

Security and Medicare will begin to feel the burden of the retiring baby boomers. And yet it seems that few are willing to face the reality of this pending crisis. We still have too many without adequate access to health care, even though we have the very best medical assets in the history of the world.

I have had the honor of representing the world's largest medical center, the Texas Medical Center, with some of the greatest researchers and institutions on the planet and yet, even with its dedicated staff and investment, within a mile of these fine people and institutions too many of our fellow citizens lack access to the benefits of their care.

We still have too many Americans struggling to make ends meet, even though we have proven to have the most efficient and successful economic model.

We still face dangers and threats, even though we have the strongest military, by far. Our democracy and way of life may well face threats if we do not act, not merely to defend ourselves and our allies, but to eradicate poverty and tyranny throughout the world. The growing number of poor throughout the world is immoral and should be unacceptable to a free and democratic society such as ours. Failure to use our economic might and commitment to freedom and individual liberty can only result in a greater threat to our own freedoms.

The challenges are too great to ignore, but I believe the people of this body possess the ability, if they muster the will. As America continues to lead, we must confront those issues before they confront us.

Mr. Speaker, mine has been a tremendous experience for which I am truly grateful to my constituents. I have always tried my best to represent not just those who voted for me but those who voted for someone else and those who did not vote at all. I have had the benefit of serving alongside some of the finest individuals I will ever meet, from both parties and Independents, and while their friendship will endure, more importantly, as I return to private life, I am comforted in knowing that the leadership of the Nation remains in such competent and committed hands.

My tenure in the House would not have been at all successful had it not been for the excellent staff who tirelessly served the people of the 25th district and our Nation. Often going unnoticed, these individuals deserve the credit for a job well done, as I know Members would agree about their own staff. I would like to take a moment to read their names into the RECORD, because they deserve to be inscribed in the history of this body for the work they have done.

Mr. Speaker, if my colleagues permit me, they are as follows: of my current staff, Ms. Willie Belle Boone, Ms. Jessica de la Torre-Sauceda, Ms. Bradley

Edgell, Ms. Ashley Etienne, Ms. Lisa Hallford, Ms. Gabrielle Hargrove, Ms. Victoria Johnson, Ms. Amber Moon, Ms. Brenda Murphy, Mr. Dominic Nguyen, Ms. Hava Rothman, Mr. J.J. Slater, Ms. Pat Strong, Mr. Andrew Wallace, the Honorable Ed Watson, and Ms. Barbara Winters.

Of our former staff, Mr. Ron Allen, Mr. Stephen Brown, Ms. Rosemary Burkland, Mr. Lloyd Chinn, Ms. Rosaline Cohen, Mr. Mark Daley, Ms. Audrey Duff, Ms. Natalya Estridge, Mr. Ruben Garcia, Ms. Jennifer Goodman, Ms. Meredith Grabois, Mr. Stephen Hofmann, Mr. Jonathan Kaplan, Mr. Lincoln Lobley, Thomas Mayo, Ms. Sandy McManus, Mr. Gary Palmquist, Ms. Sonya Pastor, Ms. Diane Patterson, Mr. Isaac Pesin, Ms. Sheryl Roppolo, Ms. Patricia Rojas, Ms. Susan Schieffer, Ms. Jessica Segal, Ms. Lisa Sherrod, Mr. Whet Smith, Ms. Samantha Smoot, Ms. Barbara Stalder, Ms. Kathryn Tsuchida, Mr. Jeremy Warren, Mr. Vince Willmore, Ms. Jennifer Winans, Mr. Patrick Woehrle, and Mr. Bobby Zafarnia.

In addition, Katie Rosenberg who served as a page, and 75, more than 75 interns who served in our offices in Washington and throughout the district.

These individuals have, in many ways, become an extension of our family; and we will always be grateful.

I also want to thank the professional staff with whom I have had the privilege to work with here on the floor, the Parliamentarian, the Sergeant at Arms, the Chaplain, the Clerk, and the Cloakroom and in committee. They, too, are among the most dedicated souls I have ever met. As some may know, I, too, was once staff of this institution and I understand the burdens of their jobs and I leave with nothing but the highest respect.

Mr. Speaker, let me thank my family for allowing me the opportunity to seek and undertake my position as a Member of the House. As every Member knows, this job, with all of its glory and grandeur, can be grueling on our families. No Member is an exception to this rule. But, at the same time, my wonderful wife, Tamra, who is in the gallery today and our two beautiful daughters, Louise and Meredith, have found a home and an extended family in this body.

I can still remember my first day on January 4, 1995, sitting just to the right of where I stand today with our two girls, then just 2 and 4. It was a long day with a lot of speeches. The gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), juggled Meredith, while Louise searched the floor for something else to do.

Throughout the years, these two girls have grown up in part on this floor, playing in the cloakroom, wrestling and dozing off in chairs during late-night debates. They harassed the staff, created havoc, and always felt at home.

I cannot thank the Members and the staff enough for what you have done to

make my family part of the experience. They have had to put up with a lot, nights and days away, missed school events and uncertain schedules.

□ 1230

All too often Tamra had to play the role of both parents in my absence. I know it was not easy.

I once heard Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia speak at the National Prayer Breakfast, and he said, when asked what his greatest accomplishment was in all those years in the other body, that "I kept my family together." He was right. But I also know that Tamra, Louise, Meredith, and I will miss this place, and it will forever be etched upon our hearts.

Mr. Speaker, 8 years ago I was given the opportunity to serve my fellow citizens of Texas' 25th Congressional District, my State, and my Nation. Few get that chance, not only to witness history, but to participate in its making, even if in a small way. I have had that chance, and I have tried my hardest every day to do the very best that I could. We did not win every battle, but I believe we finished ahead of where we started. I am confident that our efforts have resulted in the betterment of people's lives.

Most of all, I have had the chance to serve my people, doing the same that our forefathers did more than 200 years ago in the founding of this Nation. The people of the 25th Congressional District gave me this opportunity to be a part of history and the American democratic experiment, and for that I shall be eternally grateful.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 12:40 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 12:40 p.m.

□ 1254

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY) at 12 o'clock and 54 minutes p.m.

#### REQUESTING SENATE TO RETURN OFFICIAL PAPERS ON S. 1843, EXTENDING CERTAIN HYDROELECTRIC LICENSES IN THE STATE OF ALASKA

Mr. COX. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Clerk of the House of Representatives be directed to request the Senate to return the official papers on S. 1843, to extend certain hydroelectric licenses in the State of Alaska.

The House is requesting the return of these official papers to correct an inadvertent error that emerged during its