

Healthcare Worker Protection Act builds on a California health care initiative by ensuring that all nurses and others in hospitals and treatment centers have safe needle devices and information available on how to use them. We must make sure these workers are protected at all costs.

As a nurse in Congress, I am working hard to promote these important issues, but Congress will only be successful in passing meaningful health care legislation when the contributions of those on the front lines, on the every day front lines, are recognized and brought into the discussion.

Madam Speaker, the profession of nursing also gives people a unique perspective on other critical issues. As a nurse in a school setting I have seen what children need for successful learning, growth and development. I know firsthand that children learn better in small class sizes and in classrooms that are not deteriorating.

From this background, I know that health insurance which covers regular checkups, immunizations and prescription drugs for children is the best preventive medicine. I know that clean water and clean air are not merely environmental issues; they are health issues.

In addition to essential contributions to quality health care, nurses are the heart and soul of so many of our communities. There are over 2.5 million nurses across this great land and they stand for, to me, the heart and soul of our values and what binds us together in our communities.

We need to pay attention to what our nurses are saying. Despite their busy schedules and hectic work environments, nurses take the time to reach out to our communities, educating neighbors to increase awareness and promote healthy lifestyles.

Nurses' efforts in my own community on the central coast of California have raised awareness on the harmful consequences of drinking and driving, taught parents how to properly install safety seats and educated our children about underaged alcohol abuse.

As we discuss the positive contributions of nurses during National Nurses Week, we need to work to ensure that these voices of compassion and experience are included in our health care policy debate today.

CHURCHES IN INDIANA COME TOGETHER TO AID REFUGEES IN KOSOVO

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. NORTHUP). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SOUDER. Madam Speaker, having visited the Balkans, and I was privileged to be included in the trip with Senator STEVENS and Chairman YOUNG a few weeks ago, I have been aggressively against this war which I do not believe is winnable in the traditional

sense. And it is time to get a negotiated settlement and it is time to cut off the funding, but I wanted to share a couple of things tonight about the terrible things that have happened to the people there.

These are pictures that I took in Vranje, just north of Skopje, in Macedonia. This shows just one of what I call the long white road to the mountains. These are actually the shorter mountains. They rise higher up. It is impossible to get ground troops through this area, which many armies throughout hundreds of years have learned is impossible.

This street goes on and on, miles and miles, and this is just one of the camps. There were 23,000 people, we were told, in that camp when we first came in. 8,000 additional people were added just that day.

These Albanian men were at the back of the place because they kept asking us, "Are the Apaches going to save us? Are they going to wipe out the tanks?" Of course, we had to tell them no, that is not what Apaches are designed to do, but we wondered where they were getting that information.

They have radios throughout the camp that are constantly broadcasting to them that there is this hope that they are suddenly going to go back.

These are some of the people trying to make do. These tents, this size tent from USAID basically had supposedly four to eight people; many of them I saw far more than that. They get a couple of cans of food, some bread and fruit each day, but they are desperately trying to make a fire or something to heat it up.

As these camps are expanded to 30,000, 50,000 people and upwards, it is just not going to work; nor are the restroom facilities, the water facilities. Here people are desperately trying to stay clean.

In the Macedonian camps they are coming mostly out of the cities. They were often booted out in the middle of the night. Most of the people are well dressed. The clothes had not come from the U.S. This is not able to be sustained over a long period of time.

This photograph was taken at the back of the camp. I had gotten separated from the other Senators and Congressmen during the trip, as well as the interpreter, and this man was trying to talk to me by going like this. This girl had just come into the camp the night before but spoke some English, said, "May I help you try to translate?"

What he tried to tell me is he saw 20 people get their throats slit just before he left; saw the mass grave before they torched his house and he got out. That was just one of the many stories we heard.

He and all the others around them, when they were asked, first, do you want to go back? "Yes." If we get rid of Milosevic, you are going to have to live under the Serbs. "No, no, we are not going to live under the Serbs. We are going to get rid of Milosevic," was what they said, "all Serbs and

Milosevic." We heard that all through the camp. We said, what will you do if you get back? You have to try to live together. "No, we are going to kill them."

