

three bills introduced this week as part of the Democrats' plan to build on programs that already work. Together, the Family Care Act, the Medicare Early Access Act, and the Small Business Health Insurance Promotion Act would cover over half of all uninsured Americans. I have also been proud to be a part of other initiatives, both nationally and in my home State of Rhode Island, to expand existing health insurance programs for retirees, children with disabilities, and adults attempting to return to the workforce. These are all important aspects to addressing the health care crisis, and I am honored to be a part of building momentum around a solution.

Just as individuals and families know that we are facing a health care crisis, our small business owners know that we are in crisis as well. Rising health care costs are undermining their ability to purchase coverage for their employees. It has threatened their ability to keep their businesses economically viable, and they are frustrated with the increasing burden of negotiating and administering health care plans that are taking on extra costs or passing them on to employees just to maintain level coverage. Without systematic change, these problems will continue to threaten the economic and health security of all Americans.

What frustrates me the most about the health insurance crisis is what little attention it receives. But I believe that with the proper amount of consideration and planning, the health care system in America can be saved. An enormous amount of money circulates through our health care system.

We spend \$35 billion on uncompensated care for individuals who do not have health insurance, just last year alone, with Federal, State, and local governments covering as much as 85 percent of those costs. Would it not be better for American families and also more cost effective to transfer a large share of these funds to a new program to subsidize the cost of covering the uninsured? We spend millions treating illnesses diagnosed at later stages, thus requiring more costly treatments because we did not offer people the screenings to catch these problems earlier. This is the least efficient way possible to treat people.

While we may not be in the best of economic times, if we made this issue a priority and committed ourselves to spending our health care dollars more wisely, we could offer all Americans access to quality, affordable care.

Now, with these principles of efficiency and inclusion in mind, I have developed a model for universal health insurance introduced last year as the Americans Health Benefits Plan. This bill is modeled after the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, which everyone in this Chamber is familiar with, as it offers coverage to Members of Congress, their families, and staffs.

Under my proposal, private companies will compete to offer health insur-

ance, attracting enrollees on the basis of benefits as well as efficiency, service, and lower premiums. The government should make a substantial contribution to every American's premium, and those for whom paying a portion of the premium would be a hardship, the government should offer subsidies as we currently do under Medicaid.

Employers should continue to contribute to the health care system, and they could do so through a payroll tax which would fund the government contribution, but the burden of negotiating and administering health care plans should be taken on by the Federal Government.

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A National template for this model already exists. FEHBP manages health insurance for more than 8 million Federal employees, annuitants and dependents. This program is administered by the Office of Personnel Management, which assumes responsibility for approving or disapproving carriers, negotiating benefit and rate changes, and auditing carriers' operations under the law.

With administrative costs of less than 1 percent, OPM has managed to offer a wide variety of health care choices and protections for Federal employees.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Federal Government should offer this kind of coverage and oversight to all Americans and I sincerely hope to continue this dialogue with my colleagues beyond the Cover the Uninsured Week, but this is an important place to start.

PRaising THE ANNIVERSARY OF V-E DAY IN EUROPE

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

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, tonight I rise to commemorate the 60th anniversary of our Nation's victory in Europe. And in doing so, I also like to honor men like my father and millions of others who answered freedom's call in fighting World War II. When we consider generations of our past, no one exemplifies the essence of America better than those, part of what we now call, the Greatest Generation.

To this day, and forever, I will be proud to say, my father was a part of this outstanding group, which led us to victory during World War II. As a 20-year-old bombardier-navigator in the Army Air Corps, my father, Major Jim McCaul, flew more than 30 bombing missions over Europe.

This included the largest bombing mission of the war in support of the D-day invasion. He flew a B-17 bomber, the flying fortress of the war, as he and others helped defeat Adolph Hitler and the Nazi reign of terror. And like most men of his generation, my father did not talk much about what he had done

and seen over the skies of Europe. It was simply too painful.

