

for the same exact prescription drugs manufactured by American companies. It is every other country on Earth. For every dollar that a senior citizen in this country spends for prescription drugs, the people in Germany pay 71 cents; in Sweden, 68 cents; in the UK, 65 cents; in Canada, 64 cents; in France, 57 cents; and in Italy, for the same exact prescription drugs, 51 cents, half the price.

□ 1645

Mr. Speaker, during the last year, I took my constituents in the State of Vermont on two occasions over the border, we border on Canada, up to Montreal in order to enable some of them to purchase the prescription drugs they desperately need for substantially lower prices. At the end of the day, when those folks came back, many seniors, many women, they had each saved hundreds of dollar on their prescription drug bills.

One of the more outrageous examples of the disparity in prices deals with one particular drug called Tamoxifen. Tamoxifen is a widely prescribed drug to deal with the epidemic of breast cancer that tens of thousands of women throughout this country are fighting, are struggling for their lives.

In Canada, the cost of Tamoxifen is \$34. In the United States, it is \$241, same product, same dosage. In other words, we are paying roughly 10 times more for a drug that keeps women alive than are the people of Canada. Let us be clear that the pharmaceutical industry is not losing money when they sell their product in Canada or in Mexico and any place else in the world. They are simply ripping off the American people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate but true that, if one looks at the record, one will find that the vast majority of Members of Congress receive campaign contributions from the pharmaceutical industry. In fact, the pharmaceutical industry spends more money on campaign contributions and lobbying than any other industry in this world.

Well, it seems to me that the time has long passed for the Members of this Congress to give back their campaign contributions to the pharmaceutical industry, to tell the lobbyists, not only here in Washington, but back in the State capitol, to all over America, to go home, to leave us alone.

It is high time that Members of Congress did the right thing, started looking out for the interests of their constituents, their seniors. They are chronically ill, and demand it of the pharmaceutical industry that the people of this country no longer be treated as second-class citizens, that we deserve the same prices as do the Canadians, the Mexicans, and people throughout this world.

Now, in that light, I have introduced legislation. The gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) has a very good piece in our legislation, which is also intro-

duced by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) and the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. EMERSON). This is a very simple piece of legislation.

It says that the prescription drug distributors in this country and the pharmacists in this country can purchase the same exact FDA safety-approved product in Canada, in Mexico, at the same prices that the Canadian and Mexican pharmacists pay for their product, and they will be able to resell their product in this country for substantially lower prices.

Let us stand up to the pharmaceutical industry. Let us protect the American consumer, and let us start passing some real legislation to protect our people.

REGROWING RURAL AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, agricultural producers across South Dakota and across this country have been devastated by inclement weather, low prices, lack of competition, and unfair foreign trade. These are all issues which we need to address.

I want to commend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST), chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, for holding a series of hearings across this country to examine the farm economy and to hear from producers what we might be able to do to strengthen farm policy in this country. We have just one of those such hearings scheduled in South Dakota for May 2.

This is a complex problem, and there are no easy answers. There is no silver bullet solution. But our producers, all they are asking for is a fair price for their products. They work hard, they work the land, and many times are subject to circumstances which are beyond their control. We cannot control the Asian economy. We cannot control exchange rates. We obviously cannot control the weather. But there are things that we can control.

This year we are finally passing crop insurance reform. It is in conference right now. Last year we were able to pass mandatory price reporting to assist our livestock producers. We have provided emergency income assistance in each of the 3 years that I have been in the Congress. We have extended the ethanol tax incentive to assist our producers and try and stimulate value-added operations.

There are other things that need to be done as well, Mr. Speaker. We need to open markets. We need to pass trade with China. We need to step up our efforts at conservation, expanding the CRP and WRP programs. We need to eliminate the death tax so that our family farmers and ranchers can pass on their operations to the next generation. We also need relief from repressive regulations, and we need to allow

for the deductibility of health insurance premiums for our family farmers and ranchers.