We have now the stories from like this man of the throats slit, and it is not something that is going to lead to this kind of humanitarian peaceful settlement that some people are dreaming of.

This girl here had just come into the camp the night before as well. We stopped her. We saw she had diapers. And she broke down crying. I will never be a professional photographer because I could not snap the picture when her tears were coming down, but she is separated from her family. She is worried about her little child and so on.

Now, I say that because I want to illustrate some of the things that have been happening in my district. No matter what a person's position is on the war, their heart has to go out to the refugees here or in the other countries where they have been displaced.

I am pleased in my district that a number of churches and people have reached out. We tried to make the point while we were over in Europe to the ambassadors of seven nations, to NATO, that Europe has to pick up the bulk of these funds, but we in America are going to have some obligations as well.

One story from Pastor Rick Hawks, who heads a large church in Fort Wayne, The Chapel, has coordinated with 8 churches: The Chapel; Broadway Christian; Church of the Good Shepherd in Leo; Blackhawk Baptist, also in Fort Wayne, Indiana; Fellowship Missionary Church in Fort Wayne; North Park Community Church; Wallen Baptist Church.

We also had in my home church, Emmanuel Community Church, Abigail Roemke coordinated this. They had so many clothes and toiletries and stuff come in that it overwhelmed the distribution system that they originally had planned. They had far more than they could actually get directly there in that group.

Also Pastor Ron Hawkins' church, First Assembly of God, put together a group that has two registered nurses, Nancy Grostefon and Dawn Rice, and Dr. David Smith, a pediatric surgeon, to spend two weeks working in two camps, and they raised the money through their church to underwrite these nurses and this doctor going over.

In Fort Wayne we also have a large Macedonian population. George Labamoff in the Fort Wayne-based Macedonian Tribune, the oldest continually published Macedonian newspaper in the world, put together the Macedonian Relief Fund. They have also have an effort to try to raise money for the refugees in the countries.

Lastly, I wanted to read as much as I can of this letter. I visited an alternative school in Columbia City on

Monday. One of the things that they were doing was also collecting clothes and materials to send over to Kosovo. The teacher wrote me, saying, "Teaching current events to young people with little or no background in geography or history is a challenge. So I try to make every lesson relevant by working from what they do know. And at-risk kids, just like at-war kids, know suffering and deprivation. Twenty-five percent of my students have lost a parent to unnatural causes. Twelve percent have been homeless."

The point here, and I will insert the full thing in the RECORD, is these kids know what it is like to suffer, and because of that they collected clothes to help.

I hope all Americans understand we have a long-term responsibility here to those who have been harmed, regardless of our position on the war.

Madam Speaker, I have a series of articles that I would like to put in the RECORD in association with this special order.

[From the Journal Gazette, Apr. 20, 1999]

SUPPLIES SHORT IN BALKANS

(By Brian Meyer)

Fort Wayne residents will be asked today to donate clothing and toiletry items to some of the 600,000 Kosovo refugees fleeing Yugoslavia.

The Rev. Rick Hawks, pastor of The Chapel in Fort Wayne, has scheduled a news conference for 10:30 a.m. today to announce a citywide campaign to provide relief for Kosovo refugees. Donations of clothing, shoes, socks, outerwear, blankets, linens and toiletries will be accepted at seven local churches until May 3. Hawks said the Fort Wayne campaign, called "Clothes for Kosovo," followed his discussions with Dick and Barb Kelley, former Fort Wayne residents now affiliated with the Slavic Gospel Association in Rockford, Ill. Donations from Fort Wayne will be shipped to Rob and Pam Provost, missionaries working in the Albanian capital of Tirana.

"At this point, there's a shortage of everything," Hawks said. "Clothing, personal-hygiene items.

"We aren't dealing with anything perishable, just things like clothes and blankets."

Seven Fort Wayne churches will serve as collection sites: The Chapel, 2505 W. Hamilton Road, Broadway Christian Church, 910 Broadway, Church of the Good Shepherd, 14711 Wayne St., Leo, Blackhawk Baptist Church, 7400 E. State Blvd, Fellowship Missionary Church, 2536 E. Tillman Road, North Park Community Church, 7160 Flutter Road, and Wallen Baptist Church, 1001 W. Wallen Road.

