

**HAITIAN PEOPLE PURSUE STABLE, PROSPEROUS AND DEMOCRATIC FUTURE**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my longstanding commitment to assist the Haitian people in their pursuit of a stable, prosperous and democratic future.

During my trip to Haiti, I was reminded of the tremendous challenges facing this island nation. The U.N.'s appointment of President Clinton as special envoy to Haiti has helped to keep a much-needed spotlight on Haiti. President Clinton's appointment of Dr. Paul Farmer as the Deputy U.N. Special Envoy for Haiti, adds an invaluable wealth of experience and knowledge to the U.N.'s work in Haiti.

As a founder of Partners in Health and the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, Dr. Farmer has demonstrated a selfless commitment to the advancement of health and democracy in Haiti for the past 20 years. I have witnessed firsthand Dr. Farmer's dedication to helping improve the lives of those in need.

He has strong south Florida ties. I am proud to call him a friend, along with our mutual friend, Jennie Block, who has also worked so hard on issues of concern to the Haitian community.

I understand that the conference on the Inter-American Development Bank in Haiti went quite well. I was pleased to see that the United Nations voted unanimously this week to extend the authorization for the U.N. Mission in Haiti for another year.

□ 1715

I would also like to take a moment to express my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in last weekend's plane crash during a U.N. mission. The U.N. mission in Haiti has helped to play an important role in bringing security and stability to some of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Haiti. I continue to support its mission and the many men and women from around the world who work to carry it out.

However, it seems that Haiti just can't get to the next step. From assistance to debt relief, from trade benefits to hurricane recovery, U.S. policy toward Haiti has run the gamut, but it is not achieving the long-term goals that we had hoped for for the Haitian people and that the Haitian people want for themselves and their nation.

I am pleased to know that our State Department is taking a closer look at some of the challenges we are facing in Haiti. Last week, Secretary Clinton's chief of staff and her point person on Haiti briefed Members on some of the initial findings of this review.

I am confident that this review will help us to better understand how U.S. assistance to Haiti can be better targeted and supportive of Haiti's own

plans and goals; how assistance within the donor community can be better coordinated; how the U.S. can better engage the Haitian Diaspora in our assistance efforts; and, finally, how the U.S. can finally make our assistance sustainable so that outside efforts can ultimately be transferred into the hands of the Haitian government and its people.

It is crucial that the efforts made by the U.S., the U.N. and others are effectively coordinated to ensure maximum efficiency and maximum benefit for the people of Haiti. Innovative microcredit and microenterprise programs would help to empower individuals, create self-reliance and create sustainability at the grassroots level. We should also look at the very small-scale renewable energy programs for impoverished rural villages and settlements that are not served by electric grids.

One of the immediate ways we can help the people of Haiti would be to grant temporary protected status to the Haitians currently living in the U.S. Granting TPS to Haitians is the missing piece of a successful U.S. approach to supporting the people of Haiti in the short and long term. I will continue to work with my colleagues to encourage the administration to take this important step.

In addition, I will continue to support Haiti's inclusion in security initiatives, such as the Merida Initiative, to ensure that the U.S. is doing all we can to help President Preval in his efforts against the narco-traffickers.

Success in Haiti is in the U.S. national security interest, and we must work together to help address the many challenges we face and that our Caribbean neighbor faces day in and day out.

**PURSUIT OF AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL AMERICANS**

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

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure again to come to the floor to talk about the issue that is capturing all of the national attention and a lot of attention of this body, and that is our pursuit of affordable health care for all Americans.

There has been a lot of discussion about this so-called public option, this choice people would have when they are searching for insurance when they don't have it, the idea being that if you have a public alternative, an option that doesn't rely on profits, that doesn't rely on high overhead, that consumers would have a chance to choose it if they don't have insurance through their own employers.

Now, it is interesting, because just this week we got an enormous boost, those of us who care about having a public option in the final bill, and it came from, of all places, the health in-

surance lobby. In a rare moment of candor, in a rare moment of telling us exactly what it is that they are going to do, they have told us something that should come as no surprise to anyone that has health insurance. They said they are going to keep raising rates. They said we can pass whatever we want here in Washington, they are going to keep raising rates. As a matter of fact, by their calculation, by 111 percent.

Well, on one hand, I am stunned that they told the truth. On the other hand, I am not very surprised. Our rates have been going up twice if not three times the rate of our salaries every year. They have been going up about \$1,000 for people who have health insurance. So the idea that they are thumping their chest and saying they are going to keep doing it is not a surprise. But the fact that they were so honest about making it very clear that we need competition for the health insurance companies is refreshing.

They have made it crystal clear. The private insurance companies have said, you know what? If you don't have competition for us, rates are going to keep going up.

The public option, by the way, is not a mysterious thing. A lot of my colleagues here in the House of Representatives have it. Yes. They have Medicare. And I checked. Not a single one of them that is eligible for the government public plan we have today has said no. Maybe it is because they are like the country, that says, you know what? Ninety-six percent of people say they like Medicare. They like the care they get. It only has 3.5 percent overhead, not the 30 percent overhead and profits that private insurance companies get.

They like it, but they don't want you to have it. They don't want you to have the plan that they have. So many Members of Congress who are 65 say, no, you can't have it if you are 55 or 45 or 35. It is only for us.

Well, that is not exactly true. It is for every single American who turns 65. It is a government-funded, single-payer, government-administered health care plan that every year we do a survey about, and 96 percent of people who are on Medicare say they like it.

You can do the following test: Knock on the door or go to a neighbor or stop someone at the diner who looks like they are 55. Ask them, would you like it if tomorrow you got Medicare? Watch their face light up. They would love it.

Now, we are not proposing that. The President is not proposing that. I know I would like to have a program like Medicare for all Americans. All that is being proposed in the public option is that people who don't have insurance through their work, people that don't have insurance through Medicare or Medicaid, that relatively small group of people, the 10 percent or so of the country, that when they go out and