

comprehensively. I believe that the FAST Act will go a long way toward providing the simplicity, fairness and clarity that are needed for long-term growth. As we consider economic stimulus proposals in the days and weeks ahead, I hope my colleagues will join me in pursuing this pro-growth reform agenda.

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 20th anniversary of the Greater Houston Partnership. I ask my colleagues and those visitors in the House Chamber to join me in congratulating the Greater Houston Partnership and applauding the many achievements they have accomplished over the past 20 years.

In 1989, the Houston Chamber of Commerce, the Houston Economic Development Council and the Houston World Trade Center joined together to make the dream of an organization that would be an advocate for the business community in the greater Houston area a reality.

The Greater Houston Partnership has grown into an influential organization that now has two thousand member businesses and serves 10 fast growing counties: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, San Jacinto and Waller.

The Partnership has had an impressive impact on the region. In the last year, 53 percent of all jobs created in the United States were created in Texas—and one in four of those were in Houston. This is astounding and a testimony to the contributions the Greater Houston Partnership has made to cultivate a vibrant business environment. The Partnership's efforts are focused on building Houston's prosperity and promoting regional economic development. The Partnership is actively involved with public policy issues and works with local elected officials to ensure the Greater Houston community is well represented in areas such as clean air, education and transportation.

In its two decades of existence there is much to be proud of. It is an honor to recognize such an impressive organization. All Americans can learn from the collaborative example the Greater Houston Partnership continues to display through their leadership and guidance to the people and businesses in the Greater Houston community.

Madam Speaker, today more than ever, we must support the efforts of the Greater Houston Partnership and other similar organizations across the country. The work they do to help create jobs in our country is essential for continued economic growth and stability in the face of the global economic changes. I urge you to join me in congratulating the Greater Houston Partnership for 20 years of serving as the voice for the greater Houston business community.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PRESCRIPTION DRUG AFFORDABILITY ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce the Prescription Drug Affordability Act. This legislation ensures that millions of Americans, including seniors, have access to affordable pharmaceutical products. My bill makes pharmaceuticals more affordable to seniors by reducing their taxes. It also removes needless government barriers to importing pharmaceuticals and it protects Internet pharmacies, which are making affordable prescription drugs available to millions of Americans, from being strangled by federal regulation.

The first provision of my legislation provides seniors a tax credit equal to 80 percent of their prescription drug costs. While Congress did add a prescription drug benefit to Medicare in 2003, many seniors still have difficulty affording the prescription drugs they need in order to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle. One reason is because the new program creates a "doughnut hole," where seniors lose coverage once their prescription expenses reach a certain amount and must pay for their prescriptions above a certain amount out of their own pockets until their expenses reach a level where Medicare coverage resumes. This tax credit will help seniors cover the expenses provided by the doughnut hole. This bill will also help seniors obtain prescription medicines that may not be covered by the Medicare prescription drug program.

In addition to making prescription medications more affordable for seniors, my bill lowers the price for prescription medicines by reducing barriers to the importation of FDA-approved pharmaceuticals. Under my bill, anyone wishing to import a drug simply submits an application to the FDA, which then must approve the drug unless the FDA finds the drug is either not approved for use in the U.S. or is adulterated or misbranded. This process will make safe and affordable imported medicines affordable to millions of Americans. Madam Speaker, letting the free market work is the best means of lowering the cost of prescription drugs.

I need not remind my colleagues that many senior citizens and other Americans impacted by the high costs of prescription medicine have demanded Congress reduce the barriers which prevent American consumers from purchasing imported pharmaceuticals. Congress has responded to these demands by repeatedly passing legislation liberalizing the rules governing the importation of pharmaceuticals. However, implementation of this provision has been blocked by the federal bureaucracy. It is time Congress stood up for the American consumer and removed all unnecessary regulations on importing pharmaceuticals.

The Prescription Drug Affordability Act also protects consumers' access to affordable medicine by forbidding the Federal Government from regulating any Internet sales of FDA-approved pharmaceuticals by state-licensed pharmacists.

As I am sure my colleagues are aware, the Internet makes pharmaceuticals and other products more affordable and accessible for millions of Americans. However, the Federal

Government has threatened to destroy this option by imposing unnecessary and unconstitutional regulations on Web sites that sell pharmaceuticals. Any federal regulations would inevitably drive up prices of pharmaceuticals, thus depriving many consumers of access to affordable prescription medications.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to make pharmaceuticals more affordable and accessible by lowering taxes on senior citizens, removing barriers to the importation of pharmaceuticals and protecting legitimate Internet pharmacies from needless regulation by cosponsoring the Prescription Drug Affordability Act.

BAD POLLUTERS ACT

HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand here today to introduce this bipartisan legislation that will help protect the Great Lakes from harmful pollution that poisons our water and closes our beaches. The Great Lakes are the world's largest freshwater system and serve as a source of drinking water, food, jobs and recreation for more than thirty million Americans. It is critical that we enhance our restoration efforts for this critical resource, not degrade the condition of the lakes even further.

In 2007, British Petroleum (BP) threatened to begin a billion-dollar expansion of its refinery facility in Whiting, Indiana which would have included a large increase of pollution into the Great Lakes. The company sought to discharge an increase of 54 percent more ammonia and 35 percent more sludge into Lake Michigan per day. This would have totaled a combined increase of more than 1,800 pounds per day of these pollutants which strangle aquatic life and contribute to the increasing number of beach closures each year.

Based on a provision in the Energy Policy Act of 2005, BP was eligible for a tax credit that would have allowed them to expense half of the capital costs in the first year of the expansion. Essentially, the government would have paid the company to pollute our lakes. While providing incentives to energy production and refinery expansion helps to lower gas prices and reduce our dependence on foreign oil, we must not do so at the expense of one of America's most treasured natural resources.

Fortunately, BP yielded to public pressure and chose not to move ahead with the expansion as planned. Due to the determination and cooperation of federal, state and local officials, environmental advocacy organizations and communities around the region, BP is now working with a coalition of scientists and small businesses to seek an environmentally friendly way to expand its refinery.

While I applaud BP for making the right decision in the end, we must ensure that no refinery ever comes as close to drastically harming our precious lakes. That is why I am introducing the Bad Polluters Act, which will deny the capital expensing tax credit to any refiner whose facility's NPDES permit allows for an increase in any pollutant above its 2006 levels into the Great Lakes. This will prevent companies from seeking to increase pollution into our