However, when he did talk about his experiences, dad would describe his airplane as a tin can with wings that was easy prey for the flak fired from below and the Luftwaffe bullets raining down from above. He recalled watching his buddies getting shot down and the loss that he personally felt. Indeed on each mission, one out of every three planes were shot down.

And when my father passed away in 1985, he received a letter from President Ronald Reagan commending him for his service to his country. Perhaps Winston Churchill said it best, when he said of this generation, this was their finest hour.

Our Nation is replete with stories such as my father's. And while the names and faces of many of the GI Joes may be forgotten, their heroic deeds that helped secure our Nation's ultimate victory in Europe will be emblazoned as legends in our National conscience forever.

Mr. Speaker, as time passes, we come close to forever losing the personal connection to these great individuals and their historic accounts. In order to preserve these heroic stories for future generations, I strongly urge veterans to participate in the Veterans History Project housed in the Library of Congress.

For this generation of Americans, whose character and resolve was molded by the Great Depression, defeating tyranny and the hatred of the Third Reich was just another call to answer. They performed their duty with honor, it was not theirs to question. It was simply expected.

Instead of succumbing to hardship, their resolve was stiffened and they ended up leading our land and our world to one of the greatest victories in history. We see that same attitude and determination today from the men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan. And like the greatest generation, Americans are now in distant lands fighting the threat and horror of terrorism.

Sixty years ago, we defeated fascism. Today, we fight Islamic extremism, but the reason we fight is the same, to guarantee freedom. The resolve that my father served with came from the support he knew that he had at home. We must show that same support for our troops now. We must strengthen their resolve by letting them know that their cause is just.

We will never forget their victories, just as we will never forget the victories in Europe which came at such a great cost. Hundreds of thousands of my parents' generation were killed in the name of freedom and democracy. Few cases are as worthy, few prices are as great. We must always remember not just the victory in Europe, but also what it meant. It saved an entire world from tyranny, and gave people the chance to live under flags of freedom.

Victory in Europe Day will forever stand as an example of how America

prides its freedom and how our determination can accomplish any tasks and defeat any foe. And these accomplishments of the Greatest Generation serve as an inspiration to us all.

OUR NATION'S FISCAL CRISIS

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

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today once again to express my disappointment with the lack of attention to our Nation's fiscal crisis. The system is broken, plain and simple. We need to focus our efforts on finding a cure for our addiction to deficit spending in this body.

The Blue Dog Coalition, which I am a proud member of, has been a leading voice in Congress on fiscal responsibility for over a decade. Recently the Blue Dogs have posted signs in front of all of our offices that explain to everyone exactly how bad the fiscal crisis is, an example of which is on my right here.

We update the numbers on these signs every day. The sad part is that our Nation's debt is increasing so fast that by the end of each day, these signs are inaccurate. As you can see from the sign, today the National debt is at \$7,755,874,000 or \$27,000-plus per person. Ladies and gentlemen, these numbers are appalling.

The Blue Dogs are dedicated to fighting our Nation's ballooning national debt, and we will continue to lead the fight for fiscal sanity until Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle and the White House realize that we cannot continue to run our Nation deeper and deeper into the deficit hole.

There is no secret that our National debt is out of control, as we are expected to run another \$427 billion deficit in 2005, with more deficits projected into the future. We do not even have a firm grip, ladies and gentlemen, on where our money is going. At the Department of Defense, for example, only 6 of 63 departments are able to produce a clean audit. That is less than 10 percent.

This budget we passed omits so many major expenses that frankly it is a sham. The administration essentially cooked the books using Enron-style accounting and Congress is just blindly going along with the program.

We all know as well that foreign holdings of U.S. debt is on the rise. Interest on the national debt is the fastest growing area of our budget. And the trade deficit is totally out of control as well.

As this happens, what are we doing? Ladies and gentlemen, we are doing absolutely nothing. Recently the Blue Dogs introduced a 12-step reform program to cure our Nation's addiction to deficit spending. It requires a balanced budget, stops Congress from buying on credit, and puts a lid on spending.

