

McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the majority leader said it on Wednesday, we will embark upon a very important bill, that is, giving prescription medications for seniors in this country. There is an enormous difference between the Republican and the Democratic plan, and I would like to lay out the differences.

The Democratic prescription medication plan is part of Medicare. It is a core benefit. The Republican plan is not a part of Medicare; it is simply a chance to buy a private insurance policy or join an HMO.

The Democratic plan is secure. Seniors can count on it, just like they count on Medicare. Under the Republican plan, your insurance company or your HMO could leave your area, disrupt your life, as they are doing today with regular benefits, while you look for another company. This is just one more example of the HMO in pharmaceuticals.

Now, the Democratic prescription plan is simple and easy. It is a part of Medicare. Under the Democratic prescription medicine plan, you will not have to change anything that you now do to get your prescriptions. You can continue to get your prescriptions from your local pharmacist, just as you do now.

On the other hand, the Republican plan is complex and difficult. The Republican plan would require you to find an insurance company or an HMO and sign up. Then you would get your prescriptions by mail order. The chairman of the committee came before the Committee on Ways and Means and held up a letter from a mail order house in Florida. All your drugs would come from Florida, and you would have to wait 8 to 10 days.

Under the Democratic plan, you would pay \$25. The one that will be brought to the floor has a guarantee of a \$25 premium. Under the Republican plan, your premium would be set by the insurance company, which would have to be high enough to cover the marketing costs and profits.

There is no guaranteed premium in the Republican plan. Seniors have already been through this with HMOs. They joined an HMO, they were going to get all these benefits. Then they took away the benefits. Then they said we have taken away the benefits, but we are going to charge you a policy premium. That is what will happen under the pharmaceutical plan of the Republicans.

The Republicans say we are going to give you choice. They really take away choice. The only choice that a senior will have is which plan do they go into, which insurance company do they sign up with.

The HMO, or the private insurance company, will limit the choice of what pharmaceuticals they receive. Now, when I am a physician and I write a prescription and I hand it to a patient

and they go to the pharmacy, I know what the patient got. But when it goes through this HMO, they could say, well, that is not on our formula. We will give you something that is close, or we will give you something that we think is just as good, and that choice of the physician and the patient will be interrupted. We will have to put an amendment on the Patient's Bill of Rights on this issue.

The other thing they take away is your choice of pharmacy. If they are a mail order house in Florida, they do not care about your local pharmacy. Your local pharmacist is out of business as far as your being able to do down there and get your medicine with the discount. You will have to pay the old high prices. In my view, the Republican plan really guarantees a benefit to insurance companies or HMOs, not to seniors.

There is no guarantee that the insurance companies will offer an affordable, and I emphasize, affordable prescription drug plan to seniors.

Now, you ask me, why is that? Well, let me tell you the specifics of the bill. Ordinarily a lot of people do not read the bill, but I do. The Republican plan guarantees profits to insurance companies and HMOs by letting them hold the Government hostage.

Page 56 of the Republican plan says that the Government will pay private plans not more than 35 percent of the cost of those medicines. So you have paid your premium through Social Security, and the 35 percent for the Government that has to cover it. But the Congressional Budget Office and the insurance companies say the plan will not work; we will not offer a plan if the Government pays only 35 percent.

So the Republicans answer that. They go around on page 40 and they say the Government may provide financial incentives, including partial underwriting of the risk to get the insurance companies to sell policies to seniors. During the markup in the committee, the chairman of the health subcommittee said that they could cover up to 99 percent. Now, if you are an insurance company out there and they offer you 35 percent, you say, I do not want that. I am going to wait until they offer me 100 percent.

It is a bad bill, and we have to pass the Democratic alternative.

□ 1430

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

(Mr. WOLF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PRIVATIZATION OF ENRICHMENT INDUSTRY SHOULD BE REVERSED

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with my colleagues a sad and tragic headline from the Columbus Dispatch of yesterday. It is a headline that reads, "Piketon Plant to Close," and the subheading says, "2000 workers will lose jobs because of the shutdown." Then they say, "Less than 2 years ago, the United States Enrichment Corporation vowed to keep the Piketon plant and a sister facility in Paducah, Kentucky open until the year 2005." This is the plant that employs 2000 southern Ohio men and women.