Hawks said the local campaign is also seeking volunteers to help sort and box the donated goods; anyone wishing to volunteer can call The Chapel at 625-6200.

"The most labor-intensive thing is that everything has to be sorted, and there has to be a quick quality check," Hawks said. "And then everything has to be boxed accordingly."

Hawks said he is hoping to acquire enough donations to fill a tractor-trailer rig. The Chapel will pay the \$5,000 to ship the donated materials to Albania.

"We think we'll fill that (truck rig) quite easily," Hawks said.

[From the News-Sentinel]
LOCALS COORDINATE EFFORTS
(By Jennifer L. Boen)

Angie Stump and Bob Boughton are anguished by pictures of Kosovo residents fleeing to refuge with just the clothes on their backs.

"It's really heartbreaking to see what's going on there," said Boughton, a Tokheim Corp. employee in Fort Wayne, "but it's really good to help someone less fortunate."

The desire to help is compelling Tokheim employees, local churches and others in the Fort Wayne area to organize assistance.

Well-meaning people and organizations eager to help refugees or victims of disaster are well-advised to coordinate their efforts through relief agencies to ensure they are helping, not hindering the effort, said Stephen Apatow, executive director of the Humanitarian Resource Institute.

The nonprofit, nonpartisan organization works closely with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and coordinates relief efforts.

Efforts can easily be wasted:

World Relief, which handled tons of donations for Hondurans after Hurricane Mitch last year, said critical deliveries of food, building materials and other goods were impeded by the pileup at shipping ports of clothes and other noncritical items.

Donated clothing piled 17-feet deep covered a 5-acre collection site after Hurricane Andrew hit Florida in 1992. Much of the clothing eventually was buried or incinerated.

Cases of antibiotics donated by U.S. pharmaceutical companies were shipped to rural Honduran clinics without Spanish labeling. Health-care providers, without instructions in their language, could not use the medicine.

In Honduras, clothing donations were so abundant they destroyed the business of small vendors there.

Thus, the United Nations agency has some good advice for those with good intentions:

Before sending donations, work through national or international groups that have workers on site where the relief is needed, said Jennifer Dean, associate public information officer for the High Commission for Refugees.

It is precisely why Stump, union counselor and project organizer for UAW Local 1539 at Tokheim, is working with the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army and the American Red Cross both have workers in refugee camps.

The Salvation Army has issued national news bulletins listing what people should and should not donate. Because at least 45 tons of clothing awaits distribution, the agency is not accepting more at this time, said Maj. Ken Reed, Fort Wayne director.

"It is important that organizations have the logistics thoroughly worked out for transportation and delivery of in-kind donations, said Apatow.

"They need to have logistics set up for transport before the goods are collected."

It's also better to buy the building materials, tents, medical supplies and food from retailers close to the people who need them, said Apatow and Dean. It saves shipping costs that could be better spent on direct service.

The cost savings could be enormous.

For example, the Chapel is organizing a clothing drive for Kosovo refugees among several Fort Wayne churches.

Coordinator Abigail Roemke said it would cost \$5,000 to ship an 8-by-8-by-50-foot container of clothing overseas. The Chapel has made a connection to help distribute the clothes: Rob Provost, an American living in Albania who is director of Abraham Lincoln Center school in Tirana, Albania's capital.

Provost's school is working with Slavic Gospel Association and Samaritan's Purse to assist Kosovo refugees. And Samaritan's Purse has a contract with the United Nations relief agency to set up a refugee tent camp near Tirana.

The clothes will go to evangelical churches in Albania for distribution, Roemke said.

Relief organizers urge taking advantage of the enormous purchasing power of organizations such as the Salvation Army and the Red Cross. "Buying things in bulk is much less expensive," Dean said.

Immediately and lower costs are two good reasons to buy relief items as close as possible to the affected countries, and there's a third:

The countries Kosovo refugees are fleeing to are poor. "They are facing an enormous strain on their own resources," Dean said.

