

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

VA PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT IN PERIL

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 19, 1999

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to share with you my concern with a letter I recently received from the Department of Veterans Affairs. As Chair of the Subcommittee on Health of the Committee of Veterans' Affairs, I am deeply concerned by any action that threatens the well-being of those Americans who have laid their lives on the line for our country.

I know that many of my colleagues have signed on to a bill that promises to help senior citizens better afford their medicines. I refer to H.R. 664, which would extend favorable government prices for prescription drugs to retail pharmacies serving the Medicare population. Although this may sound like a win-win proposition, there would be some very big losers, namely, the nation's veterans.

The letter I received from Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D., Acting Under Secretary for Health of the Veterans Administration reads, in part: We believe enactment of H.R. 664 would increase VA's annual pharmaceutical costs by \$500 to \$600 million.

This could put the health of millions of veterans at risk because the VA would have to make up for those increased expenditures either by denying veterans needed medicines or by cutting back on other health care services. Our veterans deserve better than that.

The purpose of this speech is not to pit veterans against seniors. Rather, it's to suggest that H.R. 664 is not the way to help either of these groups. It would extend price controls to more than 40 percent of the pharmaceutical marketplace. And price controls, throughout their long and dismal history, have never solved anything. Instead, they've created shortages, delays and rationing, which we simply can't afford in health care.

We owe a debt to veterans and I intend to see that the debt is paid in full. We also have an obligation to help senior citizens gain better access to the benefits of modern medicines. Seniors deserve more from their Members of Congress than the false promise of cheap drugs through price controls. In a word, they deserve coverage. We need to roll up our sleeves and get to work on legislation that would expand coverage options for seniors while protecting the well-earned health benefits of our nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I insert this letter for the RECORD.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS,
VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, DC, August 11, 1999.

Hon. CLIFF STEARNS,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Health, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: This is in response to your letter on the impact on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) of H.R. 664, which

would extend favorable government prices for pharmaceuticals to the Medicare population.

We are very concerned that this proposed legislation would have an indirect, negative impact on VA pharmaceutical budgets. Section 3(c) of the bill would force covered outpatient drug manufacturers to sell to Medicare-affiliated pharmacies at the lower of the Medicaid reported best price or the "lowest price paid for [the drug] by an agency or department of the United States". The latter benchmark would include not only low Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) and FSS Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) prices negotiated by VA for the Government, but also large volume committed use national contract prices obtained by VA and/or Department of Defense (DOD) in head-to-head competitive procurements. Perhaps most importantly, the "lowest price paid" benchmark would include many Federal ceiling prices (FCPs) already imposed on manufacturers by the Veterans Healthcare Act of 1992, Section 603 (Public Law 102-585; 38 U.S.C. 8126).

By way of further information, through many recent inquiries by drug manufacturers regarding this bill, we have been informally informed that manufacturers may no longer offer lower-than-FCP prices to VA and DOD in BPA and national contract negotiations. They may also invoke 30-day cancellation clauses in FSS contracts and BPAs, to the extent allowed by Public Law 102-585, which would force Government healthcare agencies to buy drugs in the open market at much higher retail prices or AWP (average wholesale prices).

In summary, we believe enactment of H.R. 664 would increase VA's annual pharmaceutical costs by \$500-600 million. We would be pleased to discuss this matter further with you. If you have additional questions, please contact me or Mr. John Ogden, Chief Consultant for Pharmacy Benefits Management, at 202.273.8429/8426.

Sincerely,

THOMAS L. GARTHWAITE, MD,
Acting Under Secretary for Health.

TRIBUTE TO DIETER SCHMIDT—A TIRELESS ADVOCATE FOR CLOS- ER GERMAN-AMERICAN RELA- TIONS

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 19, 1999

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dieter A. Schmidt, Director of the Institute for Foreign Relations of the Hanns Seidel Foundation of Munich, Germany. Mr. Schmidt is a true friend of the United States and a longtime force for stability and cooperation in Europe.

One of Mr. Schmidt's most lasting accomplishments has been his leadership of the Franz Josef Strauss Symposium, a highly regarded international conference on foreign and security policy. The Symposium—which will be held for the twentieth time later this year in Munich—has provided a platform for senior American officials and Members of Congress

to meet and discuss with their German counterparts perspectives on critical issues relating to Germany and European affairs.

