have no wealth and no source of income, then all of a sudden they are eligible for Medicaid.

So, the reality today, my colleagues, is that probably 70 percent of nursing home reimbursement is from the Medicaid program. Now, some of that is appropriate. But some of it is inappropriate.

And indeed, there is actually a cottage industry out there where our good attorneys advise people how to hide their income, how to shift their possessions and their net worth to maybe another family member, and all of a sudden they have got nothing. They do not have any wealth. They do not have any income, and they are dual eligible for Medicaid. That, my colleagues, is what I call gaming the system. And when you do that, you take money away from the program, desperately needed money for single moms, for the poor who need prenatal care, for little infants that are born prematurely that need a good start in life, and they cannot get it because there is no money there.

This is something that we, the Republican majority, and hopefully in a bipartisan fashion with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, we are giving very serious attention to it. And yes, we can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can work on the Social Security problem and fix that, get out of that crisis situation and work on solving the Medicaid problem at the same time. Absolutely, we can. We will. We are doing that, and we will get to the finish line on both of these programs, and we will do it sooner rather than later.

We will not be irresponsible on these issues and put this off and say, Hey, you know, we do not want to touch that third rail because we are worried about our re-election in 2006 and keeping our majority. We are going to keep our majority by doing the right thing. And we will let the elections take care of themselves.

But we have to make sure that we understand, the American people understand, and that we do not let the nay-sayers poison the well like they tried to do on that Medicare discount card.

I was at a little town hall meeting in one of my poorest counties recently in Southwest Georgia, Talbot County, a great community, wonderful people, but poor, very low tax base. And we were talking about Social Security. Miss Menafee came up to me after the hour and a half town hall meeting, and she said, Congressman, thank you for that information on Social Security. I think I really understand it better now. I have been getting those automated phone calls and those slick glossy mailers. I do not know whether they were from AFL–CIO or George Soros and some 527, but thank you, Congressman for helping me understand it better, to see how an individual personal account can grow and have the miracle of compound interest. But I just want to say to you, also, thank you for Medicare modernization. And thank you from the bottom of my heart for that prescription drug discount card, that transitional program.

Miss Menafee told me that she had been spending something like $400 a month for five or six drugs that she desperately needed, and because she was eligible for that $1,200 credit and the lowest pricing, in fact, I think maybe a dollar, $3 copay, she said she had reduced over $400 a month worth of medical expenses to $9 a month.

Miss Menafee, God bless you. And she is 80 years old and looks healthy, and I think she is going to outlive us all because of what we did. So that is the compassion. That is the thoughtfulness that this Republican leadership, this majority has in regard to the health care program.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I could go on probably long beyond my allotted hour. But I am going to try to go ahead and bring this to a close because I think, hopefully, my colleagues have heard me loud and clear and understand that we care about health care. We care about the uninsured.

We have passed association health plans in this body at least twice, and we will continue to pass it. We have passed tort reform so that doctors and hospitals are not ordering all these unnecessary tests. And every individual that walks into an emergency room with a headache does not need a CAT scan, but they are getting it because the doctors are afraid they are going to be sued, or the hospital, and that is why people cannot afford health insurance.

All that defensive medicine, these additional lab tests, it drives the price of health insurance up so high that it is out of reach for far too many people. And we end up with 43 million in this country who have no health insurance, and most of them are working. But we are going to help them. Again, we are going to help them by what we have done in Medicare modernization, give them an opportunity to set up through their employer a health savings account where they can get catastrophic insurance for a very low premium, Mr. Speaker, a very low monthly premium, and then the employer or a relative or a friend can help them fund an account that can grow, that can enjoy the miracle of compound interest, that they can use that money for a lot of types of things that traditional health insurance does not even cover, eye care, dental care, mental health services, just so many things.

So it is a pleasure to be part of this team, to be here tonight, to be talking about what we, the Republican health care access team, is doing.

But, you know, again, I want to make sure my colleagues understand that I am not an overly partisan person. It is not all about left versus right or Republican versus Democrat. It is right versus wrong, and I think we need to focus on doing the right thing, and we ought to try to do it as much as we can in a bipartisan fashion.