This industry was privatized less than 2 years ago, and at the time of the privatization, they accepted an obligation, an obligation to operate both the Paducah and the Piketon sites through the year 2004. The day before yesterday, flying in the face of a recommendation from the Department of Treasury and from a strongly worded request from Secretary Richardson, the CEO of this company and the board of directors voted to close this facility. Mr. Nick Timbers, a person that I appropriately refer to as "Slick Nick" Timbers, was quoted in The Washington Post as saying, "It had to be done. It is the reason Congress privatized the company." For Mr. Timbers to utter such a statement is sheer hypocrisy. It shows that this man cannot be trusted or believed. He, as the CEO of this company, accepted an obligation, an obligation entered into through a legal agreement with the Department of Treasury, and he has broken that agreement.

In response to my criticism and the criticism of Senator VOINOVICH and Senator DEWINE from Ohio and others, Mr. Timbers was quoted in an AP story yesterday as saying, "Politicians should stop all this old, tiring finger pointing."

This is a man who negotiated through his own maneuverings a \$3.6 million golden parachute. If he is relieved of his job, he walks away with \$3.6 million and yet, he is willing to lay off thousands of hard-working Americans without giving them due consideration.

Mr. Speaker, privatization of our enrichment industry was an unwise decision. That is why next week I plan to introduce legislation to have the Government renationalize this vital industry. It provides 23 percent of the electricity output in this Nation, and this privatized company is destroying not only the enrichment industry, but the mining industry and the conversion industry as well.

Mr. Speaker, if we are not careful, if we as a Congress do not take appropriate and immediate action, it is possible that 3 or 4 or 5 years from now, this country could find itself totally dependent on foreign sources for 23 percent of our Nation's electricity. We know what dependency on foreign sources for oil does to prices. We know what gasoline is selling for today. Can we imagine how we could be brought to our knees if we were totally dependent

on Russia or other countries to provide us with the vital fuel that it takes to operate our nuclear power plants.

I do not know where the Vice President is today, but I hope he is watching C-SPAN. I do not know what the Secretary of the Treasury is doing today, but I hope he is watching C-SPAN. These individuals and others have an obligation to protect this Nation and to keep their word to these communities. I fought privatization and I lost that battle, and as a result, we find ourselves in these dreadful circumstances. But it is imperative that the Congress pay attention to this matter. We cannot let this situation continue as it is.

People who are a lot smarter and better well-informed than I am say that we ought to repurchase this industry and, thereby, protect the energy security and the future of this Nation.

SEND EDMOND POPE HOME

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

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make sure today that everybody in this body understands a serious problem for a family in State College, Pennsylvania; and a problem for, I think, the security of this country.

On my left is Edmond and Cheri Pope. They are a couple who have lived for many years in State College, finished raising their family there, highly regarded and respected there. Edmond Pope was a businessman who traveled the world, often went to Russia to do business. Eleven weeks ago, Edmond Pope was arrested and thrown in a Russian prison. For 11 weeks, Cheri, his wife, had no communication, could not get a letter to him, could not get a phone call to him, could not get any kind of communication from him; really did not know what was happening to her husband. Visas were canceled. Finally, last week, I helped arrange a trip where two of my staff went with her. She went to visit her husband for the first time in 11 weeks. I will just read to my colleagues a little bit of a news story on that.

"On Tuesday, they met for the first time in 3 months, just a few feet from a watchful prosecutor in a Lefortovo prison. Edmond and Cheri Pope hugged and belatedly wished each other a happy 30th anniversary. Then Cheri Pope said the first thing he said to me was, 'Cheri, I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't,' and I said to him, 'I never thought for a minute you did.'"

In an emotional interview on Tuesday after that reunion, Cheri Pope said that her husband, whom the Russians had accused of spying, was strikingly thinner, and he had a rash. He had lost a lot of weight, and he has a pallor about him and some skin problems. She said, "Even though he didn't look well, he still looked beautiful to me."