For the past two decades, this outstanding forum has provided an excellent opportunity to consider and evaluate the dramatic changes that have taken place in Central Europe—the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, the enlargement of NATO, and the changing nature of international institutions in the post-Cold War era. Dieter Schmidt's guidance—from helping to establish the Symposium in 1979 to chairing its meetings and working tirelessly to bring together policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic—has provided a critical forum for leaders of both of our countries to meet, to build strong personal relationships and to create greater mutual understanding and cooperation.

Throughout his career, Schmidt has time and time again worked to strengthen German-American relations. In 1957, as a young officer, he attended an exchange program at the United States Military Academy at West Point. In 1968, Schmidt returned to the United States for CBW warfare training at Fort McClellan, Alabama. After his military career, he became the international secretary of the Christian Social Union Party. In that capacity, Schmidt played a key role in the founding of the International Democratic Union (IDU), a worldwide association of Christian Democratic and conservative political parties. For many years now he has served as a member of the Committee for International Affairs of the IDU, where he was instrumental in expanding the organization to include American participation.

In 1981, in his capacity as Director of the Institute for Foreign Relations at the Hanns Seidel Foundation, Dieter Schmidt initiated a series of annual conferences to educate congressional staff about the German and European political processes. In the past eighteen years, these extremely valuable conferences have involved the participation of almost two hundred Congressional staff members, and they have provided the participants with a much broader and more meaningful understanding of Germany and of America's other key allies and partners in Europe.

Mr. Speaker, as we mark the twentieth gathering of the Franz Josef Strauss Symposium, I invite my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to the remarkable contributions of Dieter Schmidt to the close ties between Germany and the United States. His efforts merit our great appreciation and our respect.

RECOGNIZING MR. RAMON
GONZALES AND THE "MIRACLE
ON WEST 31ST STREET"

HON. ED PASTOR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 19, 1999

Mr. PASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Ramon Gonzales, a generous man of limited means who works hard

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

to ensure that the Spirit of Christmas touches all of South Tucson's children.

Twenty-nine years ago, Mr. Gonzales held a neighborhood Christmas party for his own children and a few of their friends. Because the party was so successful and appreciated, he gave another one the following year and every year since. Throughout the years, the celebration has radiated from Mr. Gonzales' small stucco house and onto West 31st Street. Now, on the day of the party, the street is blocked off and there are refreshments, balloons, clowns, mariachi music, piñatas, face painters, live radio broadcasts, and presents.

During the festivities, Santa Claus arrives to hand presents out to the children, sometimes in a red fire truck and other times in a helicopter. However he arrives, children, parents and volunteers alike thrill to the renewal of Christmas magic and the promise of a better tomorrow. Because of the happiness the celebration generates, Tucson's residents have come to call it the "Miracle on 31st Street." This year's event is expected to benefit approximately 4,000 local children, who undoubtedly will have a memorable Christmas because of Mr. Gonzales' kindness and compassion.

Mr. Gonzales, a former sheet metal worker now on disability, works all year to organize and develop resources for the Christmas Eve celebration. Always modest, Mr. Gonzales insists that "It's the volunteers that make the party," and he, along with 200 other volunteers, works tirelessly to ensure the success of the annual event. Many of the volunteers are Mr. Gonzales' union friends, and he has been praised by his union president, who said "I wish we all could be as selfless and as giving as Brother Gonzales." Volunteers also come from businesses, radio stations, friends, neighbors, nonprofit groups, and government agencies who enjoy generating positive feelings for the children and within the volunteer corps.

Although many of the children who come to the party are from low income families who may not have another Christmas celebration, Mr. Gonzales welcomes all children to join in the festivities. He understands that childhood dreams are nurtured through a caring community that transcends the individual's situation and emphasizes positive concepts: sharing, love, involvement, generosity, and kindness. The block party on West 31st Street in South Tucson has become a beacon for those ideals.

I commend Ramon Gonzales for his dedication and personal sacrifice that has generated so many positive emotions and wonderful memories for thousands of children. He is an outstanding model for our nation of one person truly making a difference. May his energies and commitment continue for many years to come.

PROMOTING HEALTHY HEARTS
AND HEALTHY LIVES: DEAN
ORNISH, M.D.

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 19, 1999

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to pay tribute to Dr. Dean Ornish, a man who has dedicated his career to building healthier

lives. Dr. Ornish is considered by many as the leading authority on the effects of diet and lifestyle on health and well-being. His groundbreaking research has resulted in the discovery that comprehensive changes in diet and lifestyle can reverse even severe coronary heart disease without drugs and surgery. Dr. Ornish has produced valuable research that can empower individuals and build healthier communities. He is a talented, dedicated researcher whose work must not go unappreciated or unnoticed.