It is why the United Nations agency is buying things locally (overseas) as much as possible. "We are paying bakeries to make the bread for refugees," she said, helping both refugees and their new communities.

The American Red Cross wants monetary donations only for the Kosovo refugees, said Jean Wagaman, interim executive director of the Northeast Indiana Chapter.

"The Red Cross estimates we need \$1 million each week to meet the needs of the refugees," she said. The organization is helping provide shelter, food, health care and first-aid teams.

For the U.N. High Commission for Refugees and other organizations, the best way for people to help is to donate money.

"We do not want to discourage anyone who wants to help," Dean said. "All the enthusiasm of the caring and help is wonderful."

But getting the right kind of help is important, Apatow said. Make monetary donations for Kosovo relief through these organizations:

The American Red Cross—send to American Red Cross International Response Fund, P.O. Box 37243, Washington, D.C. 20013; or to the local chapter, marked Kosovo Relief, 1212 E. California Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46825. Secure credit card contributions can be made over the Internet at www.redcross.org. Call 1-800-HELP-NOW, or 1-800-435-7669, for more information and to make a donation.

Salvation Army—send to 3100 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46208; mark check "Kosovo relief;" credit card donations can be made by calling 1-800-SAL-ARMY, or 1-800-725-2769.

To donate clothing at one of eight area churches participating in the Chapel's "Clothes for Kosovo" campaign, call Abigail Roemke at 625-6200; Contact Rob Provost on the Internet at www.lincoln_intl.org.

The Salvation Army is accepting the following donations for military personnel dispatched to the Kosovo region through PROJECT SACKS:

Individual-size bottles of anti-bacterial soap; Packaged candy (nothing that melts); Packaged snacks, peanuts, snack-sized bags of potato chips, crackers and cookies; Writing materials, cards, paper and envelopes; Games, playing cards, pocket-sized crossword puzzle books and word-search books; First-aid supplies, adhesive bandages, medical tape, gauze pads and pocket-size Bibles.

[From the Journal Gazette, Apr. 30, 1999]

CITY TEAM WILL ASSIST KOSOVARS

(By Joe Boyle)

It's a matter of faith for three local medical professionals who are leaving in two weeks for Albania to help Kosovar refugees.

Registered nurses Nancy Grostefon and Dawn Rice, and Dr. David Smith, a pediatric

surgeon, will be on a Health Care Ministries medical team working in refugee camps on the Kosovo-Albania border.

"The team itself, the way it came together, was providential," said Marilyn Tolbert, missions director for First Assembly of God Christian Center, 3301 Coliseum Blvd. E.

The team will spend two weeks working at two camps, with a total of 800 to 2,000 refugees in each, said the Rev. Ron Hawkins, the church's pastor.

The Assemblies of God has traditionally been very active in overseas missions, Tolbert said, and the local church has sent people on different kinds of missions before.

But, she said, this is the first time the local church has sent a medical mission into a refugee situation.

And for some of the team members, a chance to minister through an overseas mission is a dream come true.

"It's been a desire of mine since I was in high school," said Grostefon, a cardiac critical care nurse from Parkview Hospital. "It's a God thing."

Grostefon said she's been preparing for the trip by watching many TV news reports and reading newspaper articles about the Albanian refugee camps, which, according to some reports, now hold more than 370,000 displaced people.

Despite the fact that she's traveling to the fringe of a war zone, Grostefon said her family has supported her decision.

"My kids are excited, and my husband knows this has been a desire in my heart," she said.

Rice, who is executive director of the Fort Wayne Sexual Assault Treatment Center, brings another special skill to the mission.

"Rape in wartime is not new," she said. "It's not new to this war, and it won't be held back from the next war."

Rice said helping rape victims from a war is different than treating rape victims in the city because evidence collection isn't a major part of the program.

But what's similar is tending to the injuries of the assault. Rice said she hopes to help with both the psychological and physical injuries the victims suffer.

And for Rice, it's a chance to do something instead of watching it on television.

"It's so easy to watch what goes on and say, 'I hope someone takes care of them,'" she said.

It's not just the three team members who are hoping to make a difference.