The last time she saw her husband was March 14 as he was leaving their home in State College, Pennsylvania on what seemed to be another routine trip to Russia, his 27th. While Redmond Pope remained cut off from the world in one of Russia's most infamous maximum security prisons, Cheri Pope struggled through months of anguish, grasping morsels of information while trying to cut through an international maze of red tape to visit him. Over the weekend she was minutes away from boarding a plane for the long-awaited meeting, when her son called her to tell her her 74-year-old mother had passed away. What a decision Cheri had to make. She knew that she had to go and encourage her husband, and that is what she did.

Edmond Pope needs to come home. He needs to come home to his wife, to his children, to his seriously ill father of 75 years; he needs to come home so his health can be monitored and maintained. He has had cancer that was arrested, he has Graves' disease, but he needs to be monitored closely. He is not a spy. His itinerary was printed and available, his visa explained why he was there. It was his 27th trip. In fact, his friends and neighbors tell me that he spoke fondly of the Russians. He wanted to help build a business relationship between these two countries. He was helping take Russian technology and helping them commercialize it.

Edmond Pope is no spy. He does not belong in a Russian prison. I will be sending a letter to be delivered to Mr. Putin the first of this week, and it will say, President Putin, if you value our friendship, send Edmond Pope home. It will say, President Putin, if you value the growing business relationships beneficial to both of our countries, send Edmond Pope home. It will say, President Putin, if you value the many ways we aid you financially, send Edmond Pope home.

I will be asking this body, Mr. Speaker, next week to get unanimous consent to pass a Sense of the Congress resolution, again, for this Congress speaking to Mr. Putin and the Russian leaders that it is time to send Edmond Pope home.

Edmond Pope is a man who was there on sound financial business reasons. He is not a spy. He needs to be home with his family to help his grieving wife. He needs to be home to visit his father, who is seriously ill. He needs to be home to have his own health monitored, and he needs to be home so that the relationships between Russia and America continue to grow and prosper to the benefit of both.

Edmond Pope is no spy. Edmond Pope does not belong in a maximum security prison in Russia where he got very little care. Edmond Pope needs our help and our support. Mr. Putin, send him home.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN NEEDED NOW FOR OUR SENIORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, we will be considering a prescription medication plan very shortly, and there is a great need for assistance with our seniors for prescription drugs. I hope that as we do that we will consider a meaningful prescription drug plan that looks at affordability, looks at accessibility, and also looks at simplicity.

Both in rural America as well as urban America, we know there are a large number of our seniors who are making decisions about whether they can afford to buy their prescriptions, pay their rent, or buy food. They are making decisions between acquiring very basic needs. So hopefully, as we craft a bill to speak to these critical needs, we are not playing politics with the needs of seniors, that we are really designing a meaningful bill that will be helpful, easy to assess, and affordable by seniors, both in urban America as well as rural America.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about rural America, because that is where I come from. There is a difference. The difference comes primarily because of economies of scale, and therefore, we do not have the infrastructure that depends on the market-driven economy. We do not have large hospitals because we do not have a large accommodation of patients to support that. We do not have a mix of sophisticated specialists in those areas. So we rely on a combination of regional hospitals or tertiary hospitals or relationships with community health centers, a variety of networks to put together kind of a patchwork in providing health care to our citizens. It costs us more in rural areas just because of the lack of the economies of scale. So already, there is built in to the health services that we receive through the market system, but also the current health system assistance we receive from the Federal Government.

Now we are about to craft a prescription drug bill supposedly to help seniors who are having to make these critical decisions between being able to take their medicine that they desperately need and the food that they must have to survive, or paying their bills. So when we do this, hopefully, we take into consideration structure, affordability, and simplicity.

Mr. Speaker, if I am hearing correct, the plan that came out of the Committee on Ways and Means yesterday has a structure where it is predicated on private providers, that HMOs would be the carriers for getting the prescription assistance to rural areas.

Now, nothing would be wrong with that, because I have an HMO myself; I am fortunate enough to use an HMO that I get through my employment. But I can tell my colleagues that there