But there is one other issue, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to address today, and that is this whole issue of value added, the need of producers to reach up the agricultural marketing chain and capture the profits that are generated from processing the raw commodities.

Producers have great interest in pulling together to do just that, but there are a couple of important barriers. The first is technical expertise and the second is capital. Most of our producers are currently cash strapped.

Now, in response to the need, producers' need and desire to become engaged in these types of ventures, we are introducing two pieces of legislation. The first is H.R. 3513, the Value-Added Agriculture Development Act, which would grant \$50 million to create Agricultural Innovation Centers for 3 years on a demonstration basis. The Ag Innovation Centers would provide separately needed technical assistance, expertise in engineering, business, research, legal services, to assist producers in forming producer-owned, value-added endeavors.

The companion bill, the Value-Added Agriculture Tax Credit Act, would create a tax credit program for farmers and ranchers to provide a jump start to value-added agriculture by allowing them to get a tax credit for making an investment in those types of operations. Specifically, the bill would make available a 50 percent tax credit for farmers who invest in a producer-owned value-added enterprise. Producers could apply the tax credit over 20 subsequent years or transfer the tax credit to allow for the cyclical nature of farm incomes.

Mr. Speaker, combined into a single package, these two initiatives will provide American family farmers the tools that they need, desperately need to successfully become vertical integrators, and to transform themselves from price takers to price makers.

This is a common sense approach to the problems that plague our agricultural economy, which are many. This is part of a solution.

But I hope that we can generate interest in this body in moving legislation that would provide the types of incentives that are necessary to tear down the barriers to value-added operations that will allow our producers to add value at the point of production and to maximize their profit and help restore some level of profitability and some level of survival to the agriculture economy in this country.

Mr. Speaker, let me just add one last thing, and that is this, this does not just affect producers. What is happening in the agricultural economy is destroying our rural way of life, our rural main streets, those who depend for jobs on the agricultural economy of this country. We are seeing it day in and day out across my State of South Dakota and across this entire country.

So I would urge this body to consider this legislation, to enact it, to help create jobs, create economic development, and create additional value-added agricultural operations that will provide the sustenance and necessary levels of profitability to sustain agriculture in this country.

I encourage and urge my colleagues in this Chamber to cosponsor this legislation and to help us see it become law.

REAL MONEY NEED FOR EDUCATION

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

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be joined here today by Patty Boyle, a teacher from Southern California, whose outstanding work is well known to the colleagues that she has had in teaching, to the parents, and the students that she has touched. As a result of Patty being here, I have decided to address the House on the importance of providing funds to modernize our schools and to provide additional classroom space.

I think we are all aware of how important it is to modernize our schools, to provide Internet access to teachers and to students. Many of us have focused on how important it is to provide air conditioning for schools as we go into the spring and summer months. More and more schools have extra programs or full-year sessions. Certainly, air conditioning is necessary then. It may also be necessary in May and in September when schools have their regular sessions.

Keep in mind, we here in Congress work in air-conditioned buildings. They tell tales of last century of what it was like to be a Member of Congress without air conditioning. Imagine what it is to try to teach 30 students without air conditioning.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we have again and again talked about the importance of smaller class sizes, particularly in the first 3 years. Well, if we are going to have class sizes of 18 or 20 students in the first 3 years or throughout elementary school, we are going to need more classrooms. We are either going to need to reconfigure the space that we have now or build additional space for those classrooms that will be needed because we take the same number of students and put them into a larger number of classrooms so that they can have smaller class sizes.

All too often, what this has meant for resource specialists, for special ed classrooms, is that, as there are more classrooms devoted to regular elementary school education, the special ed students find themselves relegated to closets, to faculty rooms, to whatever nook and cranny that was never designed to allow students to learn and teachers to teach.

Both parties have recognized the importance of allocating Federal aid to

schools and especially to provide school districts with the capacity to build additional classrooms and to modernize the classrooms that they do have.