Geoff Thomas, media coordinator for the Lutheran Health Network, said Lutheran and St. Joseph hospitals are excited to help the refugees through aiding the team.

The hospitals donated handmade quilts, T-shirts for children, thermometers, stethoscopes, latex and non-latex gloves, bandages, sutures, surgical kits and Ibuprofen, which Thomas said is a hot commodity in the camps.

[From the News-Sentinel, Apr. 29, 1999]

MEDICAL TEAM GOING TO ALBANIA

(By Jennifer L. Boen)

"I'm being carried by God's hand," says nurse Dawn Rice, who is preparing for a two-week medical work trip to Albania.

Rice is the director of the Fort Wayne Sexual Assault Treatment Center and is experienced at helping people through trauma. But knowing how to help the Kosovar women who have been raped and tortured is something she can't fully grasp.

"I don't know what to expect," she said. "All these people will have post-traumatic stress syndrome . . . the terrible things that are going on there."

Rice is part of a team that includes Fort Wayne pediatric surgeon Dr. David Smith of

Lutheran Children's Hospital, and Nancy Grostefon, a Parkview Hospital intensive care nurse.

The three will fly to Athens, Greece, on May 14 and travel by land to a refugee camp just north of Tirana, the Albanian capital. They plan to return to Fort Wayne on June 2.

The team is sponsored and supported by First Assembly of God, 3301 Coliseum Blvd. E., and will be working under the auspices of the denomination's Health Care Ministries division, based in Springfield, Mo.

Also being sent from Fort Wayne will be a semi-truckload of supplies and medicine donated by local hospitals. Bandages, thermometers, stethoscopes, medical gloves, quilts and other items are being donated by Lutheran Health Network.

Parkview Hospital is donating surgical and medical supplies, as well as antibiotics, diaper rash cream and vitamins. Van Wert Community Hospital in Ohio also is donating supplies and medicine.

This is the first time a medical team is being sent from the church, said Marilyn Tolbert, chairwoman of the church's mission committee.

"We've always wanted to do a medical trip," Tolbert said. The mission committee had contacted Health Care Ministries earlier in the year and was told all openings for people to participate in medical trips were filled.

Just two weeks ago, however, Health Care Ministries contacted the church and asked for a team of people to go to Albania. Church member Michelle Denton took on the task of finding the right people.

"The type of people they want there are people who are skilled in dealing with trauma," said Tolbert. ". . . These three were ready and willing to go."

They will be working out of tents and giving medical care to refugees who have crossed the Yugoslavia-Albania border, she said. Rice hopes to help train other medical personnel to identify those women who have been raped and give guidance on how to treat for sexually transmitted diseases. "A female may be able to help better than a male," she said.

Smith has been on several previous medical work trips, but it is a first-time experience for Rice and Grostefon.

Other local individuals and businesses are helping make the trip possible. Root's Camp 'n Ski Haus and GI Joe's Army Surplus have donated equipment and supplies. Brateman's Inc. donated boots. American Freightways is donating the shipping for the supplies to Springfield. An organization called Convoy of Hope is packing and shipping the supplies.

"We have so much," said Tolbert. "The poorest of us in this area are worlds beyond people there. We don't have a clue."

The Rev. Ann Steiner Lantz is director of chaplains at Parkview and chairwoman of the hospital's mission and community outreach committee. She is coordinating the hospital's involvement in the project.

"This is part of our mission and our Judeo-Christian heritage," she said. "It's the right thing to do."

"What we're doing is a drop in the bucket," Lantz said. "But if everyone does a little, we can help a whole lot."

Donations to help with the cost of sending the medical team from Fort Wayne can be sent to First Assembly of God, 3301 Coliseum Blvd. E., Fort Wayne, IN 46805.

[From the News-Sentinel]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(By George Lebamon)

A group of prominent Macedonians from around North America and Europe, aided by

the Fort Wayne-based Macedonian Tribune, the oldest continuously published Macedonian newspaper in the world, have formed the Macedonian Relief Fund. The fund will provide financial assistance to agencies in Macedonia to deal with the impact of the NATO-Yugoslavia conflict.

Chris Evanoff, a Macedonian American entrepreneur in the Detroit area, will chair the effort. He will be assisted by people around the country, including myself.