Dr. Ornish is the founder, president and director of the non-profit Preventive Medicine Research Institute in Sausalito, California, where he holds the Bucksbaum Chair. He is Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and a founder of the Center for Integrative Medicine at the university. Dr. Ornish received an M.D. from Baylor College of Medicine, was a clinical fellow in medicine at Harvard Medical School and completed his internship and residency in internal medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Dr. Ornish is the author of five best-selling books, including New York Times bestsellers: Dr. Dean Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease; Eat More, Weigh Less; and Love & Survival. His research and writings have been published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, The Lancet, Circulation, The New England Journal of Medicine, the American Journal of Cardiology, and elsewhere. A one-hour documentary of his work was broadcast on NOVA, the PBS science series, and was featured on Bill Moyers' PBS series, "Healing & The Mind." His work has been featured in virtually all major media; he was on the cover of the March 16, 1998, issue of Newsweek magazine.

Dr. Ornish has received several awards, including the 1996 Beckmann Medal from the German Society for Prevention and Rehabilitation of Cardiovascular Diseases, the U.S. Army Surgeon General Medal, and the 1994 Outstanding Young Alumnus Award from the University of Texas, Austin. He is listed in the Dictionary of International Biography, Who's Who in America, and in Men of Achievement. He was recognized as one of the most interesting people of 1995 by People magazine and by LIFE Magazine as one of the 50 most influential members of his generation.

Mr. Speaker, I have great admiration for Dr. Dean Ornish. He is truly a remarkable individual whose outstanding research and effective programs have improved the overall quality of life for many people. His proven research on behavior modification has the potential to revolutionize the way modern medicine approaches heart disease. Dr. Ornish's promotion of healthy hearts and healthy lives is an inspiration for all Americans.

HONORING WILLIE AND VERONICA
ARTIS

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 19, 1999

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I am very honored to rise before you today to acknowledge the achievements and contributions to the

Flint, Michigan community of a wonderful couple who have cultivated a successful business partnership, as well as a life partnership. On Tuesday, October 19, members of the Charles Stewart Mott Community College Foundation will gather and, in the spirit of Minority Business Month, will honor Mr. and Mrs. Willie and Veronica Artis of Genesee Packaging, Inc.

It was in 1979 that Willie Artis and Buel Jones founded Genesee Packaging. Using an opportunity granted from minority business programs sponsored by General Motors, Artis and Jones ventured into business together and reached over one million dollars in revenue within the first year. In the 1980's, once again due to the benefit of General Motors, the company expanded with Genesee Corrugated, Inc. Now, instead of creating the packaging, they were manufacturing the materials to create the packaging as well.

Following the retirement of Buel Jones, Willie Artis began overseeing daily operations of the companies. The companies, which eventually merged, served to be profitable, not only to its owners, but to the community as well. Currently, Genesee Packaging employs nearly 300 people in three plants throughout the Flint area. The company constantly serves as one the city's strongest economic resources.

As Willie Artis can claim to over 28 years of experience in the packaging field, his wife, Veronica can claim an equal amount of experience in the business administration field. After obtaining an education from such schools as the University of Wisconsin, Dartmouth, and Harvard, Veronica began a noted work history with Ameritech, holding positions including District Training Coordinator, Personnel Manager, Marketing Manager, and Purchasing Manager. Veronica joined Genesee Packaging in 1989 as Vice President of Administration, and currently sits on the company's Executive Staff.

Mr. Speaker, not only will the Mott College Foundation celebrate the contributions of Mr. and Mrs. Artis, but, to further establish the impact they make on Flint residents, the evening will also mark the creation of a scholarship in their name. I am pleased to be witness to all they have done on a corporate level, and what they have done in serving as positive role models for young people. I ask my colleagues in the 106th Congress to join me in congratulating Willie and Veronica Artis. Together they have made our community a better place.

TRIBUTE TO CENTRAL BAPTIST
CHURCH

HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 19, 1999

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the 100th Anniversary of the Central Baptist Church in Willisville, Illinois.

As this millennium is nearing an end, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the history of small towns and cities which have committed themselves to their communities. Many churches and religious institutions have been the source of providing American citizens with comfort and strength during troubled times. In my congressional district, one church in particular has provided this type of example. For