We have a provision in this plan that requires pay-as-you-go budgeting, so

that when we have an increase in the budget, or we have a tax decrease, we have to offset them. The principles in this 12-step reform plan should be able to be agreed on by everyone. The plan injects a little common sense into the way Congress and the White House does business.

I hope that some day this Congress will wake up and help us restore our fiscal responsibility as a Nation. The time to stop digging the hole deeper is now.

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

(Mr. GOHMERT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING JUDGE ANDREW L. JEFFERSON, JR.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, often we do rise on the floor of the House to begin a debate that may not end itself in a positive outcome. It is not often that you have the opportunity to raise and salute an outstanding member of your community knowing that his life is already exhibited a positive outcome, and, of course, we honor him as he still lives.

My friend and our friend, and the friend of Houston and Texas and the Nation, Judge Andrew Jefferson, brings me to the floor this evening. And I am delighted to be able to rise this evening to honor a great legal scholar, as well as a great institution of legal education located in the 18th Congressional District of Texas. The institution about which I speak is the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University, established in 1947, and the scholar and friend is Judge Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr.

At a time when the future of Houston's public school system is in jeopardy, I am especially pleased to deliver this statement in honor of a scholar and a product of our own Jack Yates High School.

On Friday, May 6, 2005, I will join my constituents and friends to honor Judge Jefferson on the establishment of an endowment for trial advocacy in his name, the first endowed chair, called the Andrew L. Jefferson endowment for trial advocacy, at Texas Southern University, the Thurgood Marshall School of Law in Houston, Texas.

I wish all of us had the opportunity to meet this distinguished gentleman. He is truly distinguished, regal in his build, deep in his commitment. The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, a native of Dallas, Texas, graduated from the University of Texas School of Law in 1959 after earning his Bachelor's de-

gree from Texas Southern University, was president of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and became a partner with Washington and Jefferson, attorneys at law in Houston, Texas.

He served as an assistant criminal district attorney for Bexar Country, a chief assistant United States Attorney for the Western District of Texas, and a trial counsel and labor relations counsel for Humble Oil and Refining Company.

Each time he was a pioneer, he explored new ground, and certainly as an African American, getting his degrees in the late 1950s, going through the 1960s before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1965, the Voting Rights Act, he truly braved new areas and stood for the dignity and respect of all, all in our community.

Judge Jefferson served in the judge advocate general corps in the U.S. Army Reserve where he is honorably discharged as a captain. He has as his lovely bride, another civic leader, his wife, Mary Jefferson, who I have the pleasure of serving with on a number of organizations. She believes in education. She advocates for quality education for our young people, and promotes the opportunities for young people to go to college.

In 1970, Judge Jefferson was appointed to preside over the Court of Domestic Relations number 2 for Harris County. In 1974, he was elected to Judge of the 208th District Court. That too was one of the many firsts in his career, but as well, he is one of the first African Americans to serve on that court.

He decided to reenter the active practice of law in 1975, and was admitted to the United States Court of Appeals for Fifth, Sixth and Eleventh Circuits, and the Supreme Court of the United States of America. A long time active committee member of the State bar, Judge Andrew L. Jefferson is a fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation, a member of American Bar Foundation, the Texas Trial Lawyer's Association, Texas Constitutional Revision Commission. He is an outstanding jurist, and even after he left the bench, he was constantly requested to give his expertise on broad legal issues.

He represented many of the underserved and unempowered. He became active in many organizations and particularly the National Bar Association, the Family Law Institute, where he was asked to speak many, many times. He was an arbitrator, he was a mediator. He had the ability to bring people together. And so a lot of his practice developed around that on the domestic court.

But, he was skilled as a jurist, and as an advocate, but his personality was one that was firm but understanding. He served, of course, in the Houston Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank, and he was respected by presidents, both Democrats and Republicans. He received many honors and awards: The Anti-Defamation League National