I was at a town meeting in the eastern part of my district about 2 weeks ago; and a woman said, please, Congressman, don't let them take away my Medicare. And that's what's happening today. And it's unfortunate the process has been so usurped that we didn't have time other than 1 minute to talk about it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Michigan has 20½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 17½ minutes remaining, for a total of 38 minutes. The gentleman from Louisiana has a total of 30 minutes remaining. The gentleman from Texas has 7 minutes remaining.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I would yield 1 minute at this time to the distinguished gentlewoman from California, my dear friend, Mrs. CAPPS.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, this bill is the reason I came to Congress, to continue my work for children's health. It's a blight on our Nation that millions of children in hardworking families still have no access to health care, and today we can undo that wrong. Through this fiscally responsible bill we ensure that millions more eligible children will be able to get primary care, manage life-threatening illnesses, improve their school attendance and grow into healthy, productive adults. And how fitting that at the same time we will improve Medicare for seniors.

I wish to submit for the RECORD the piece by Ron Brownstein in today's L.A. Times where he calls the Bush and Republican arguments against this bill as not much more than stealing health care from babies.

We do have a choice today. We can continue to ignore the health of millions of babies and children, or we can take the high moral ground and pass this bill which will provide health care to those who need it most.

I want to commend Chairmen DINGELL, PALLONE, RANGEL, AND STARK for all the hard work they and the committee staff have done. I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on the CHAMP Act. Do something positive today for America's children.

[From the Los Angeles Times, Aug. 1, 2007]

STEALING HEALTHCARE FROM BABIES

(By Ronald Brownstein)

Does President Bush really believe what he's saying about the effort from congressional Democrats and some leading Senate Republicans to provide health coverage for millions of uninsured children? He's portraying it as the first step on a slippery slope toward ''government-run healthcare,'' as if senior senators in both parties were conspiring with Michael Moore to import Cuban doctors to inoculate and indoctrinate American children.

In fact, Congress is moving responsibly to remove a blot on the nation: the 8 million children without health insurance. It is doing so by expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP, a state-federal partnership that the Republican Congress and President Clinton created in 1997 to cover kids in working-poor families. Final votes on the House and Senate floors could come this week.

Bush, seemingly determined to provoke every possible confrontation with congressional Democrats, has pledged to veto the bills. And with the GOP congressional leadership, he is fighting the proposals with a swarm of misleading and hypocritical arguments.

Bush complains that expanding the program costs too much. But cost was no object when Bush and congressional Republicans sought to court seniors by creating the Medicare prescription drug benefit in 2003.

Under the bipartisan Senate bill, Washington would spend about $56 billion over the next five years to cover almost half of the nation's uninsured children. Over the same period, the Medicare entitlement that Bush signed (after more than four-fifths of House and Senate Republicans voted for it) will cost nearly $330 billion. Is social spending affordable only when it benefits constituencies Republicans prize in elections?

Next, Bush complains that the SCHIP expansion would require ''a huge tax increase.'' Actually, both the House and Senate plans would raise taxes just on tobacco. And the sponsors are increasing taxes only because they have committed to the novel notion of paying for their program. When Bush and the Republican Congress created the expensive Medicare drug benefit, they did not provide any new revenue to fund it. They just billed the cost to the next generation through higher federal deficits. Now Bush is condemning Democrats for displaying more responsibility.

Bush also disparages the SCHIP expansion as an attempt ''to encourage people to transfer from the private sector to government healthcare plans.'' But studies have found that three-fourths of children covered under the current program receive their care through private insurance plans that contract with the states, notes Edwin Park of the liberal Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. In that way, the program is no different than Bush's prescription drug plan: The government pays for services delivered by private insurance companies.

Bush's argument that the SCHIP changes will unacceptably ''crowd out'' private insurance is misleading in another respect. It's true, as Bush charges, that if the program is expanded, some eligible families would shift their children into it from private coverage, hoping to save money or improve care. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that children making such a switch would account for about one-third of the 6 million kids expected to enroll in the expanded SCHIP program under the Senate plan, and hence one-third of the added cost.

But as CBO Director Peter Orszag notes, all efforts to expand coverage for the uninsured inevitably spill some benefits on those who already have insurance. And the Senate SCHIP plan, by limiting that spillover to one-third of its cost, is actually more efficient than most alternatives for expanding coverage.

Bush, for instance, wants to reduce the number of uninsured by providing new tax incentives for buying coverage. But the Lewin Group, an independent consulting firm, recently calculated that 80 percent of the benefits from Bush's plan would flow to people who already have insurance. Such numbers help explain why Orszag recently said that, dollar for dollar, expanding SCHIP ''is pretty much as efficient as you can possibly get'' to insure more kids.

Bush's most outrageous argument is that expanding SCHIP ''empower[s] bureaucrats.'' In reality, covering more children would empower parents like Sheila Miguel of Sun Valley, Calif.

Miguel used to spend hours in emergency rooms trying to obtain asthma medicine for her daughter, Chelsea, but since enrolling her in a SCHIP-funded program, Miguel can take her to reliably scheduled clinic visits.

Bush says he wants ''to put more power'' over healthcare ''in the hands of individuals.'' By freeing Miguel's family from the worry and drudgery of repeated emergency room visits, that's exactly what SCHIP does.

Few of the lower-income working families that rely on this program have the time to follow this week's legislative struggle, much less analyze how it serves the White House's apparent strategy of embroiling congressional Democrats in unrelenting conflicts with Bush that alienate swing voters. In that political skirmishing, these families have been reduced to collateral damage. They deserve something better from a president who once called himself a ''compassionate conservative.''

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I would like to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished Republican whip and a member of the committee who is on leave, Mr. BLUNT of Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I'm thankful to the former chairman and the ranking member for yielding to me on this bill.

It seems to me that what we have here is a bill that has not benefited from the process of hearings. Most of our friends in the majority today, I assume, will vote for this bill. Most of our friends on our side are going to vote against this bill, and I believe that during the month of August the voters will have the hearings that we should have had in advance. I believe what we'll find out is this bill has needless problems in it in the name of expanding SCHIP.

My good friend, Ms. DEGETTE, mentioned the moon mission. It does seem to me that, in this bill now, the moon is the limit. The original bill said 200 percent of poverty, with some flexibility to the States. We're in favor of extending these guidelines.

The original proposal, as we understood it from the majority, was 400 percent of poverty. Families who made 80, $85,000 would get free health insurance for their children. I don't think that limit is there any more. I believe it's up to the States under this bill. If you made 1,000 times the poverty rate and your State wanted to insure you, they could do that and your initial payment from the Federal Government would be 95 cents on every dollar.

We're going to offer a recommital today that extends the current SCHIP program; that gives us the time to talk about it and ways that make it better; that reinstates the current law on immigrants, where, if you come to this country, you have to have a sponsor, and you can't participate in programs like this for the first 5 years. That's been one of the workable parts of our immigration policy.

We would propose we don't have self-verification, where people who are here illegally just can walk up and sign up and say I'm legally here.

We'll have a doctor fix. We'll do something about the therapy caps. And, in my district, 21,033 people who would lose their choice of Medicare don't lose their choice of Medicare. Restricting Medicare benefits to pay for children's health care is not the right thing.