"Nearly 150,000 Kosovar refugees have flooded the tiny country of Macedonia in less than a week, creating a humanitarian catastrophe of unprecedented proportions," Evanoff said. That total could increase to nearly a quarter of a million refugees, he added. He also noted, "Macedonia was assured by NATO nations that sufficient assistance would be available to care for these unfortunate victims of war and ethnic cleansing. The delay in getting aid to the region has crippled the Macedonian economy and its capacity to sustain relief efforts."

The refugee crisis so far has cost the Macedonia republic more than \$250 million. Total costs this year could exceed \$1.5 billion.

There are about 500,000 Macedonians in North America. The group has established a Macedonian Relief Fund account at Comerica Bank in Detroit. Contributions in the form of checks, credit card payments and wire transfers can be mailed to: The Macedonian Relief Fund, c/o Comerica Bank, 28801 Groesbeck, Roseville, MI 48066. Information requests can be e-mailed to mtfw@macedonian.org. The group has also set up a Web site at www.macedonianrelieffund.org to provide additional information.

Macedonian Relief Fund for the Kosovo Refugee Crisis

The Macedonian Tribune, in cooperation with Macedonians in the United States and Canada, is initiating a relief effort to provide resources to the people of Macedonia who are sharing what little they have with tens of thousands of refugees from Kosovo.

Since 1991, Macedonia has feared a humanitarian catastrophe if a crisis in Kosovo developed. Regrettably, this catastrophe has been realized. The strain of tens of thousands of refugees has crippled Macedonia, destabilizing its economy and progress toward a democratic, free society. Not only are refugees suffering, but so are the people of Macedonia as their factories have been closed and work has come to a halt.

Donations can be mailed to the Macedonian Relief Fund, c/o Comerica Bank, 28801 Groesbeck, Roseville, MI 48066. Reference bank account #1851014603. To wire donations, use transit/routing #072000096, refer to the bank account number and Comerica.

You can donate by check or with Visa or Master Card. No donation is too small, none too large.

MARSHALL CENTER ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL, Columbia City, IN, May 2, 1999.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN SOUDER: I am pleased to have been requested to forward details of my students' Kosovo clothing drive to you. I welcome this opportunity to illustrate the scholastic merit of an unconventional learning activity:

Teaching current events to young people with little or no background in geography or history is a challenge. (Most of the alternative students cannot locate Europe on a map, and one of them even thought NATO was a country.) So I try to make every lesson relevant by working from what they do know. And at-risk kids, just like at-war kids, "know" suffering and deprivation.

Twenty-five percent of my students have lost a parent to unnatural causes. Twelve percent have been homeless. Most have survived on rice or beans or cereal for extended periods. All have lost friends to violence, and all have been outcasts most of their lives.

Do they understand the politics of this (or any) war? No. But they understand what it means to be orphaned, to be vagrant, to be hungry, to mourn, and to be hated. They fully understand what it means to be a refugee.

So they collect clothes to help others—and end up helping themselves in the process. In the process, they are working cooperatively with adults (employees in the building, their parents, community members) they normally consider adversaries. They are earning respect for a job well-planned and efficiently executed: In just two weeks a mere dozen students have collected enough clothing, shoes, socks, and undergarments for about 3600 refugees. Remarkably, these students who anticipate failure and disapproval at every turn are succeeding at something meaningful.

While they may never compose a thesis comparing and contrasting the present conflict with events in the Balkans leading up to WWII, they have learned to advertise a campaign, schedule and share tasks, meet deadlines, calculate weight and cubic yard measurements, arrange transportation and more.

I'm glad you inquired about the project. We appreciate your knowledge and support as you debate the merit of alternative education programs. We need critical resources to raise citizens as well as test scores.

Sincerely,

REBECCA R. ROADY,
Teacher.

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

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. BERRY. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the special order time of the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG FAIRNESS ACT FOR SENIORS

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

Mr. BERRY. Madam Speaker, I would like to speak this evening about the Prescription Drug Fairness Act for Seniors. This legislation will help the problem that our Nation's seniors have had to deal with for years, and that is the outrageous prices of prescription drugs in this country.

