the Washington State legislature and started the Washington Basic Health Plan.

When I came to Congress, I introduced the American Health Security Act in 1992. This act is the gold standard that provides universal coverage for all Americans, and it does it through a single-payer mechanism. Now the American Health Security Act offers a fair and fiscally responsible way to deliver high-quality and cost-effective health care to all Americans. It provides for a highly decentralized system that is federally financed from Washington, but state-designed; and it delivers the health care through the private health care system. It guarantees universal coverage, comprehensive benefits, costs containment, the freedom to choose your own employers, and accountability. Every citizen should be entitled to that kind of coverage in this society.

The reason I came over to talk about this is that today we are being treated to one of those events that begins the campaign season when people start putting out press releases in the form of resolutions. This one is H. Con. Res. 271, expressing the sense of the Congress that public awareness and education about the importance of health care coverage is of the utmost priority, utmost priority, and that the national importance of Health Care Coverage Month should be established to promote these goals. So we will have a whole month for people to get up here and tell you how everybody ought to have health insurance.

But the question you have to ask yourself is, Where is the proposal that would provide health care coverage for everybody? Where is it? We can put out these press releases.

This thing reminded me of the reason I came over here and I was sitting there reading this and I thought about the joke of the Methodist minister. He had gotten very ill and so the head of the board of deacons called all the deacons together one night and he called a meeting and they all got together to decide what to do about the illness of the minister. They had a long discussion. Many things were argued back and forth. And finally by a vote of six to five with 20 abstentions, they decided to write a letter to the minister urging him to get well.

Now, that is what this is. This is saying to the American people, why do you people not go out and get health

insurance? What is the matter with you? Do you not know how important that is? As though the American people were stupid or that they would not be doing it if they could.

The resolution is an indictment of itself. It says, "Whereas over 17.3 million of the uninsured are employed, but are not offered health coverage through their employers."

Now, if you are an individual in this country and you work full time and you are not offered it through your job, you are supposed to go out by yourself and find a policy. Anybody who knows anything about that kind of experience knows how ridiculous it is to say to people, you should be aware.

When are we going to take up the issue in real substance and get away from these letters to the American people to get well?

#### MAKE BUSH TAX CUT PERMANENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I come to the well today to draw attention to an issue which affects over 100 million American taxpayers. This past year because of the leadership of President Bush and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT) and the House Republican majorities, we were successful in enacting a tax cut which benefits and helps over 100 million taxpayers who now have lower taxes. And what we call the Bush tax cut when it was passed into law does a number of things. It lowered rates for everyone. In fact, 3.9 million families with children no longer pay Federal income tax. We have brought fairness to the Tax Code by phasing out the death tax, by eliminating and wiping out the marriage tax penalty, and also providing opportunities for taxpayers to save for retirement, a tremendous benefit for over 100 million Americans. And unfortunately, because of some of the arcane rules that we have in this Congress, that tax cut was made on a temporary basis.

It is always interesting that in this Congress under the rules that the House and Senate operate under, that spending increases and tax increases are easily made permanent; but when you want to lower taxes, you can only do it on a temporary basis, meaning that down the road that those who benefit from elimination of the marriage tax penalties or elimination of the death tax or seeing their taxes lowered because of rate reductions will have a tax increase.

In fact, when the Bush tax cut expires, it will be the biggest tax increase in our country. I want to draw attention to just one example of what the permanency of the Bush tax cut means. There are 43 million married working couples who benefit from the marriage tax relief. And I am one of those who,

like many in this House, particularly on the Republican side, who feel it is wrong that under our Tax Code that 43 million married couples paid higher taxes just because they were married prior to the Bush tax cuts. We passed legislation several times out of this House of Representatives to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, to eliminate that unfair aspect; and unfortunately, President Clinton at the time vetoed it.

But under President Bush we were successful in eliminating the marriage tax penalty, but unfortunately our efforts to wipe out the marriage tax penalty were temporary and means that if we do not make permanent the Bush tax cut, do not make permanent our efforts to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, 43 million married couples will have to pay higher taxes and will suffer once again the marriage tax penalty.

I believe, like I know many of my colleagues do, that it is just wrong that under our Tax Code that anyone should have to pay higher taxes just because they are married, because I believe, and I know Republicans believe, that we have should not punish society's most basic institution.

The marriage penalty occurred in the past because of the complications of our Tax Code. Married couples filed jointly, they combined their incomes, and it pushed them into a higher tax bracket. And they save about \$1,700 in taxes because of our marriage tax penalty relief. The bottom line is let us prevent a new marriage tax. Let us prevent an increase in taxes on married couples.

The House has passed legislation to make permanent the Bush tax cut, to make permanent our efforts to wipe out the marriage tax penalty. My hope is the entire Congress, Democrats and Republicans, will work together and pass this legislation as well. Let us make the Bush tax cut permanent. Let us benefit over 100 million taxpayers who, unless we act, will see higher taxes in just a few short years.

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#### DOE'S LITTLE SECRET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, we have assumed for some time that the Department of Energy has made an overwhelming effort to prove that their research on the Nation's spent nuclear fuel is based on sound science and safe for Americans. Well, Mr. Speaker, I stand before my colleagues today to ask that despite the DOE's claims that Yucca Mountain is a geologically safe place to store 77,000 tons of the Nation's nuclear waste, that we take a closer look at the truth behind these claims.