And to that point, Mr. Speaker, I want to let my colleagues know that we have recently formed a medical/dental doctors in Congress caucus in this House. There are 13 of us. There are three dentists. There are ten MDs. Three of those MDs are on the democratic side; seven on the Republican side. And we are going to work on these issues in a bipartisan fashion.

You know, I thought yesterday, as we had that plane, that little Cessna that inadvertently got in the airspace over the Capitol, and we all went just, I mean, pouring out of here in semi panic, although the Capitol police did an excellent job of keeping people calm, but, you know, making sure that we got out of harm's way as quickly as possible.

□ 1630

You have to take every one of these threats seriously, and I could not help but thinking as I was running down the street, where are the other 12 members of our physician and dental doctor caucus?

We probably were all going in a different direction. My co-chairman of that caucus is the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER), Mr. Speaker, a great Member of this body. The gentleman has been here a good bit longer than I have been, a fine doctor from Arkansas.

The gentleman and I have been working together. That was one of the things we were talking about last week. The next meeting we have, we are going to make sure that we work with the House physician so that this team would know what we would do in a situation like that so we were not all going in different directions. Maybe all 13 of us, hopefully the caucus will grow, I like doctors and dentists in Congress, but we could go to a designated spot so if this really truly turned out to be a terrorist attack, we would be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Again, as I speak to my colleagues this afternoon and I am deeply appreciative, Mr. Speaker, of the opportunity to talk about what the Republican majority is doing on health care, I do not want to forget that the American people do not like a lot of partisanship and animosity and, indeed, hatred. We do not accomplish anything in that fashion. I am very proud to be part of that new bipartisan caucus as we work towards solving these problems.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 6913, and the order of the House on January 4, 2005, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House

to the Congressional-Executive Commission on the People's Republic of China:

Mr. LEACH, Iowa, co-chairman;
Mr. DREIER, California;
Mr. WOLF, Virginia;
Mr. PITTS, Pennsylvania;
Mr. ADERHOLT, Alabama.

THE DANGERS OF CAFTA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed hearing my friend, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY), and his comments about Medicare.

I know that my Republican friends care about health care. But unfortunately, they care more about the drug companies and the insurance companies than they do in providing low-cost prescription drugs and health insurance to the 50 million Americans who do not have health insurance.

I did not come forward today to talk about Medicare, particularly, except to note that when Congress passed the Medicare bill last year, a bill that a couple of years ago was not received by the public very well in part because they did not tell us the truth about the cost of the bill, it ended up costing almost $1 trillion when they told Congress it would only cost $400 billion.

But more than that, this bill provided literally 180 additional billion dollars to the drug industry profits and had direct subsidies of about $60 billion to the insurance industry.

So I wish, while my Republican friends, I do believe they care about the poor, they care about working people, they care about health insurance, unfortunately their caring so much more about the drug industry, the insurance industry, it sort of gets in the way of too often doing the right thing.

I come forward this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to talk a little bit about the Central American Free Trade Agreement which, frankly, will likely be defeated in this Congress bipartisanly. This is not a partisan issue. It is an issue of justice, an issue of jobs, and an issue of where our country and our economy goes.

Two weeks ago, more than 150 Republicans and Democrats, Senate and House Members, pro-business, pro-labor groups gathered on Capitol Hill to speak out against the Central American Free Trade Agreement. Republican House and Senate Members and Democratic House and Senate Members joined with these outside groups, this group of unlikely bed fellows perhaps, to speak with one voice of the unified message to vote against the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

CAFTA expands on the failed trade policies of the North American Free Trade Agreement and expands on those policies by enlarging NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, to six Central American countries, including the Dominican Republic.

When I ran for Congress in 1992, I do not want to bore my colleagues with numbers, when I ran for Congress in 1992, the United States had a trade deficit of $38 billion. We thought that was way too big. That meant we were buying, importing $38 billion more worth of goods than we were exporting; $38 billion trade deficit we had in 1992.

