Thank you for yielding, Congressman Hodes. It is an

extreme pleasure for me to be with you this evening and with our

Speaker Braley from Iowa. The American people have been posed a number

of questions by you this evening. I think the most important question

was posed to our generation many years ago by Bobby Kennedy on the

evening of the assassination of Martin Luther King when he asked the

country this question: What kind of Nation are we? And which direction

shall we turn?

We were confronted several days ago with a Presidential veto of

children's health care called SCHIP. The State Children Health

Insurance Plan, SCHIP, saves lives. SCHIP saves lives for children and

for pregnant mothers. We have to do all we can to guarantee access to

affordable care for everyone in our country. But first and foremost,

what kind of Nation are we if we don't care for our children?

I have here a placard that gives us the SCHIP facts. People may have

heard a number of things in the last several days about SCHIP, but

these are the facts. SCHIP is a State-run private program. The States

get grant money from the Federal Government to run their own programs.

It focuses on the poorest working families in America, families that

earn just above what would qualify for welfare or Medicaid health care

coverage. It also provides $3.50 cost per child per day. Now, if you

want to compare what you can do with your hard-earned tax dollars, you

can invest $3.50 of your hard-earned tax money into the health care for

children who need it most, and on 1 day we are currently spending $330

million to $400 million a day in the sands of Iraq.

Now, where I come from in northeast Wisconsin people are asking me

this question: ``Doc, how can I get my country back? I want my country

back.'' We need to create jobs here in America, not overseas. SCHIP

fact Number 4, who is eligible? The poorest working people in America.

People that are three times the Federal poverty rate, which is just

under $58,000, $59,000 per year. Also, who is it going to cover? It is

going to cover 10 million, 10.8 million, we hope, children who need

access to their pediatricians, children who require their family

practitioner to guide them and make them healthy.

If our children are not healthy, they can't learn in school. If they

are unable to learn in school and progress with their education, what

kind of future do they have? Our children, after all, are our own

future. Our future depends on the good health of our children.

So these are the SCHIP facts that we are going to be taking about in

the next several days. You will see more and more Congressmen and

Congresswomen talking about health care for children. But I haven't

seen in my medical practice over 30 years a single child in my

examination room without a mother, a father, or a caregiver.

So we have to begin to broaden this discussion not just about

children's health care, but access to health care for every citizen

everywhere in these United States. So SCHIP is a proven program. I hold

it against no one that it started out as a Republican program. It is a

Republican-inspired private program administered by States with moneys

appropriated through the Federal Government. It focuses on working

families, the poorest among us, and focuses on putting children first.

It only involves U.S. citizens. If you are not a citizen, you are not

a legal resident, you are not going to get these benefits that come

with it. It is a private, private-run plan, private doctors, private

health care plans, and children up to 19 years of age can be covered.

This is a program that works for kids. In my view, in the view of

most people living throughout the United States and especially

northeast Wisconsin, the President was being morally unresponsible. It

is morally unacceptable to say ``no'' to our children.

I yield back my time for a few moments, to my good colleague from New

Hampshire as we talk more about health care and its relationship to

Iraq. Because the way I look at it, Iraq is a health care issue. They

are using real bullets, real people are being killed, about 700,000

Iraqi civilians are dead, and they are not coming back. Thousands of

our soldiers have given everything, have given their lives as they have

served with courage, with honor and with incredible skill. We have done

our job in Iraq. We have taken down Saddam. We have done everything the

Iraqi Parliament needed us to do for them to help them in their

religious civil war.

Thank you for yielding. One of the nice things about being

in the majority is we have an opportunity now to have oversight, to ask

questions seeking the truth about where our hard-earned tax dollars are

being spent.

I have always believed and I believe everyone in Wisconsin believes

that your family values are reflected in how and where you spend your

money. The values of this administration, of this President, will be

reflected in how and where he is attempting to direct us to spend our

hard-earned dollars.

We have heard from you, Congressman Hodes, the voice of the

administrator from the new Iraq, the freely elected government of Iraq.

I would like to share with you now some of the words of people from my

district who have concerns about money and their health and where we

are going.

Albert from Crivitz writes, ``Without a job that pays a fair wage, I

won't have money to pay for health care, gas, a war, Social Security or

anything else.''

Albert in Crivitz understands. He has to balance his checkbook every

month and he can't spend money that he doesn't have.

Lloyd in Wisconsin, who I spoke with this evening before coming down

to the floor, he is from Kaukauna, said, ``Do

something to help your senior citizens for health care and drug

programs. Thank you.''

When I spoke with him this evening, he went beyond his postcard to me

to explain that he has two daughters who are retarded who are dependent

upon him. And even though he is trying to retire, he is a retired paper

worker in the paper industry and his wife has diabetes, he is having a

hard time making it. And without the role of government, what kind of

future would he and his daughters have?