The district that I represent has the highest number of senior citizens that live only on Social Security of any district in the country. When I hold meet-

ings in the First Congressional District of Arkansas, I hear about two issues, and that is the agriculture crisis and the high cost of prescription drugs, especially for seniors.

I also get letters from Arkansas seniors who tell me every day that they cannot afford to pay for all their needs; specifically, all their medicine and all their food.

I also get letters from Arkansas seniors who tell me that their drug bills are massive. Seniors are not following their doctors' orders. Some of them have been given prescriptions which they cannot afford to fill. Others have filled prescriptions which they cannot afford to take as directed.

Because they cannot pay the rent, pay the electrical bills, buy food and take very expensive prescription drugs, they either stop taking them or they take less than is prescribed by their doctor. They are doing things that in the long run are harmful to their health. I find it amazing that we tell our seniors that they can live longer if they take this pill or that pill but then if they cannot afford the medication that keeps them alive we do not do anything about it.

The Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act of 1999 is a chance for us to do something about it. It is a chance to step forward and show our seniors that we care about their well-being.

Madam Speaker, this legislation allows seniors, Medicare beneficiaries, to purchase prescription drugs at reduced prices. It allows pharmacies to purchase prescription drugs at the best price available to the Federal Government. It is estimated to reduce prescription drug prices for seniors by over 40 percent.

The average American under 65 takes only four prescriptions a year. The average senior citizen over 65 takes an average of 14 prescriptions a year. Our seniors suffer from more than one chronic condition: hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, glaucoma, circulatory problems, and many others. Medicare beneficiaries spend over \$700 per year on average for prescription drugs and many seniors spend much more than that, some as much as \$700 a month.

Are the pharmaceutical companies hurting for profits? Certainly not. They are the most profitable businesses in existence. Last year they had a net profit of \$24.5 billion, or 17 percent of their revenues.

□ 1930

Certainly we have no objection to the drug companies being profitable, and hope they continue doing so. Here is a letter that a senior in my district sent to me about this very problem.

She said, "I want to thank you for introducing a bill to investigate the extreme cost of prescription drugs. As I attempt to control blood pressure, cholesterol, treat a thyroid deficiency, and restless leg syndrome, it costs me over \$100 a month. I have had to cut out my arthritis medicine that costs \$125 a

month that the doctor prescribed, and I have had to return to aspirin, which my doctor insists I should not take with these other medications.

"Please do what you can to get the cost of prescriptions back down to a reasonable level. I have had numerous people tell me that they cannot afford the medicines that are prescribed for them."

Madam Speaker, sadly enough, this letter is not something that should surprise anyone here, because I am sure that if we talk to most of the constituents in Members' districts, they will tell us they have received similar letters and they have talked to many seniors that have the same problem.

What do we do? Do we continue to stand by and allow our seniors to be taken advantage of, robbed, by the pharmaceutical manufacturing companies? Fortunately, we have a bill that has 108 cosponsors that will help those seniors who find themselves choosing between food and medicine.

I call on all my colleagues to stand up for our seniors and sign on to this bill. It is a good bill. It is a step in the right direction. It does the right thing as it concerns the senior citizens of this country.

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. HAYWORTH. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to use the special order time of the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. NORTHUP). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arizona?

There was no objection.

TRUE BIPARTISANSHIP NEEDED TO SAVE MEDICARE AND HELP AMERICA'S NEEDIEST SENIORS

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

Mr. HAYWORTH. Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my friend, the gentleman from Arkansas, detail a genuine problem. And as the citizen honored to represent the Sixth Congressional District of Arizona, home to many of America's seniors who endured a Great Depression, who took part in World War II, who built our American economy into the envy of the world, and who now, in their golden years, have time to enjoy a quality of life unparalleled, I still understand that for many there are genuine problems.

How unfortunate it is, then, Madam Speaker, that when those of us in our commonsense, conservative majority move in a bipartisan manner to offer real choices to help the neediest seniors in our society, to offer alternative plans out from the auspices and away from the auspices of big government and bureaucratic solutions, how unfortunate it is that those who claim to