

*September 27, 2008*

**Mr. SCOTT of Virginia:** Madam Speaker, access to quality, affordable health care is critical to the well being of our citizens. With 46 million uninsured, including 9 million children, and many more underinsured, we must focus on strengthening our existing system as we continue to work to assure that quality health care is available to all. The Patient Advocate Act will assist patients, particularly those with a chronic illness, in successfully meeting the challenges brought on by their illness.

Patients battling a life-threatening illness are generally ill-equipped to negotiate with insurance companies, hospitals and other medical providers. Advocates will be available to assist with job retention and other debt crisis matters, while the patients are dealing with the reality of their illness at the same time. The limited network of existing patient advocate programs have proven their value and cost effectiveness. It is in the best interest of the patient to have someone available to advocate on their behalf while suffering from chronic illness.

Madam Speaker, the Patient Advocate Act would establish a demonstration grant program for State, local, tribal and non-profit entities to develop and operate patient advocate programs. The programs will assist patients in resolving health insurance, job retention, debt crisis and other problems related to the patients' diagnosis and illness. Specific services include negotiating pre-authorization claims, expediting the appeals process on contested claims, resolving billing errors and other bill issues, resolving debt crises, brokering resources to supplement limits to insurance, gaining access to services for the uninsured, and addressing other problems related to the patient's illness, at no cost to the patient. The grants will be made available to existing and new patient advocacy programs.

Madam Speaker, to ensure that patients facing serious illness are able to effectively address the major issues that confront them during their illness, it is vitally important that they have access to professional case management services. The Patient Advocate Act will provide communities with the ability to establish patient advocate programs to assist patients as they negotiate the challenges of serious illness. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.