Last year after NAFTA, after PNTR with China, after several other trade agreements over the last decade-plus, our trade deficit is $618 billion, from 38 to 618 billion.

Now, you can see the trade deficit with Mexico as an example, prior to NAFTA, the year I came to Congress, in 1992, we actually had a trade surplus with the Republic of Mexico. We actually sold them more than we bought from them. Look what happened after NAFTA. Look at these numbers. This is zero right here. We had a trade surplus in those 4 years prior to NAFTA. Then all of the sudden 10 billion, almost 20 billion, 25 billion, over 30 billion, almost 40, over 40, approaching a $50 billion trade deficit with Mexico.

Now, George Bush, Sr., who originally negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement, he said that $1 billion in imports or exports represented about 12,000 jobs. That meant if you have a $3 billion trade surplus then that is three times 12,000. You would have 36,000 more jobs in your country. If you have a $3 billion trade deficit, you would have 36,000 fewer jobs in your country.

Look at this. We went from a $38 billion trade deficit overall to $618 billion. You do not need to do the math except you just sort of estimate and you see what these trade agreements have meant to the American people, to our economy, to our manufacturing base.

In my State of Ohio we have lost 200,000 manufacturing jobs. One out of 5 manufacturing jobs in my State has disappeared in the last 4½ years since President Bush took office. Those manufacturing jobs have been lost for a lot of reasons. The most important reason is NAFTA and PNTR and these trade agreements.

Unfortunately, these trade pacts like NAFTA and like CAFTA enable companies to exploit cheap labor in other countries and then import back to the United States under favorable terms. The Central American Free Trade Agreement should probably be named the Central American Free Labor Agreement because that is really what it is all about.

About 5 or 6 years after NAFTA passed, in the mid-to late 1990s, at my own expense I flew to McAllen, Texas, rented a car and went across the border to Reynosa, Mexico because I wanted to see what NAFTA looked like, what these free trade agreements looked like. I wanted to put a face on these numbers. These numbers are persuasive. They certainly convinced me and I think convinced many that these trade agreements are bad ideas. But I wanted to see real faces and real people and put real names next to those faces and people so I really could understand what this global economy looked like.

I went to the home of two people who worked for General Electric Mexico. They lived in an area about 30 feet by 30 feet, maybe smaller than that, probably more like 20 feet by 20 feet. No running water. No electricity. Dirt floor. When it rained hard, their floor turned to mud. Both of these people worked at General Electric Mexico. They lived 3 miles from the United States of America.

Now, if you walk outside their little shack into their colonia, their neighborhood, 3 miles from the United States, you will notice as you look around a couple of things. The first thing you will notice is there is a ditch nearby with who-knows-what human and industrial waste running through this ditch, maybe 4 feet wide. Children playing in this ditch because children will play wherever children play.

The American Medical Association said this area along the Mexican-U.S. border was the most toxic area in the Western Hemisphere. So no telling what kinds of diseases these children could get from playing in this ditch.

If you walk through the neighborhood more, you will notice that all of these shacks were built out of packing materials, boxes and wooden crates and wooden platforms, coming from the companies from where they worked. So you could tell where these workers worked just by walking through the neighborhoods and looking at the shacks, shacks literally constructed out of packing materials for these companies they worked for.

The point of the story is when I went to a General Motors plant nearby and what I noticed was this General Motors plant looked just like a General Motors plant in Lawrencetown, Ohio, and just like a Ford plant in Avon Lake, Ohio, or just like a Chrysler plant in Twinsburg, Ohio. It was modern. It was new, newer than the plants in my State. The floors were clean. The workers were working hard. The latest technology.

There was one difference between the General Motors plant in Mexico and the auto plant in Ohio. And the different was the auto plant in Mexico did not have a parking lot because the workers were not paid enough to buy the cars which they make.

You can go half way around the world to Malaysia to a Motorola plant. The workers do not make enough to buy the cells phones which they manufacture. You can go back halfway around the world to Costa Rica, one of the countries in the Central American Free Labor Agreement, and the workers at a Disney plant do not make enough to buy the toys that they manufacture.

You can go back halfway around the world to China and go to a Nike plant