From Waupaca, Dianne writes to me, ``We know numerous people over 50

who have lost their jobs so companies can cut health care and payroll

costs, and cannot find any other work and no longer have health

insurance.'' No health insurance for 4 years.

In speaking with Dianne's husband this evening, Ken, he explained

that his son is shipping out on the 26th of this month to Iraq as a

member of the Guard. He is a gunner on a Humvee. He is a college

graduate, and he is making a sacrifice.

No one in this administration has asked the American people to

sacrifice for this poor judgment of entering into the Iraqi civil war.

But who is he really asking to pay the price? He is asking us to forgo

health care for the poorest among us and for our Nation's children who

are near poverty. That is a poor choice. It is poor judgment that got

us into Iraq. But we have to stand up in this House, in this, the

People's House, expressing citizens' points of view. It is their money,

and that is who we represent.

From Appleton, Wisconsin, my hometown, Leroy and Lois: ``We are

retired, over 80. We need drugs for high cholesterol, but the cost for

this drug is extremely high. Also it would be great to have some

alternative auto fuel.''

These people in Appleton really get it. And they are listening

tonight. I called them to tune in on C-SPAN, because we are expressing

their views here this evening.

From Fremont, Wisconsin, Larry writes, ``My wife and I spend over

$900 a month for drugs now. When we hit the doughnut hole, that is when

we really will pay.'' In speaking with him tonight, his wife is in the

doughnut hole. That is over a $2,400 hole, and their copay is $600 for

their medications.

We have some values that we have to reflect here in the People's

House. Where are we going to spend the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars--

overseas, or here at home?

Bonnie from Biron, Wisconsin, writes, ``We need to start worrying

about the people of U.S.A. before we worry about others in the world.''

Robert from Green Bay, ``Iraq, bringing them home. If taxpayers can't

get the same health insurance as Congress, at least get drug costs down

to the VA amounts.''

My friend, people in Wisconsin understand the deal they are being

handed. My honorable friend, Congressman Hodes, you point to a chart

that shows $330 million a day being spent in Iraq. I can build 10 brand

new hospitals in Wisconsin with that amount of money. Each and every

day, 10 hospitals in your State, Texas, California, Missouri,

everywhere in these United States and that money is gone and it is not

coming back.

That brings up a good point that Linda DePere writes, ``I

do not want the government involved in health care. The government

mismanages money and thinks funds are endless.''

We agree with Linda, but we also believe in good government. And I

believe good government can make a real difference in people's lives.

That's why I left my medical practice to come to Congress to speak up

for people who can't pay for their prescriptions.

Being a songwriter and a singer yourself, I understand,

you remember the song, ``There's a Hole in the Bucket.'' Well, when we

came to Congress, we discovered there is a hole in the bucket. We feel,

and I will just speak on behalf of myself, I feel just as frustrated as

everyone back home that change can't happen fast enough, that we can't

plug the leaks as fast as humanly possible.

We have not got the ability. I wasn't elected President; I was

elected to be one of the 435 Members of Congress who express the

people's view. We are not the administrators. Our job is to do

oversight, to legislate, and to fund those things and place our values

on the table and put our money where we believe the people best want it

spent.

And people watching have to ask themselves: Whose side are we on? Are

we on the side of large insurance companies? Are we on the side of no-

bid contractors?

I am a Democrat. I am not on their side. I don't sit in the

boardrooms. I sit and stand with you on the House floor speaking their

voice.

All these issues come together. You cannot solve our situation in

Iraq and health care and education and our environment and the safety

and security of this Nation without talking about how we are going to

spend our hard-earned money. It always requires money, and that's

obvious. It is simple. Money is a problem solver. If you have a

problem, you throw money at it and the problem should go away. Well, we

are throwing money into Iraq and the problem isn't going away.

Here are the words from Tom and Sue from New London: ``Number one, 51

million people without health care is a disgrace. Number two, the war

in Iraq is like Vietnam all over. Number three, outsourcing is

unacceptable and morally wrong.'' Tom and Sue from New London

understand. There is a connection between outsourcing by hiring people

offshore, lower wages, lower tax base that we don't have the money to

solve our problems here at home.

Vicki from Green Bay writes, ``Better medical care for poor

seniors.''

Well, SCHIP is not focused at seniors. It is focused first at our

children who are most at risk, those with lower-income families. Those

are the people I think we have to focus on first, and never think for a

moment we are going to neglect our seniors, our military veterans and

active military people who have served and put their lives on the line.

They covered our back. It is time we cover theirs as well.

This is Kathleen from DePere: ``It is time for all Americans to have

the same health care benefits as their representatives in Washington.''

Well, Kathleen, you don't want my coverage because I respectfully

declined the health care benefits here until everyone in my district

and the State and the country is offered the same cafeteria menu of

choices. I felt it was wrong.

Deb from Little Chute in my district. ``I want to see lower drug

prices for everyone, not just seniors.''