But while both parties have recognized the need and both parties have decided that that need should be met by changing our Tax Code, that is where the similarity ends.

Unfortunately, the Republican Party has come up with a bizarre notion of how to use the Tax Code in order to encourage school construction. What they have said is it is okay for school districts to issue school bonds and then those districts will be encouraged to delay school construction, not for the 2 years that are allowed under the current tax law, but up to 4 years.

Now school districts need flexibility into when they issue the bonds and when they actually do the construction, but this is the first case where that flexibility is designed as a method of providing money for the school districts.

Well, how are they supposed to get money? Well, they are encouraged to arbitrage, to take the funds that they get by issuing school bonds and not build schools right away, but take the money to the markets, play the markets. Then they are allowed under the new Republican proposal to keep the profits.

The sole contribution to school construction and modernization offered in this Republican tax plan is a free ticket to Las Vegas for every school board member in the country.

I do not think that we should be encouraging schools to arbitrage invest, and we certainly should not view ourselves as having made some major contribution to education and school construction, because we have provided those free tickets to Las Vegas and told the school district that they are allowed to keep the profits that they make by playing the market.

Instead, the Democratic tax proposal, one that I am proud to cosponsor, and it is not just a Democratic proposal now, I believe the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON) and many other Republicans have sponsored or cosponsored. This legislation would, instead, provide real money by allowing schools to have the Federal Government pay the interest on the bonds up to \$25 billion in bonds. That is real money for schools to spend.

CONGRATULATING HAWAII'S WINNERS OF THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate two remarkable students from Hawaii—Leanne Nakamura, age 17, of Kaneohe and Aubrie Weedling, age 13, of Honolulu. Leanne and Aubrie are Hawaii's top two youth volunteers for the year 2000 in the Prudential

Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism.

Leanne Nakamura, a senior at James B. Castle High School, co-created "S.A.V.E. Kualoa Beach," an effort to remove marine debris and educate her community about environmental issues. While attending an environmental conference, Leanne learned about beach erosion and the devastating effect marine debris has on the beaches. She did not feel that the suggested action of writing letters to government officials was an adequate solution.

After being alerted by a faculty advisor of foreign fishnets on Kualoa Beach, Leanne organized an effort to remove the nets and conduct a beach clean-up. Leanne recruited volunteers from several school clubs and the University of Hawaii's Environmental Club and persuaded local merchants to donate food for the volunteers. As a result, three-quarters of the fishnets were removed. "I believe that when students took part in this project they learned about beach erosion and how people's carelessness affects the environment," said Leanne. "It allowed students to take responsibility for the earth, creating a relationship between the environment and the student."

Aubrie Weedling, an eighth grader at Moanalua Middle School, volunteers every week at a local food bank and once a month at a homeless shelter organizing, preparing, and serving food. Inspired by her mother, an ordained pastor who frequently talks about the importance of helping the less fortunate, Aubrie accepted an invitation by the food bank's organizer to volunteer her time. "Sometimes it's hard: I am the only young person from my church who works at the food bank and the Institute [shelter]," explains Aubrie. "The happiness on the faces of those we serve in more than I can ask for. I would tell other young people that it is a learning experience we should all have, and the feeling you get back is well worth your time."

I look forward to having the opportunity to meet these special young women and to welcome them to Washington when they come to the Capitol on May 9th. Leanne and Aubrie exemplify the very best of our youth, of Hawaii, and of our nation.

□ 1700

TAX RELIEF, TAX SIMPLIFICATION, AND TAX REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am here to talk about taxes. April 15 is drawing near once again, and I am joined by my friend, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH), a member of the Committee on Ways and Means, and others, to talk about taxes, a topic that is on a lot of Americans' minds right now. It is a bottom line issue for families and businesses in my district and around the country as we draw close to tax filing deadline.

Tax season is, in a sense, a time for renewed focus, and that focus, I think,