People back home get it, Congressman Hodes. It is not just about

kids, but we have to start somewhere. If we can't stand up and say--

what kind of Nation are we, that we would turn our back on those most

in need, children from hardworking families, what kind of Nation are

we? It is morally unacceptable for the President to have vetoed this

bill. This bill is paid for, and it is paid for in a responsible

manner. It is a good deal for the American taxpayer. It is a great deal

for our future to invest in our children's care.

Thank you for yielding. One of the lessons I learned when

I entered the world of politics and politicians was that it's

politicians that determine who will live and who will die. It was,

after all, politicians that took us to war based on lies and

deceptions, and it's politicians today who are preventing my patients,

my constituents and those who are most in need from having access to

their health care that they require to survive. It's politicians that

are very important.

So our politicians I believe on every level, whether you're a mayor,

an alderman, a county board person, a Governor, a President, our

elected leaders must now, more than ever, have good judgment, and good

judgment will yield good results.

Now, this bill isn't just paid for with SCHIP. It saves money.

Instead of a low-income family taking their children with a strep

throat to the emergency room, they will get to go to a doctor, and you

know, I can share with you a scientific fact you already know, but

sometimes people who point out the obvious are called geniuses. You

know, a cataract never had a name on it like Republican or Democrat.

Strep throat never had a name like Independent or Progressive or

Republican. Human disease has no political affiliation. I have not

asked my patients what political party they're in before we decide

what's best for them. The motto is, the thematic idea is, do what is

best for your patients if you're a physician.

Here in Congress we have to have that same mantra, that same idea: do

what is best for our constituents. That's our duty. That's our job, but

we have to have good judgment.

Now, the other thing I've discovered here, when I served in the

Veterans Administration hospitals as a physician during my training

days, we had a slogan that said, hey, wait a minute, if it makes sense,

don't do it; it's the military. If you served in the Marines or the

Army, you might have that same idea, wait a minute, if it makes sense,

what are we doing it for?

But we have to now make sense of our judgments, especially with

health care for our children. They are the ones most at risk. Early in

life, the early development of the human brain, the first 5 years of

development are so critical to the future health and psychology of that

person. We have to invest in our children's health care. SCHIP is not

perfect but it is the best way forward. It just makes too much common

sense for many people.

I'm hoping that tonight people watching throughout America will

understand, yeah, it does matter who my politician is, who my

congressperson is. They should call and write their congressman and

congresswoman today. Don't wait till tomorrow. This is far too

important.

This is a matter literally of life and death. It's not just your

pocketbook. We're talking about your neighbors, the people that live

just down the street that don't have access to care that they require.

We can change it. I believe in good government. I know you do as

well. I know people listening want good government. This is their

opportunity to participate. We have shared their stories here tonight.

It's their story, and it's their lives that we're attempting to

improve. Their quality of life is on the line on the 18th of October.

This President has failed to listen to ordinary people, people from

my district who are asking for access to their doctor, who are asking

him to take a new and different direction away from Iraq and back after

Osama bin Laden and his followers.

The President, who I believe is a good man, has poor judgment on this

one, is listening to some people that are giving him bad advice. We'd

like to work with the President.

The third lesson I've learned: One congressperson can't make a

tremendous change, but they don't have to give up trying. What really

matters here in our government is who's in the White House. I'm

convinced, now more than ever, with this recent battle over health care

for children that makes sense, that's paid for, that saves money, saves

tax dollars, if we can't win over this President and the Republican

Party on this argument, they don't deserve to be in the White House for

a generation. Their judgment is ill, spoken like a physician, and no

joke meant.

I cannot tell you how hard I took it when the President said ``no''

to our children, to our Nation's children most in need. It's the most

unkind act, other than taking us to war based on poor judgment and

deception.

I appreciate your sentiment, your energy, and I agree with

everything that you have been saying, and I would ask another question

of the American people, not just what kind of Nation are we, but this

essential question that you will recognize. If not now, when? And if

not you, then who? This moment does matter.

I am so grateful for our leadership in giving us this opportunity

this week to have an ongoing conversation with constituents and voters

and parents and children all across the country. We need to have a

discussion about what kind of Nation we are and in which direction

we're going to turn, shall we invest in the health of our children,

those who are most in need, or shall we be unkind and immoral and turn

away from them? I think most people would agree with us, that it's a

great idea to be healthy and especially to invest in the health of our

children.

In the State of Wisconsin, the SCHIP program under BadgerCare, what

we call BadgerCare, 16,527 children are covered. We can enhance with

this bill up to 37,000 additional children who have access to health

care. My friends, if not now, when? And if not you, then who? You must

contact your representative to make sure that he or she is speaking the

way you want them to speak.

We have been listening to you all throughout our election and all

throughout our careers, we will continue. Because a politician is

someone who is looking forward to their next election. We are statesmen

looking out for our next generation.

By working together, we will.